

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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The *World Socialist Web Site* invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature
Latin America

Rallies held across Argentina in defense of public education

Tens of thousands of people rallied on Wednesday October 2 in Buenos Aires, Cordoba, Rosario and other major cities in Argentina, in defense of state-run universities across the nation.

The mass protests took place as fascist president Javier Milei was vetoing a budget increase for public education that had been approved by congress.

The theme of the protest was “education is a human right, that combats the injustice of inequality” that makes people free, an investment in science and technology.

The mass protests also denounced conditions of poverty facing thousands of students.

Brazilian workers and Iguazu tribe protest budget cuts in São Paulo, Brazil

On October 5, health workers rallied at Sao Paulo’s City Hall protesting budget cuts to health and education. São Paulo, Brazil’s largest city and a major industrial center, has adopted neo-liberal austerity policies and moved to privatize public services.

Joining the workers, were members of the Iguazu tribe, from indigenous suburbs that surround São Paulo. Tribal protesters denounced two years of budget cuts to public schools and health services in eleven tribal

communities, inhabited by 2,000 people.

Thousands protest Gaza Massacre in Mexico City

On Saturday October 6, thousands protested against the Gaza genocide and the escalating war in the Middle East in demonstrations held in Mexico City and across Mexico.

The demonstrators demanded that the Mexican government break diplomatic relations with Israel, and declared their determination to expand the student anti-war movement that began last year in Mexican universities.

United States

Contracts expire for 3,000 Oregon nursing home workers

The contract covering 3,000 nursing home workers at about 50 facilities in Oregon expired October 1 as workers are demanding safe staffing levels along with improved pay. The 46 certified nursing assistants, certified medical assistants, along with kitchen and housekeeping staff at Meadow Park Care in St. Helens, have already voted by a 98 percent margin to grant strike authorization.

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 503, which represents the workers, will be holding strike votes at other facilities throughout the month. The five companies involved in the negotiations — Avamere, EmpRes, Volare, Sapphire and Caldera Care — operate dozens of nursing homes throughout the state.

In an SEIU release, Jessica Dupuis, a CNA at

Meadow Park, said of the lack of safe staffing, “We will strike if needed to protect our residents’ safety...”

On wages, Tony Cortes, who works at the Sapphire Nursing Home in Portland, said, “It’s getting harder to afford everyday expenses on these wages.”

Oregon Teamsters strike over beverage company’s pension takeaway

About 240 workers at four Bigfoot Beverages facilities in Oregon have been on strike since September 19 over the company’s demand to substitute a 401(k) retirement plan for the Teamsters-sponsored defined-benefit pension plan. According to Teamsters Local 324 Secretary-Treasurer Chris Muhs, “each member would have to spend at least \$3,300 per year out of pocket just to match the company’s current rate of funding for their retirement benefits.”

Teamsters Local 324 represents workers at the Roseburg and Newport sites while Teamsters Local 206 represents workers at Eugene and Coos Bay. The bargaining unit includes drivers, warehouse workers and workers involved with vending, merchandise and sales. The company distributes alcoholic, soft drink and other beverages to Central Oregon, the Southern Willamette Valley and the Oregon coast.

Besides the pension/401(k) stalemate, Bigfoot Beverages has made wage offers between \$3.00 to \$6.00 an hour and included a \$2,500 signing bonus. But the workers fear that the withdrawal of the pension will cancel these increases out.

The Teamsters have told the company they will not resume bargaining until the company puts pensions back on the negotiating table.

Canada

More than 25,000 health care support workers in Manitoba set to strike October 8

Health care aides, laundry workers, dietary aides, ward clerks, recreation coordinators, maintenance,

housekeeping and other support staff in Manitoba will walk off the job Tuesday in a strike over chronic low pay and for wage increases to keep pace with inflation.

A survey carried out by the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Manitoba, which is the bargaining agent for most of the more than 25,000 workers, revealed that one in 16 workers relies on food banks. In addition, one in nine workers has experienced housing insecurity due to low wages, which include starting pay for some positions of a mere \$17.07 per hour. Among Canada’s low-paid health care support workers, staff in Manitoba earn especially badly, receiving on average wages that fall \$3 below the average in the next lowest province.

The Manitoba Government and General Employees Union (MGEU) is also involved in bargaining. “We have been bargaining all weekend with the assistance of a conciliator in the hopes of reaching a fair settlement and averting a strike,” a joint statement by CUPE Manitoba president Gina McKay and MGEU president Kyle Ross said Sunday. “Unfortunately, bargaining is not going well. We remain far from an agreement, but we will continue to bargain.”

The employers include provincial agencies Shared Health, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, Prairie Mountain Health, the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority, and Southern Health.

The 6,500 workers represented by the MGEU voted down a contract offer, with a union official saying the result was “not even close,” while refusing to release the vote totals. The proposal included a miserable 2.5 percent wage increase in the first year, 2.75 percent in year two, and 3 percent in years three and four. CUPE Manitoba recommended the same terms to its members, with the result that workers in the Northern Health region approved the agreement and would not participate in the strike. Workers in other regions defied the union recommendation by voting the contract down. All of the workers have been without a contract since March 31.



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