

Workers Struggles: The Americas

Vote on strike authorization by 3,000 Indianapolis Rolls Royce workers set for Thursday ; 12,000 Quebec daycare workers hold one-day strike

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The World Socialist Web Site invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature.

Argentine chemical workers strike

On February 3, chemical workers employed by Linde-Praxair went on a strike of indefinite duration in plants in Argentina over attacks by the firm on their union stewards. The plants being struck are in industrial cities in Buenos Aires Province (Avellaneda, Ensenada, Pilar, Lanus and Pacheco). Non-union Linde-Praxair workers in Rosario and other locations in the industrial belt of Santa Fe Province have rallied throughout the week in support of the strikers. Also supporting the strikers were dock workers in the port of San Martin.

While some plants ended their strike toward the end of the week, pressed by the trade union bureaucracy, striking workers in the Pacheco plant defied the union bureaucracy and set up camp in front of the plant. The Pacheco workers are campaigning for a national strike of all chemical workers

Linde-Praxair is a multinational oligopoly, one of the largest in the world, based in the US and in Germany. It produces nitrogen, hydrogen, oxygen, argon, acetylene, helium, neon, carbon dioxide and other gases for industries and in the medical field, together with equipment to handle them.

Auto parts workers stage protest at Chihuahua, Mexico wheel plant

Workers employed by Superior, Inc., in the Chihuahua industrial complex in northern Mexico, blocked access to the plant on February 5 and 6, demanding better working conditions, higher wages and the reinstatement of workers fired during a previous strike.

Superior is part of the global supply chain, manufacturing aluminum wheels for automobiles. On the second day of the protest, Chihuahua police surrounded the demonstrators for blocking the entrance of supplies to the plant, forcing workers to end their protest.

Superior is one of 40 border plants in Mexico, known as maquiladoras, that have been on the verge of strikes against low wages and exploitative working conditions since December 2024. The strikes have been repeatedly postponed or canceled by the trade union bureaucracy and the Chihuahua authorities.

Transit workers strike in Peru over extortion threats

Transit workers went on a protest strike February 6 in the provinces of Lima and Callao, denouncing the government of Dina Boluarte for ignoring their demands for security measures against assault by armed gangs, dedicated to robbery and extortion of drivers and passengers.

Transit workers denounced an increase on cases of extortion, in which drivers have to pay the gangs to be able to work and are killed if they refuse. Over 150 people have been killed by gangs in the last 15 days, mostly in Lima, Peru's capital city.

Leaders of the transit workers union report that 80 percent of the drivers are being "taxed" by the gangs, while the government does nothing. On the contrary, the Boluarte regime is criminalizing public rallies and protests instead, claiming that they represent "urban terrorism."

The transit workers were joined by other logistics workers who joined their rallies in solidarity.

Vote on strike authorization by 3,000 Indianapolis Rolls-Royce workers set for Thursday

Over 3,000 Rolls-Royce workers in Indianapolis are voting on strike authorization Thursday. The contract between Rolls-Royce and the United Auto Workers Local 933 expires February 26.

Rolls-Royce workers should recall the struggle their brothers and sisters waged at neighboring Allison Transmission. The UAW pushed through a second tentative agreement almost a year ago after almost three months of working without a contract, disregarding the membership strike vote. Shawn Fain claimed the initial rejected contract was a "big win" while his lieutenant, Region 2B Director David Green, also endorsed the sellout agreement.

As in the sham "stand up strike" waged by Fain and the UAW bureaucracy at the Big Three in 2023, the UAW falsely claimed the contract ended tiers and provided cost-of-living adjustments. Like Allison Transmission, Rolls-Royce is a military contractor, producing military aircraft engines rather than Allison's tank engines.

Both have received millions in military contracts for the war in Ukraine as well as the ongoing genocide in Gaza. According to reports, Rolls-Royce received \$74.7 million producing V-22 AE1107C engines for the Navy and Marine Corps.

Rolls-Royce should heed the statement by the Allison Workers Rank-and-File Committee on the lessons of their struggle.

“With every backstab, people are getting more and more anxious to figure out a different route. People are tired of the rhetoric and the games. This is our livelihoods. That’s why we’ve founded the rank-and-file committee.”

After seeing the outcome of the Big Three and Mack Truck contract struggles, the rank-and-file committee at Allison called for oversight of the bargaining by trusted workers and preparation for a strike connecting with workers at other plants.

Pueblo, Colorado workers protest proposed food tax

Protesters hit the streets in Pueblo, Colorado to oppose a food tax proposed by Mayor Heather Graham in her January 24 State of the City address that will impact working class families. One protester carried a sign, “Tax Empty Buildings, Not Empty Stomachs.”

Pueblo is facing an \$8.6 million revenue shortfall and the proposal being debated now by the city council is for a 3.7 percent food tax that she projected would accrue \$15 million for the city on an annual basis. The proposal needs to be passed by the council and will then be put before voters in the November 2025 elections.

Mayor Graham threatened that if the tax was not passed, then 100 city workers would be laid off. “So what do the taxpayers want?” she asked. “Do they want essential services to continue to be provided at the rate that we are providing them or are they going to be OK with the city cutting back?”

Some 16 percent of Pueblo County families fall below the poverty level. Further research by United Way defines a new category—Asset-Limited Income-Constrained Employed (ALICE). This category comprises another 31 percent of Pueblo County families and when combined with those in the poverty level nearly half of all families are financially challenged. The new food tax, combined with probable increases due to the Trump administration’s tariffs, will deepen poverty.

The protests come as Pueblo grocery workers at King Soopers voted by a 97 percent margin to strike the Kroger-owned food chain.

Pennsylvania UPMC Washington Health workers vote overwhelmingly for strike

The 300 hospital workers at UPMC Washington Health voted by a 95 percent margin February 3 to grant strike authorization against the Washington, Pennsylvania healthcare facility after the old agreement expired January 31, over management concession demands and a proposal for a mere 1 percent wage increase. The starting wage for some workers is only \$16 an hour.

UPMC is also gutting workers’ healthcare, overtime and shift differential pay. These miserable conditions are leading to high turnover, leading to unsafe staffing levels.

Chuck Steadman, a control engineer, told KDKA News, “When I first started at Washington, people used to line up at the door to work there. Now there’s just a revolving door. In my department, we’ve had an open position for almost three years that we simply can’t fill.

“Washington has so many problems with recruitment and retention because the pay is too low for the cost of living. UPMC executives need to start fulfilling their promises by investing in Washington Hospital’s workers, families and patients.”

The Service Employees International Union, which represents surgical

technicians, therapists, carpenters, dietary aides, records clerks, housekeepers, cooks and other workers in the negotiations, has not set a strike date, pending the outcome of a new round of bargaining talks last week.

12,000 Quebec daycare workers strike

On Thursday, February 6, 12,000 daycare workers at 400 establishments conducted a second walkout. The workers, all members of the Federation de la Santé et des Services Sociaux (FSSS), voted late last year for a strike mandate of five separate days of job action at their choosing. The first one-day strike occurred on January 23.

The main issues in the contract dispute are pay, workload, bonuses for workers in the regions and support for children with special needs.

The salary of a qualified childcare worker is \$21.60 an hour at the entry level. It rises to \$28.60 at the 10th level, then \$30.03 after one year at level 10. The Treasury Board for the provincial government has promoted an unsatisfactory 17.4 percent wage rise spread out over five years in exchange for concessions on the organization of daycare work.

Unifor transit drivers and mechanics strike on Vancouver Island

On February 10, 44 transit drivers, mechanics and cleaners under contract to BC Transit via their Transdev employer began a strike in pursuit of demands for improved job protections and contractual language guaranteeing proper break times and access to washrooms. The strike has closed regional service in the Cowichan Valley and also affects inter-regional routes from Cowichan and Shawinigan Lake to the provincial capital in Victoria.

Bus strikes have affected several BC Transit contracted services over the past two years. Bus drivers in Campbell River and the Comox Valley, also organized by Unifor, walked out for almost two months against their employer, Pacific Western Transportation, in late 2023 and early 2024. Transit workers in the central Fraser Valley also struck for 127 days in 2023 while Whistler region bus workers went on strike for 137 days in 2022.



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