

## Workers Struggles: The Americas

### Workers occupy Buenos Aires printing plant, issue call for support; Ten thousand workers protest social crisis in Toluca, Mexico

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

#### Workers occupy Buenos Aires printing plant, issue call for support

Following an announcement of bankruptcy by the Anselmo Morillo printing company in the industrial district of Avellaneda in Metropolitan Buenos Aires its 200 workers decided to occupy the plant on Wednesday February 26 in order to protect the integrity of the plant and defend their jobs.

Rumors of the plant's closure had circulated days before the bankruptcy announcement as the news spread that stockholders were demanding mass layoffs and wage cuts.

In addition to the production of newspapers and magazines, the Avellaneda plant also produced material for the Ministry of Education, now under attack by the Milei administration. The Avellaneda plant first opened in 1974.

The striking workers denounced management for breaking all links to the plant, refusing even to answer telephone calls, and not recognizing workers' rights. At issue is the defense of the workers' rights to jobs with decent working conditions and wages. The occupying workers intend to run the plant under workers' control.

The striking workers have called on the entire working class, including printing press workers, to "surround with active solidarity this struggle."

News of the plant occupation and the struggle spread across social media and the press newspapers, with many describing the plant closure as part of the war on workers being carried out by the ruling class, backed by the fascist Milei administration, including massive layoffs and wage cuts.

For its part the Graphics Workers Union apparatus, took exception to the workers call for a mass struggle, and limited its response to the plant occupation with a call for a government-imposed arbitration agreement to reopen the plant with wage cuts and a reduced workforce.

#### Rallies and marches across Argentina in defense of public health

On February 27, marches and rallies took place across Argentina against the Milei administration's mass firings, and wage and budget cuts that are destroying government health services. The government's most recent measures involve suspending purchases of painkillers for the treatment of cancer patients.

The most recent attacks on health care is the closure of the country's main pediatric hospital and the dismantling of the National Cancer Institute, in a direct attack on jobs and workers' health. Even before the latest attacks, patients were facing long-waits and scarcities of medications, forcing patients to rely on costly private hospitals and clinics.

At the Buenos Aires protest, demonstrators included health workers from 100 hospitals and clinics.

#### Ten thousand workers protest social crisis in Toluca, Mexico

On February 26, thousands of workers from various locations in Metropolitan Mexico City marched on the State Government House in Toluca, west of Mexico City, in defense of education, health and justice.

Several columns of educators, health workers, and their supporters, including peasants, retirees and parents of school children converged on the government installation, blocking roads in major streets and avenues into Toluca. The demonstrators are demanding that the state administration immediately spend 4 billion pesos (US\$ 250 million) to begin resolving this crisis.

Protesters drew attention to the fact that public schools and health centers are in terrible disrepair across the state, some without roofs. Parents are forced to rent needed equipment and pay to rent school rooms, to pay for electricity and water, for maintenance workers, and, in some cases, for teachers. Some 1,500 teachers are employed on a contingent basis, having to move from school to school as needed. Health centers for students lack medicines and equipment.

The demonstrators have set up camp around the government house and plan to continue their protests until their demands are met.

#### Two-week strike by truck drivers at US Postal Service contractor

More than 500 truck drivers and warehouse workers at 10 Roads Express have been on strike since February 18 for better pay and conditions. The Iowa-based trucking firm is one of the largest private contractors for the US Postal Service. Strikers are manning picket lines in Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Utah.

About 500 of the company's estimated 2,500 employees voted to join the Teamsters union in 2023. The Teamsters bureaucracy, however, is limiting the action to an "unfair labor relations" strike, which it can call

off once union officials claim management is bargaining fairly—even if no contract is reached.

Keith Damgaard, a nine-year driver at 10 Roads Express in Omaha, Nebraska, said, “We’re done with the unfair treatment from a company that takes millions from USPS while leaving workers behind,” according to a union press release. “We will not accept anything less than what we have earned and deserve.”

The strike is of particular importance since postal workers are fighting Trump’s plans to privatize USPS. Far from uniting truck drivers with USPS workers, Teamsters President Sean O’Brien, an avid supporter of Trump, has expressed his support the mass firing of federal workers, saying, “there is fat to be cut.”

### **Journalists at three New Jersey Gannett newspapers vote for strike action**

The union representing journalists at three New Jersey newspapers owned by media giant Gannett voted by a 95 percent margin to strike unless the company comes to an agreement. The AOO-MCJ Guild, which represents journalists at the *Courier News*, *Asbury Park Press* and *Home News*, has filed unfair labor practices against Gannett, among them a protest over the manner in which the company is employing artificial intelligence policies without union input.

Workers are also protesting the withholding of raises for six years and a policy of retaliation.

Print circulation for the newspapers has been in steep decline, affecting financial stability. Pew Research Center has reported that daily newspaper circulation in the United States has plummeted by 40 percent during the period 2015 to 2022.

Another three Gannett newspapers in New York state are contemplating strike action. Gannett owns over 200 newspapers across the United States.

### **California school district slashes jobs in the face of student and faculty opposition**

The Ventura Unified School Board backed off a portion of their job cuts at their February 25 board meeting in the wake of staff protests and a walkout by more than 100 students the previous day. Hundreds of staff, parents and students attended the meeting that weathered four hours of public comment as the board contemplated cutting some 40 jobs.

Nevertheless, as midnight approached, the board of trustees pushed through \$5.5 million in cuts that axed 17 full-time jobs of teachers, counselors and administrative positions for 2025-26 school year. The new cuts come on top of the elimination of 86 jobs by the board in the previous weeks.

The district faces a \$5.9 million budget deficit next year and \$13.7 million in 2027. The immediate force behind the cuts was attributed to the failure to pass a local tax levy, the end of temporary COVID funds, and falling enrollment. Final approval of the budget will be made in June.

### **University of Rochester clinical workers stage one-day strike**

Professional and clinical workers at the University of Rochester

Medicine Home Care (URMHC) in New York state carried out a one-day strike February 24 to press for affordable health insurance, reasonable caseloads, and fair wages. Some 111 nurses, physical therapists and other caregivers took part in the strike.

Jenna Berndl, a nurse with URMHC for 15 years, told the Rochester *Democrat & Chronicle*, “When you focus on productivity and loading us up with more visits than we can do, you’re putting quantity before quality. We don’t work on a production line; we work with human beings. They need our help. They need our time. They deserve quality care.”

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1199 has held 44 bargaining sessions with URMHC since May of 2024. Management appeared unmoved by the one-day strike and repeated the usual boilerplate reply in their press release claiming they had bargained “in good faith.”

The strike comes as graduate students are preparing to strike as the University of Rochester has refused to recognize their unionization efforts. Graduate student compensation runs as low as \$15,000 a year and they are seeking a health insurance plan and representation for international students.

### **British Columbia LifeLabs workers on rotating strikes**

One thousand two hundred medical technicians working in 129 testing laboratories across British Columbia are in the second week of a rotating strike to press their demands for wage equity with hospital-based lab technicians and for better health and safety protections and scheduling processes. Technicians at LifeLabs in the province are paid between 4 and 16 per cent less than hospital workers who perform the same job.

The technicians are organized by the BC General Employees Union. After working without a contract since last April, workers voted by 98 percent for job action this past November.

Due to provincially mandated essential services regulations, workers are required to rotate their strike activity. LifeLabs is one of the largest diagnostic results companies in Canada. In the province, the company provides services for over 7 million patients annually.

### **Waterloo Region outside workers strike**

About 240 outside workers in and around Waterloo, Ontario began a strike yesterday to pursue pay demands to address the erosion of their wages during the inflationary spike that occurred over the course of their last contract.

The workers are members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees and perform work in road maintenance, landfill services, airport services, clean water treatment services and emergency vehicle repairs.

Contract negotiations stalled after regional management withdrew a previously offered wage improvement and then presented a “significantly lower” wage proposal.



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