

Workers Struggles: The Americas

Argentine maritime and fluvial unions call strike; Strike by 800 workers at Providence, Rhode Island Butler Hospital continues

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

Argentina maritime and fluvial unions paralyze ports

The Federation of Maritime and Fluvial Unions [*Federación Sindical Marítima y Fluvial* (Fesimal)] carried out a 24-hour protest strike on May 27, paralyzing all port tugboats, river freight and fishing activities to protest a set of government measures that de-regulate towing, fishing and transport.

A federation spokesperson described government decree 340/25 as “in the interest of corporations, that seek to cut sailors’ and fishers’ wages by 30 percent, and remove existing regulations that protect workers and working conditions, on national waters.” Furthermore, the decree will allow companies to replace permanent workers with temps and contingent employees and lead to the privatization of Argentina’s Merchant Marine Agency.

The decree limits the right of sailors to strike. In line with other anti-strike legislation being imposed by the Milei administration, the decree mandates that when a strike is called, 75 percent of the workers remain on the job.

The protest strike prevented ships from entering or leaving all of Argentina’s ports. It also stopped fishing and river transportation for a day.

Buenos Aires healthcare workers protest

Workers, nurses and doctors, employed by the Buenos Aires’ Juan Pedro Garrahan pediatric hospital, are waging a struggle against the draconian budget cuts being imposed by the Milei administration.

On Thursday, May 29, Garrahan healthcare workers carried out a one-day strike and marched on the Health Ministry building, demanding wage increases and better working conditions. A delegation of the strikers was allowed in to meet with Health Ministry officials, but nothing was resolved. The workers plan a new rally this Tuesday, June 3.

Garrahan provides medical services to over 600,000 patients each year. It is a regional center for pediatric medical attention, including complex surgical procedures and organ transplants. The current crisis jeopardizes the health of thousands of children in Latin America.

The *zonanortehoy.com* news website quoted a striking doctor who declared: “The loss of buying power has been brutal. We calculate that it

fell between 40 and 60 percent since last year.” In addition to wages, the quality of care has been negatively affected. Many Garrahan employees are working second jobs, wearing them out.

The protest takes place in the context of a policy of budget cuts that Milei calls “history’s largest,” which is destroying the hospital. The budget cuts on Garrahan and other public hospitals are part of the Milei’s administration’s privatization of health services.

Press Secretary Manuel Adorni denied that the hospital is being starved of funds and blames mismanagement by the hospital administration. The Milei administration merely “seeks to abolish privileges,” added Adorni.

Garrahan workers have scheduled another protest strike next week, beginning with a symbolic “march of candles” on Monday and a rally at the city’s central Obelisk Square.

Brazil Petrobras office workers defy union, strike in Rio de Janeiro and Santos

On Friday, May 29, office workers in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Santos, employed by oil company Petrobras, defied their union apparatus [Federação Única dos Petroleiros, FUP] and decided to strike against the firm’s elimination of working from home.

Last February, the Petrobras management decreased the number of days workers were entitled to work from their homes. Workers must now work three days in the office, instead of two. At the time, Rio de Janeiro office workers responded with a 24-hour strike; in other locals protest rallies took place. Petrobras is government-owned.

The issue has never been fully resolved, with the FUP bureaucracy openly siding with Petrobras. It had cancelled workers’ assemblies and tried to solicit the vote of managers to defeat the strike call and to impose the arbitrary interests of Petrobras management in the service of the Lula administration.

Even as the union managed to approve the betrayal in some of their unions, Rio de Janeiro and Santos office workers carried out a 48-hour strike last Thursday and Friday and plan to extend their struggle this Monday. Office workers in two other union locals, in Minas Gerais and Bahia, met on Friday to withdraw their approval of the Petrobras decision and are expected to join their union brothers and sisters in Rio and Santos.

Strike by 800 workers at Providence, Rhode Island Butler Hospital continues

Contract talks between the New England Health Care Employees Union (SEIU 1199NE) and Butler Hospital have stalled, as more than 800 staff members continue a two-week walkout.

According to a report by WPRI SEIU 1199NE, management's latest offer would leave union workers with even less than the "last, best and final proposal" that was put forth earlier this month.

"Management gave us a set of proposals with lower wages, higher healthcare costs, less on retirement and no movement on our workplace violence committee," one local union official stated.

Strike threat at four New Jersey hospitals

As talks continue at four New Jersey hospitals—the Inspira Health Network in South Jersey, New Bridge Medical Center in Paramus, Bayonne Medical Center and Christ Hospital in Jersey City—the state's largest nurses union is continuing talks in the face of a Saturday strike deadline.

More than 3,500 members of the Health Professionals and Allied Employees say they are prepared to strike if a contract is not reached over safe staffing ratios.

Workers on strike at Sutphen, major Columbus, Ohio area firetruck supplier

About 85 workers at Sutphen, members of the Teamsters, who had been working without a contract since October 12, 2024, finally walked out May 28.

Members of the Columbus City Council have been pressuring Sutphen to return to negotiations.

Negotiations continue for workers at two Colorado grocery chains following strike vote

United Food and Commercial Workers International Union Local 7 is continuing negotiations with Safeway and King Soopers in Colorado after a strike vote last weekend.

However, the union has reported "good progress" in the talks and said it is not extending negotiations through the end of June. The union said the company had been trying to impose cuts to healthcare and retirement benefits.

Strike continues at California cable plant after management terminates healthcare benefits

Workers at Okonite, a plant in Santa, Maria, California, that builds insulated cables for hospitals, are continuing at strike following the sudden cutoff of their healthcare benefits. Workers had voted to reject a management proposal that they say failed to address the rise in the cost of living.

The workers make insulated cables for hospitals, military bases, transit

systems and major utilities across the US. Workers say management's move has created significant hardships.

Union says Detroit-area nursing home fired employees who picketed

Service Employees International Union Health Care Michigan (SEIU HCMI) said it is filing complaints against Ciena, the state's largest nursing home operator, claiming management threatened employees who considered participating in a one-day strike and then fired workers some of whom picketed, claiming no call, no show.

The 300 workers at the five metro Detroit-area Ciena facilities have been without a contract for months. The SEIU called a one-day strike to protest the lack of progress. Management retaliated by falsely telling workers they did not have the right to picket and offering cash bonuses to discourage workers from striking. Management also carried out surveillance and other forms of harassment.

Champaign County, Illinois employees vote 96 percent for strike authorization

Workers, members of the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 150, are continuing a strike against QSL America over dangerous working conditions, wrongful terminations and unpaid overtime, among other grievances on the Chicago lakefront. The union says port operations have been significantly slowed.

Southern Ocean Medical Center nurses in New Jersey vote to strike over staffing

Nurses at Ocean Medical Center in Safford, New Jersey, say they will strike June 9 if management does not address their issues, including improved staffing.

The 350 members of the Health Professionals and Allied Employees Local 5138 have been in negotiations since February over staffing. According to the union, in addition to staffing the issues include wages, benefits and other working conditions.

"I've been a nurse for 35 years," Local 5138 President Anna Pona told *Ashbury Park Press*. "I have never seen staffing levels as bad as they are right now."

60,000 Quebec construction workers on indefinite strike

Residential construction workers across Quebec walked out on an indefinite strike last week in pursuit of a wage increase equal to that received already by workers in other sections of the construction industry in the province. The strike impacts the building of single-family homes, townhouses and residential buildings with six floors or less. Construction of buildings of seven floors or higher are not affected by the strike nor is renovation work.

The residential workers comprise about 60,000 workers out of a total of

200,000 workers, all members of the umbrella union, the Alliance Syndicale de la Construction.

Also in the union but already with newly settled contracts are civil engineering/roads, industrial and institutional/commercial workers. In those settled contracts, workers agreed to a wage increase of 22 percent over 4 years.

However, in the current dispute, residential workers have only been offered 18 percent over 4 years by the Association des professionnels de la construction et de l'habitation du Québec (APCHQ), the group of developers for all construction sectors who oversee contract settlements. The residential workers are demanding 22 percent for the majority of workers who build houses of 4 stories or less and 24 percent for those constructing buildings of 5 or 6 floors.

Jean Boulet, the provincial Labour Minister in the right-wing government of Premier Francois Legault, has threatened government intervention should a quick settlement of the strike not be reached. As there is no anti-scab law for construction workers in Quebec, workers are allowed to stay on the job despite the strike should a developer keep the job going. However, the overwhelming majority of workers have walked off the job and virtually shut down the residential construction industry.



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