

Workers Struggles: The Americas

Nurses launch national job action in Peru; Canada Post union caves to management demands, lifts overtime ban ahead of holiday season

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

Nurses launch national job action in Peru

On Tuesday, September 9 over 60,000 health workers in Peru, belonging to the National Union of Social Security Nurses, went on a strike of indefinite duration. All but essential services were shut down.

The strikers oppose government plans to transfer the Health Social Security agency (EsSalud) so as to make it directly dependent on government subsidies. In addition, nurses and health workers are demanding better working conditions, and a substantial increase in funding for hospitals and clinics. The strikers complain of worn out hospital equipment, lack of supplies and internal corruption.

Rally marks 52 years since Salvador Allende's overthrow in Chile

On September 7, Chilean gendarmes violently repressed a march of hundreds of workers and students in Santiago and a rally at the Central Cemetery. The peaceful demonstration of workers and students, "honoring the fallen of yesterday and today," was demanding the full truth about the thousands of victims of the Pinochet dictatorship, which overthrew Allende in September 1973.

As the demonstrators approached, they were met with gendarmes reinforced by trucks armed with water cannon. The gendarmes corralled the protesters in the cemetery and aimed the water cannon at them. Fifty-seven protesters were arrested.

The military coup that overthrew and killed Allende established a dictatorship supported by the oligarchy and right-wing organizations that jailed, tortured and executed more than 40,000 people and forced another 200,000 into exile.

Argentine universities and Garrahan Hospital workers stage protest strike

In response to the most recent actions by the Milei administration aimed at starving out public universities and the Garrahan Pediatric Hospital, university and health workers carried out a 24-hour protest strike in all public universities last Friday. Milei vetoed university legislation that guaranteed adequate wages and scholarships and funds for pediatric emergencies.

Health technicians at Garrahan Hospital joined in the protest strike and called for pot-banging protests across the country. The hospital has already lost 200 health workers due to Milei's budget cuts.

Ecuador retiree protests continue

On September 10, Ecuadorean Social Security recipients rallied at the National Legislature in Quito to protest legislation being pushed by President Daniel Noboa that would privatize government pensions. The new law allows the state to take over Social Security reserve funds and use them to fund government bonds and private credits.

At the rally pensioners called for President Noboa's removal. The pensioners and their supporters denounced the legislation as "robbery disguised as law."

Hundreds rally against the militarization of Puerto Rico

On September 7 hundreds of Puerto Rican workers and youth rallied in protest military maneuvers by the US Armed Forces aimed at dominating the Caribbean Sea and threatening Venezuela in particular.

With their chants the demonstrators denounced the US naval and military maneuvers taking place in and around the island, and referred to Trump as "a murderer." Due to mass opposition, beginning in the 1970s, the US was forced to abandon its military bases in Puerto Rico (the last military base, in Vieques Island, was closed in 2023.)

The rally was organized by Mothers Against War.

Las Vegas warehouse workers vote to strike Kroger subsidiary

Teamsters Local 14 announced September 8 that 140 warehouse workers who supply products for Smith's Food and Drug grocery stores in the Las Vegas region voted overwhelmingly to authorize strike action. Workers joined the Teamsters back in January of this year and are seeking increased wages, job security, improved working conditions, and guaranteed retirement benefits.

Juan Castillo, a warehouse worker stated, "All we want is a fair contract that brings us in line with the wages and benefits other Teamsters at Kroger already have nationwide." Smith's Food and Drug is a wholly owned subsidiary of Kroger.

Teamsters Warehouse Division director Tom Erickson issued a statement, declaring, "Nationwide, the Teamsters represent thousands of workers at Kroger who are prepared to stand in solidarity with Local 14. Management must bring a real contract offer to the table, or they will face the consequences."

Erickson did not elaborate on what he meant by consequences, which could only be effective if they involved sympathy strikes. Nor did he set a strike date.

Amazon fires 150 New York contract drivers

Amazon ended its contract with Cornucopia, a delivery service provider (DSP) in Queens, New York, essentially firing 150 workers who make deliveries for the company. The Teamsters said Amazon took the action in retaliation against the workers for unionizing with Teamsters Local 804.

Amazon contracts with more than 3,000 DSPs globally and has previously terminated contracts with these DSPs in cases where workers have joined the Teamsters. Amazon uses the ploy of claiming that third party contractors like this are not employees of the company and therefore lack any rights.

Last month an official with the NLRB (National Labor Relations Board) reached a ruling that charged Amazon with an unfair labor practice when it ended its contract with another DSP, Battle-Tested Strategies (BTS), in Palmdale, California. The ruling did not accept the union's characterization of "retaliation," but concluded Amazon and BTS were joint employers. Amazon is appealing the ruling.

Canada Post union caves in to management demands, lifts overtime ban ahead of holiday season

On Monday, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) which represents 55,000 postal workers across the country replaced its overtime ban with a stoppage on commercial flyer delivery. The overtime ban had been instated by the union in late May to divert the planned nationwide strike by postal workers after a five month long government-imposed back to work order was lifted.

In August, nearly 70 per cent of urban and rural postal workers rejected Canada Post's final offers in a government forced vote designed to impose sweeping concessions that will Amazonify the postal service and transform it into a profit-making concern. CUPW is a willing partner in the ongoing conspiracy against postal workers, chaining postal workers to the collective bargaining framework to

ensure the swift passage of Canada Post's demands.

CUPW's lifting of the overtime ban is a capitulation to Canada Post management, which recently blamed its \$407 million quarterly loss on "labor uncertainty" and signaling, with the full backing of the federal liberal government and corporate Canada, that it will not brook even minimal disruptions to its operations.

In a recent press release, CUPW president Jan Simpson announced that, "Our goal is to get collective agreements that are ratifiable before Christmastime," making clear the union's plan to sell out the almost two-year-long militant struggle by postal workers before the lucrative holiday season begins.

BC public service workers strike enters second week; overtime ban extends to liquor warehouses

On Friday, the BC General Employees' Union (BCGEU), which represents public service workers across British Columbia, announced that it has extended its overtime ban to cover more than 1,700 Liquor Distribution Branch (LDB) workers.

In mid-July, when contract negotiations between the union and the province soured, the BCGEU membership voted 92.7 percent in favour of job action. Limited strike activity began on September 2, including staff at B.C. Liquor stores, administrative professionals, conservation officers, correctional officers, woodland firefighters, social workers and other government employees, and expanded to picket lines in about 10 cities throughout the province.

Workers are demanding wage increases after years of wage erosion, cost-of-living adjustments, and access to remote work, among other issues. The province has rejected the BCGEU's proposal for a meagre 8.25 per cent wage increase over two years, announcing that its most recent offer—a paltry 1.5 per cent in year one and 2 percent in year two—is "fair and reasonable" and necessary so it can "maintain" its fiscal plan.

Despite the overwhelming majority of public sector workers signaling their readiness to fight, the BCGEU has thus far restricted the strike to a tiny portion of its membership. Only 6,000 public service workers—less than a fifth of the 34,000 under the expired collective agreement—are currently engaged in limited job action.



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