

## Workers Struggles: The Americas

### One-day strike by 6,000 Brazilian Embraer aircraft workers; Provincewide strike by Alberta teachers looms

22 September 2025

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

#### One-day strike by 6,000 Brazilian Embraer workers

A one-day walkout by 6,000 metal workers hit Brazilian aircraft maker Embraer September 17. The strike was called to protest management's paltry wage offer. The company, a major manufacturer of passenger airplanes worldwide, had offered a wage increase that barely covered inflation and attacked workers' rights.

Metalworkers demanded an 11 percent salary increase and an increase in food and shopping vouchers. The decision to strike took place at a meeting inside the Embraer plant in São José dos Campos.

The strike was suspended by the Metal Workers Union the next day, following attacks on pickets by the Military Police. The Union apparatus claims that the strikers then decided to go back to work and lowered their wage demand from 11 to 9.5 percent. Embraer management has yet to respond to the new proposal.

#### Thousands in Peru protest attacks on pensions

Thousands of young adults converged in Plaza San Martin square in central Lima on Saturday, September 20 for a weekend of protests on September 20 and 21. They were accompanied by climate and animal rights activists, and trade union members, protesting attacks on workers' pensions, corruption and the lack of government transparency.

The protest was organized through digital platforms, popular with Generation Z youth. The demonstrators called on the "People to rise up" against the government of President Dina Boluarte. The protest was triggered by changes in the pension system that threaten to leave workers with little or no retirement payments.

The demonstrators broke through police barriers and faced tear gas attacks. On Saturday a group of demonstrators attempting to access Peru's Government House were attacked by the police. At least five were wounded. Police were seen attacking youth that were peacefully leaving the rally.

Demonstrators also protested against press agencies that continue to support the current administration, "when the people are hungry and children are malnourished."

One shot was fired at the demonstrators by an individual who later claimed he was protecting a car from being damaged.

On Sunday, as demonstrators were assembling in the San Martin square, police attempted to confiscate signs that denounced the government.

The Social Security legislation raises the retirement age from 50 to 55 years, and prohibits workers from accessing their pension funds before retirement.

#### Uruguayan university workers, educators and students protest budget cuts

On Thursday September 18 university employees, educators and students at University of the Republic (Universidad de la Repùblica, UdeLaR), Uruguay's largest and oldest university, rallied at the legislature in Montevideo demanding a budget increase for the university together with a budget increase for all public education.

The rally included members of various educator and healthcare unions. Joining them were non-teaching workers and students. The demonstrators partially blocked adjoining avenues, demanding "a just budget for the People's University."

A spokesperson for the current government, headed by President Yamandú Orsi, blames the state of the universities and public schools on previous administrations and claims that it is making efforts to increase the education budget by 6 percent (1.8 percent for UdeLaR), which the demonstrators have denounced as insufficient and are demanding a 52 percent increase.

#### Nurses in contract struggles at hospitals in Michigan's Upper Peninsula

Nurses at the Aspirus Ironwood Hospital in Michigan's Upper Peninsula held a rally September 17 to protest management's decision to terminate at the end of 2025 the facility's labor and delivery services. The nurses, members of the Michigan Nurses Association, have been without a contract since August 2 and are currently in negotiations.

Meanwhile, 600 nurses and medical technicians at UP Health System-Marquette saw their contracts expire in the first part of September. Both units are with the Michigan Nurses Association and began negotiations back in March of this year.

The nurses are seeking to limit excessive workloads due to understaffing. Technicians want improved healthcare. Their current plan is inferior to that of nurses but yet they pay more for the coverage.

The UP Health System-Marquette is operated by Lifepoint Health,

which in turn is managed by Apollo Global Management, a private equity firm. As of 2025, Apollo Global Management had \$840 billion of assets under its control.

### **Long Island physician assistants rally for higher pay, protest foot-dragging by management in negotiations**

Some 160 physician assistants (PAs) rallied outside Northwell Health's Long Island Jewish (LIJ) Medical Center in New Hyde Park September 16 to press for higher wages and an end to management's dragging out negotiations. PAs unionized with 1199SEIU more than a year ago and negotiations have been carrying on since October of last year.

Prior to unionizing, PAs had received a meager cost-of-living increase. Once unionized, Northwell management canceled the COLA and have sought to punish workers by refusing to come to terms on a new contract.

"The PA body at LIJ has just been overlooked and taken for granted for a long time," said Erica Rose, 46, a longtime PA in the hospital's surgical and intensive care unit.

### **Fast food workers victimized after protesting working conditions**

Two workers at one of the El Pollo Loco chain restaurants in San Jose, California, were terminated after they spoke out against poor working conditions and took part in a rally on September 17. Erika Medina and her daughter Adriana complained about a malfunctioning air conditioning system that led to temperatures of 91 degrees.

"We know that we should work in better conditions," Erika Medina told KQED through an interpreter. She said the walkout was staged to "defend our rights."

The California Fast Food Workers Union filed a complaint over wage theft and an excessive heat complaint with the California Labor Commissioner on behalf of the two workers. Meanwhile, the National Fast Food Workers Union also filed an unfair labor practice complaint against the restaurant's parent company, WKS Restaurant Corporation, alleging unlawful discrimination and termination for protected union activity.

The California Fast Food Workers Union reports there are over 630,000 fast food workers in California. Most of them are adult women.

### **Province-wide strike by Alberta teachers looms**

A strike by 51,000 public education teachers in Alberta could begin October 6 if a new agreement is not reached with the provincial government. The educators are supported by 11,000 education support workers, who have vowed not to take on the work of teachers in the event of a strike.

Teachers are demanding redress for a series of issues, including chronic underfunding, classroom overcrowding, inadequate wages, and increased workloads—all of which have intensified over recent decades due to relentless funding cuts that have accelerated under the right-wing United Conservative Party.

According to the Alberta Teachers Association (ATA), the province's pledge to hire 3,000 new teachers over three years will do little to curb the

issues of overcrowding and lack of resources. Currently, in hundreds of schools across the province, enrollment numbers, which continue to climb, now exceed available classroom space and the 200,000 new student spaces the province is planning will require the recruitment of 8,000 more teachers.

In May, teachers had rejected by a margin of nearly 95 percent a tentative agreement that had been recommended by the ATA, which contained the province's paltry offer of a 12 percent wage increase over four years. On behalf of the province, the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association (TEBA) also issued authorization for school boards to lock teachers out should they initiate a work-to-rule or any other job action.

Talks, that have been dragging on since the expiry of the teachers' collective agreement in August last year, reached a breaking point earlier this month when the province launched a complaint accusing the ATA of falsely claiming that provincial negotiators didn't have the power to negotiate non-wage issues. In a statement, the ATA called the complaint "without merit" and an attempt by the government to poison public opinion against the teachers. On Thursday, a consent order was issued by the labour board ruling that the parties have agreed the matter is over and the only outstanding bargaining issues are related to pay hikes and COVID-19 vaccines for teachers.

Talks resumed on Friday, but the province has only dug its heels in further. On Saturday, Premier Danielle Smith made clear once again that her government is committed to undercutting teachers' wages, working conditions and the further deterioration of public schools. She presented what amounted to an ultimatum to take it or leave it, declaring, "We're simply not going to continue to have a conversation about more and more salary increases when we know what we're putting on the table is abundantly fair." Adding, "The ATA wants more money than we are prepared to offer them."

### **Unlimited strike by workers at Port of Montreal underway**

Workers at a container complex located in the Port of Montreal began an indefinite strike as of 5 a.m. Monday, September 22, after voting 96 percent in favour of job action September 11.

The 32 employees work for Montreal Gateway Terminals, which operates two of the Port of Montreal's three international terminals and handles 58 percent of its container volume. The workers, who have been without a collective agreement since December 31, 2024, are striking over subcontracting and wage issues. The workers' bargaining agent, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), says mediation and conciliation efforts have been unsuccessful.

Over recent years, workers on both coasts have struck repeatedly over similar issues and have been subjected to anti-democratic government intervention. The strike last October by nearly 1,200 longshore workers at the Port of Montreal was restricted by CUPE to just 350 workers at two terminals and preemptively limited to just three days, leaving the struggle isolated from the docker strike in British Columbia and elsewhere. This betrayal paved the way for the intervention of the federal Liberal government, which directed the Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) to order the end of work stoppages at the ports of Vancouver and Montreal and impose binding arbitration.



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