

Workers Struggles: The Americas

Argentine nuclear power plant workers protest privatization; Vancouver Symphony Orchestra musicians strike

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Argentine nuclear power plant workers protest privatization

Nuclear power plant workers marched and rallied at Argentina's three nuclear-powered electricity plants against the Milei Administration's plan to sell off publicly owned shares in the Argentine Nuclear-Electric Corporation (CNEA), which operates the facilities.

The Milei administration also plans to shut down the Science and Technology administration (NA-SA), and the National Institute of Industrial Technology (INTI).

In Buenos Aires, workers marched along the "tech" corridor and rallied at the Atomic Center building. Protests also took place at the Atucha 1 and Atucha 2 nuclear electric power plants in Buenos Aires province and at the Embalse plant in Cordoba province.

There is a widespread suspicion that in his latest meeting with President Milei, US President Trump insisted that the privatized shares of the nuclear plants and uranium deposits go to US firms.

Protest held in Mexico City to mark 11 years since the disappearance of Ayotzinapa 43

On September 26, 11 years after the disappearance at the hands of the state of 43 students from the teachers' college in Ayotzinapa, over 10,000 workers and students from across Mexico braved the rain to march in Mexico City, including the families of the 43. The demonstrators marched through central Mexico City and rallied at Zocalo Square.

The city government had mobilized police to repress the

protest, setting up barriers around the Zocalo. This led to scenes of firecracker and stone throwing by some of the participants, according to the Spanish Daily, *El País*.

Many of the demonstrators also held signs denouncing the Gaza massacre and carried Palestinian flags.

It is an open secret that the Mexican state and the Mexican Army disappeared and killed the students, who were on their way to a protest in Mexico City commemorating the 1968 Tlatelolco Massacre in that city.

A central demand of the demonstrators is that the government of President Claudia Sheinbaum release 800 documents held by the army that would shed light on the disappearance of the 43. These documents were never handed over to the group of independent international investigators (GIEI) that originally investigated the case and raised the issue of the Mexican military's role in this crime.

The families also seek the extradition of those who fled the country to avoid the investigation and probable prosecution.

So far, the only remains recovered were bone fragments found in 2019 and 2020 belonging to three of the victims: Christian Rodríguez, Jhosivani Guerrero and Alexander Mora.

Sheinbaum has repeatedly issued empty assurances that her government is doing everything possible to find out what happened to the 43.

Massachusetts transit workers slated to strike over low pay

Transit workers in the Massachusetts region encompassing Taunton, Attleboro and Plymouth will be striking at some point during the week of September 29. Members of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1548 voted 81-7 on September 13-14 to reject the last offer from Kiessling Transit, the subcontractor that manages bus lines for the Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA). Workers voted unanimously back in the first part of August to grant strike authorization.

According to the ATU, GATRA is among the lowest paying

regional transit operations in the state. Initial pay for drivers is \$24 an hour, compared to Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority which starts at \$30 an hour. Despite this, the ATU is only asking for a pay increase of \$1.79 an hour, while GATRA has refused to budge from its offer of \$1.28 an hour.

Further fueling tensions was GATRA's decision in 2024 to increase compensation for its administrator Mary Ellen DeFrias from \$141,971 to \$155,001.

Workers at Chicago Museum of Science & Industry grant strike authorization

The union representing workers at the Museum of Science & Industry (MSI) in Chicago, Illinois, announced September 23 that workers have granted strike authorization as talks over wages, vacation, holiday pay and other issues remain unsettled. In a vote with 95 percent of the staff participating, some 90 percent of workers voted for strike action.

Museum workers' pay ranks between \$16.60 an hour, which is the minimum wage in Chicago, and \$20. "The public needs to know that this world-class institution pays us poverty wages," said Josh Garcia, a museum worker and a member of the bargaining committee.

Workers first organized back in 2023 with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Council 31. Workers have been without a raise since 2022.

No strike date has been set by AFSCME. Bargaining between the two sides will resume October 6.

Strike continues at Sutphen Corporation in Dublin, Ohio

A strike involving 85 workers, members of Teamsters Local 284, is continuing against fire truck manufacturer Sutphen Corporation in Dublin, Ohio, outside Columbus, that began May 28.

The Teamsters have filed unfair labor practice charges, saying management is not negotiating in good faith over wages and other issues. The company has been bringing in strikebreakers from its Urbana, Ohio, facility to continue production.

The Teamsters, who have been isolating the strike, are now covering their inaction by urging cities to cancel equipment orders from the company.

Vancouver Symphony Orchestra musicians on strike for the first time in a century

On Thursday, roughly 70 musicians employed at the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra (VSO) walked off the job, launching their first strike in the orchestra's 107-year history.

The musicians' bargaining agent, the Vancouver Musicians' Association (VMA) Local 145, has been negotiating with the VSO management since March. Their previous contract expired on July 1. Later that month, on July 31, members rejected the employer's "final offer" by a margin of 97.4 percent.

The key issue in dispute is wages. Management is proposing a 15 percent wage increase over three years, while the union is seeking 23 percent over the same period. The musicians argue that while the VSO has thrived financially in recent years—expanding staff positions and giving pay raises to upper management—players' wages have lagged. According to the union, VSO musicians earn a base salary of just over \$75,000, which is about 30 percent lower than what their counterparts receive in other Canadian cities.

Vancouver is the country's most expensive city, where the median price of a home hovers around \$2.4 million and is expected to increase further. One recent report ranked the coastal city as the fourth most expensive city worldwide.

In response to the strike, management suggested that its wage terms are non-negotiable. In a recent media statement, VSO Society president and CEO Angela Elster announced that the VSO "has put forward fair and substantial proposals that balance the vital contributions of our musicians with the financial realities unique to our organization."

The VSO is the third-largest symphony orchestra in Canada and the largest performing arts organization in Western Canada, with an operating budget of \$16 million. At the end of 2023, according to Charity Intelligence Canada, the VSO had a surplus of \$5.1 million and \$50.6 million in reserve funds.



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