

# Workers Struggles: The Americas

## Montreal transit workers stage partial strikes as contract talks continue; Educators in Colombia and Uruguay hold national walkouts

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

### Colombia national educators protest strike over health benefits

On October 30, thousands of Colombian teachers and school employees, members of the Colombian Federation of Education Workers (FECODE), carried out a national 24-hour protest strike demanding improved health benefits for all teachers.

Striking teachers marched and rallied in cities across the country. Workers interviewed by the Telesur press agency described the deterioration of health benefits over the last 20 years, long delays in treatments and in the provision of medication, and the subordination of health to the profits by a medical oligarchy.

### Uruguayan teachers' hold two-day strike

Teachers across Uruguay went on strike on October 30. In Montevideo, the strike lasted two days, October 29 and 30. Rallies took place in several cities.

The educators are demanding an increase in the public education budget—currently only 4 percent of the national budget is dedicated to education—and a reduction in hours of work.

In support of the teachers' demands, bank employees also shut down the banks on October 30. Taxi drivers stopped work during part of the day and rallied at a busy corner in downtown Montevideo. Other trade unions announced their support, without joining in the strike.

### Youth protests against government repression in Peru

On Saturday October 26, hundreds of youths marched and rallied in Lima, Peru in honor of Eduardo Ruiz Sanz—a rapper known as Trvko. On October 15 Sanz was shot in the chest by a police officer in civilian clothing during a protest against newly appointed right-wing president Jose Jeri. He died at the scene.

The demonstrators demanded justice for Ruiz and all other victims of

police repression. The marchers stopped at various locations in the city, observing a minute of silence in memory of Ruiz Sanz and all other victims of previous mobilizations against the presidency of Dina Boluarte, who was replaced by Jose Jeri.

### Major impact from road blockages by farmers in central Mexico

Between October 27 and October 29, corn farmers demanding higher corn subsidies from the Sheinbaum administration, blocked major highways in Mexico's central Bajio district northwest of Mexico City. The impact of the blockades was felt in Mexico's auto industry, which is highly dependent on the free movement of parts and supplies.

In addition to transportation the protest interrupted the production of autos and auto parts by General Motors, Nissan, Mazda, Pirelli (tires), Denso (auto parts) and Fraenkische (auto parts). Thousands of workers were affected by the closures, forcing the government to agree to negotiate with the farmers. The road blockades were called off while negotiations take place.

### Protests over death of Santiago, Chile McDonalds worker

On October 30, workers surrounded a McDonald's in Santiago, Chile's Capital, protesting the death of Hilda Leiva, 22 years old, who was found dead near her job at the fast-food shop.

Hilda was last seen on October 22 walking up a staircase within the shop; she never came down. Her comrades, looking for her, asked management to close the shop to no avail. Calls to the police were also ignored. Hilda's body was found outside the shop the next day by a fellow worker.

At the rally, dozens of young, contingent workers from across the city demanded "justice for Hilda" and denouncing the company's, and the government's, negligence lack of concern over the life of contingent workers, many, like Hilda, forced to work for hunger-wages at exhausting speeds.

### Tech workers at Kickstarter crowdfunding platform enter second month on strike

Tech workers in New York, Seattle and Boston who work for the crowdfunding platform Kickstarter have been on strike since October 2 in their struggle to raise wages of their lowest-paid workers and getting contract language to secure their 32-hour, four-day workweek. The workers, members of the Office and Professional Employees International Union Local 153, have been in contract negotiations since last April and the old agreement expired in July.

The workforce comprises creators, customer support, marketing, outreach, research and software development. Many operate from home offices across the country. The decision to strike was supported by 85 percent of the bargaining unit.

Joan Wright, a Kickstarter striker, in a submission to the website “The Chief,” explained that the company secures its profits by taking a 5 percent cut out of all money pledged to its clients’ appeal for funding. “Kickstarter’s founders and its current executives pride themselves on being a ‘public benefit corporation’ to ‘harness the power of private enterprise to create public benefit.’”

However, when workers set out to unionize in 2020, Kickstarter “hired the notorious union-busting law firm Littler Mendelson, the same firm used by Amazon and Starbucks.” Workers were fired for advocating representation.

“The major shareholders and investors of Kickstarter include massive venture capital funds and tech billionaires and multi-millionaires,” wrote Wright. “Most recently, Kickstarter received \$100 million in funding from the venture capital fund Andreessen Horowitz, founded by Mark Andreessen and Ben Horowitz, tech investors who have donated millions of dollars to Trump-aligned political action committees.”

### **Strike over safety conditions by group of Pennsylvania Iron workers enters eighth month**

The strike by nine iron workers at Greco Steel Products in Springdale, Pennsylvania, is now into its eighth month as the company refuses to negotiate with the workers who first unionized in October of 2024. Workers have been seeking better wages and benefits, but dangerous working conditions became a major factor in their struggle against the company.

In July 2023, 42-year-old Greco iron worker Joe Gazzo fell through a hole in the roof of the Pine-Richland High School while renovating the school’s gymnasium. Workers maintain that the company’s failure to maintain working equipment played a role in Gazzo’s death.

Greco fabricates steel products, and the striking workers would install them at construction sites. Greco has an appeal before the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) that challenges the vote to unionize with the Iron Workers International Union. Given the Trump administration’s crippling of the NLRB, the issue remains stalled and the union bureaucracy has left the striking workers isolated.

### **Workers involved in three-day strike at Texas art and entertainment company**

Workers at the “Meow Wolf” immersive art attraction in Grapevine, Texas, launched a three-day strike October 31 to protest stalled negotiations over a first-time contract aimed to rectify stagnant wages. Negotiations have been deadlocked for more than a year after workers unionized with the Communications Workers of America (CWA) Local

7055.

The company is an arts and entertainment operation that specializes in large-scale interactive and immersive art installations. Besides the Grapevine Real Unreal exhibit, the company has created facilities in Santa Fe, New Mexico; Denver, Colorado; Las Vegas, Nevada and Houston, Texas.

In a statement on the CWA website, striker Jack McPherson, stated, “The first year we were open, Meow Wolf would preach about community and being on the forefront of social change, which really resonated with this work force. That’s why all of us are still here, why we work so hard. And over the last few months, Meow Wolf has really stepped back from those ideals, and we’re not going to let that happen without a fight.”

### **Montreal transit workers stage partial strikes as contract talks continue**

The Montreal transit system, Société de transport de Montréal (STM), was hit with a 24-hour strike Saturday November 1 that paralyzed most bus and train service. The 4,500 bus drivers, metro operators and station agents affiliated with the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), and the 2,400 maintenance workers affiliated with the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN) are set to walk out again November 15 and 16 unless there is progress in contract negotiations.

These actions are part of a broader rise in class conflict across Canada, with strikes at Air Canada, Canada Post, and by Alberta teachers, to name just the most recent. In all these conflicts, workers are confronting a ferocious employer assault supported by a state apparatus bent on crushing essential democratic rights such as the right to strike.

The walkout Saturday marked the first time in 38 years that CUPE-represented bus drivers, Metro operators and station agents in Montreal had gone on strike.

The transit workers are seeking better working conditions and better wages. Talking to the CBC, Frédéric Therrien, CUPE Local 1983 president, said 50 percent of the workers currently on leave are off for psychological issues due to stress.



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