

## Workers Struggles: The Americas

### Twin Cities HealthPartners healthcare workers authorize strike; Workers protest in support of plant occupation by Lutramax employees in Buenos Aires

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

#### Workers protest in support of occupation by Lutramax employees in Buenos Aires

Last week a series of protests took place in Buenos Aires in support of Lutramax workers who have occupied their plant in a “permanent assembly” demanding that management stop laying workers off.

Lutramax, a maker of instruments for restaurants and food catering establishments, announced the layoff of 45 workers last week. The laid-off workers were told of their sacking as they came to and then refused to leave the plant and management called the police; “as if we were criminals” declared a worker occupying the plant.

In their support, workers and left-wing groups rallied and blocked a major highway into the city on January 13 and 14.

On Saturday, January 17, workers, artists (actors, poets, musicians) students and retirees assembled outside the occupied plant, in a ‘festival’ in support of the occupation. Also present were human rights groups and left-wing political organizations.

The struggle is taking place as the national legislature is discussing a Labor Reform law, presented by the Milei administration that would greatly reduce workers’ rights and grant employers the ability to impose virtual wage slavery.

#### Twin Cities HealthPartners healthcare workers authorize strike

The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) announced January 15 that nearly 2,000 healthcare workers at

HealthPartners facilities in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro region have voted overwhelmingly to grant strike authorization. The bargain unit, comprised of healthcare providers excluding doctors and dentists, is seeking higher wages and are opposed to management’s demand for health benefit concessions.

“They have not offered any wage increase and they are proposing a massive increase to our healthcare costs,” said Kate Lynch, a licensed practical nurse and vice president with the SEIU local. No strike date has been announced as contracts are set to expire on January 31.

HealthPartners CEO Andrea Walsh makes about \$3.6 million annually. In addition, she currently serves on the nine-member board of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

#### Pennsylvania Parker Lord workers strike to recoup wage losses during five-year period

The 250 workers at the Parker Lord plant in Summit Township, Pennsylvania, went on an open-ended strike January 10 in an effort to recover wages lost to inflation during the previous five-year contract. Members of the International Association of Machinists Local 1211 rejected the company’s offer of a new five-year contract with 3 percent wages in each year, and are instead demanding a three-year contract and the implementation of cost-of-living escalators.

To make up lost wages, workers will need between 9 and 11 percent wage hikes. Steve Gurga, president of Local 1211, told Erie Times-News, “They have recorded record profits year after year.”

The Parker Lord plant was purchased in 2019 by Cleveland-based Parker Hannifin Corporation. The company reported profits of \$3.5 billion in 2025. CEO, Jennifer Parmentier, raked in a compensation package that totaled over \$19.3 million.

## **Richland, Ohio Arcelor Mittal workers strike against concessions**

Some 450 steelworkers went on strike January 15 at the Arcelor Mittal Shelby plant in Richland County, Ohio, as the company demanded concessions. United Steelworkers Local 3057, which represents the strikers, has been bargaining since September 2.

United Steelworkers rep Steve Ackerman said, “[T]he company's just wanting to take a lot of things the membership can't go without.” Management is seeking to take away healthcare for workers' spouses and force them to obtain a separate healthcare plan.

Workers struck Arcelor Mittal back in 2021 over management's obstinate desire to implement concessions at that time. At this point, the company has not agreed to a new round of negotiations.

## **Healthcare workers at Yakima, Washington MultiCare Memorial Hospital strike**

Staff at MultiCare Memorial Hospital walked out this weekend over wages, and retiree healthcare benefits after the union could not reach an agreement.

Teamsters Local 760 has filed several unfair labor practice grievances against the hospital for making unilateral changes to working conditions. Talks have been ongoing for three weeks without progress on issues concerning the 168 workers.

April Wellock, a nuclear medicine technologist told the local NBC affiliate, “We need more coverage when people are sick. We can't just like make the patient load just on the other techs. Like it's just not safe for the patients. It's not safe for us. You're going to have tech burnout. For some people in my department that I worked here a long time, the benefits have really downplayed quite a bit.”

She added, “I'm pretty burnt out. There's just not enough of us to do the job.”

## **York Region public sector workers hold “strike-ready” rally**

Paramedics, public health workers, road maintenance crews and other members of Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 4900 based around Newmarket just north of Toronto held a demonstration on January 15 demanding a significant wage increase in a new contract.

Workers made clear that they were ready to strike should an acceptable deal not be forthcoming.

The local union organizes more than 3,000 workers. In late November about 2,400 cast ballots on whether to authorize strike action should a new contract not soon be reached. Over 93 percent voted in favour. Then in early December union officials and the municipality reached a tentative deal that was endorsed by the union's bargaining committee—workers voted overwhelmingly on December 17 to reject the proposed settlement.

Between 2019 and 2024 workers saw their wages rise by only 9 percent which still left their wages 11 percent behind due to the inflationary spiral that reduced purchasing power over that time period. The rejected tentative contract would have left the region's workers 10 percent below wage rates earned by similar public servants in neighbouring municipalities.

A recent survey of the York Region CUPE members was responded to be almost 1,600 workers. It was found that 41 percent work a second job to make ends meet, 53 percent struggle to pay monthly rent or mortgage costs, 47 percent have cut back on food expenses and 67 percent have stopped putting money aside for savings.

In addition to their current fight for a new contract, workers continue to rally around one of their Local 4900 colleagues, paramedic Katherine Grzejsczak, who was fired this past summer for speaking out on her own private Facebook page against Israel's genocide against the Palestinians and its war crimes in the Middle East.

## **Yukon University staff give strike mandate**

Some 400 staff at Yukon University in the Northwest Territories have voted to authorize strike action as early as March 2. The Yukon Employees Union said the administration's latest offer failed to address key concerns including protections for precarious workers and fair wages. Negotiations have been dragging on for over 18 months.

In a statement, Justin Lemphers, the local union president, said “For many years, our members have lost ground to inflation.” Adding, “This strong strike mandate reflects the seriousness of the issues facing our members and the need for meaningful progress at the bargaining table.”



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