

Peruvian oil-workers hold 72-hour protest strike; Faculty strike shuts down classes at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

Peruvian oil-workers hold 72-hour protest strike

On Monday, January 19, Peruvian oil workers launched a 72-hour protest strike at the state-owned Petroperu. The principal demand was the derogation of a government decree—from the Jeri administration—that seeks to break up Petroperú, in order to privatize it bit by bit.

The government justifies the partial privatization citing the need to pay down debt. Workers charge that the privatization will lead to the destruction of 1,500 jobs and lead to increases in fuel prices.

A peaceful protest march in the city of Lima on the first day of the walkout was assaulted by the police.

Belo Horizonte, Brazil sanitation workers strike over deadly working conditions

Scores of part-time urban cleaning employees, in the city of Belo Horizonte, went on strike January 19, against the cleaning contractor Sistemma Serviços Urbanos. At issue was the life-threatening sanitary and working conditions that they deal with each day. The walkout lasted three days. In addition to physical injuries, at least two sanitation workers perished from COVID-19 in 2021. Many workers also are affected by the high daily temperatures in this tropical municipality, with annual high temperatures that reach 101 degrees F (38.4 C) on average.

Sanitation workers have been fighting for medical insurance since 2013.

In addition to dangerous working conditions in the streets of this city of 2.7 million inhabitants, workers also denounced being forced to use outdated trucks and cleaning equipment, exhausting work, the lack of health insurance and delayed payments to severance and retirement.

The Belo Horizonte municipal administration blamed the bad conditions on the subcontractor, but refused to take any meaningful action.

Chilean mining supply workers strike

Five hundred workers employed by the Canadian firm Finning, which delivers mining supplies and equipment, went on strike on January 20. The workers denounced the firm for wage discrimination relative to other employees at the firm. The strike impacted copper mines in the Antofagasta region of Chile, near the Peruvian border, and lasted seven days.

“We are simply fighting to have the same wages and benefits as other workers at the firm,” declared a striking worker.

The strike was broadly supported by the workers in the Antofagasta region, including the miners. Educators carried out a sympathy strike on January 24.

Initially, Finning responded by flying in supplies with helicopters. When this became untenable, the company negotiated with the strikers. The negotiated settlement granted workers a US\$100 raise and US\$14,000 sign-in bonus to be paid in 10 days.

US Foods drivers and warehouse workers grant strike authorization

The 135 drivers and warehouse workers at the US Foods distribution center in Indiana voted January 22 by a 98 percent margin to strike unless the second largest US food distributor and Fortune 500 company produces an acceptable offer. Workers are making an array of demands for better wages, benefits, job protection measures and safer working conditions.

Teamsters Local 135 President Dustin Roach stated in a press release, “[O]ur members will not work a second past the expiration of this agreement” on January 30. The union said there will be no contract extensions.

US Foods operations comprise some 30,000 employees. The Teamsters represent more than 5,500 workers nationwide, but the union signs separate contracts that entail different contract expiration dates, thereby frustrating united action.

US Foods CEO David Flitman raked in a total compensation package in 2024 of \$11.25 million.

Rockford, Illinois teachers grant strike authorization

Some 1,400 teachers in the Rockford, Illinois public schools district voted January 24 by an overwhelming margin to grant strike authorization after turning down district negotiators’ most recent offer. The Rockford Public Schools (RPS 205) is offering a 4 percent annual wage increase and a \$700 ratification bonus.

The Rockford Education Association (REA) says that teachers want a much higher signing bonus, step increases, better benefits and retroactive pay as well.

The REA has not given the 10-day strike notice, required by law, to the district. “We’re not planning on striking in ten days,” REA president Claudia Marshall told WTVO/WQRF. “We are hoping to get back to the table with the district.”

Marshall indicated that a strike would probably not occur until at least late February.

Faculty strike shuts down classes at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario

Some 700 tenure-track faculty, limited-term faculty, master lecturers, librarians, seasonals, clinicians and professional staff are in the second week of their strike at Laurentian University based in Sudbury, Ontario. All classes, labs and online learning programs have been

suspended. The university, with some 9,000 students, is a major bilingual (English/French) university and a key provider of online distance education throughout northern Ontario and beyond.

In the current Sudbury strike, the workers, members of the Laurentian University Faculty Association, are fighting for improvements in working conditions, bargaining rights and pension control. With significant cuts in financial support from the right-wing provincial government of Premier Doug Ford decimating post-secondary education, the faculty at Laurentian were forced into significant concessions in 2021 through the Companies’ Creditors Arrangement Act (CCAA) enacted by the provincial legislature.

At that time, the insolvency process at the university imposed a four-year contract on faculty that included job and salary cuts, increased workloads and changes to the pension plan, which mandated limits on the union even bargaining on its pension plan until 2038. In late 2025, the faculty union began a Charter of Rights court challenge to allow it to negotiate for pension plan improvements during collective bargaining. With the recent expiration of the university’s insolvency period, faculty are now fighting to reverse all the brutal concessions contained in the last imposed contract.

Mirroring the increasing attacks on basic democratic rights to strike and demonstrate, in the first week of picketing, contingents of the university’s security personnel harassed strikers, students and community supporters on the picket line and at a major rally. Security personnel were demanding individuals provide them with their names and email addresses. People carrying signs supporting the strikers at the rally were accosted. Students who had erected signs in windows on the campus were told to take down the signs.

The Laurentian strike follows on from bitter struggles by thousands of Ontario community college workers this past fall against the Conservative provincial government’s ongoing program to slash 10,000 jobs from the education network provincewide. In addition, a militant three-week strike by some 50,000 public school teachers in Alberta was crushed last October by government anti-strike legislation in that province.



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