

# Workers Struggles: The Americas

Peasant protests in Bolivia merge with worker and student mobilizations against right-wing Paz administration; Nova Scotia long-term care workers' strike continues to expand

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

## Peasant protests in Bolivia merge with worker and student mobilizations against right-wing Paz administration

The newly appointed conservative Rodrigo Paz administration is facing a week of protests in Bolivia. On April 8, 34 peasant and indigenous organizations began marching on La Paz, from Pando, a state in northern Bolivia, part of the Amazonian region. This weekend, as they enter La Paz, they are being joined by students, city workers, education workers and retirees, demanding an end to university closures, budget cuts in education, hunger wages and pensions.

The peasant march began as a protest, against Law 1720, which allows for the dissolution of peasant-owned small farms and their consolidation and takeover by agribusiness. The demonstrators are also campaigning against legislation that allows for the repression of protests that block roads and highways.

The peasant and indigenous farmers are backed “morally and financially” by the Miners Federation, with its long history of left-wing politics. The miners called on all the unions to support these mobilizations.

The mass demonstration takes place under growing inflation, triggered by rising fuel and fertilizer prices, a direct result of the US war on Iran.

The administration of Rodrigo Paz has denounced the demonstrations, claiming that they are being financed by the left-wing MAS (*Movimiento Al Socialismo*). “It is time to use force, to impose the law. Nobody can march or block the roads,” in the words of legislator Alejandro Reyes of the ruling party.

## National protest strike by Argentina’s government workers

Argentina’s Association of Government Workers union (ATE) carried out a nationwide 24-hour protest strike on April 21 against the economic policies of the Javier Milei administration. The protest strike included the suspension of services in major airports in Buenos Aires and across the country. The ATE is demanding the reopening of wage negotiations, to make up for the loss of real wages (by 44 percent), since Milei took office, less than two years ago.

In addition to airport workers, protests affected the National Weather Service, the Industrial Technology Institute, the National Security Agency, the Medical Care Program, Food Aid for the poor and other agencies that have suffered from massive layoffs caused by the Milei administration’s budget cuts.

The ATE apparatus limited its protest to 24 hours, however.

## Cafeteria workers in Chile strike major chain

On April 24, workers at the Juan Valdez Cafeteria chain went on strike in Chile. At issue is the attack on wages and working conditions. Workers argue that since new managers took control of the chain in March 2026, conditions have deteriorated, and management refuses to negotiate. Juan Valdez, formerly a Colombian firm, has 32 stores in Chile.

The Juan Valdez Workers Union took a strike vote on April 13 and over 90 percent voted for the walkout.

Workers, many of them temporary or gig employees, describe a company policy that has canceled conditions won under previous contracts, including automatic wage increases tied to the official cost-of-living index. Union officials point out that the hourly wage that many workers currently get barely covers the cost of a cup of coffee. In addition, there are speed-up conditions, with new tasks being added in violation of past contracts. Worse than that, the company is constantly spying on workers to “increase productivity,” imitating the Amazon model in the US.

## Venezuela's public university employees hold 24-hour protest strike

Educators, management personnel and workers at Venezuela’s public universities went on a 24-hour protest-strike on April 22. In Caracas, strikers rallied at the historic Tamanaco Gate in Venezuela’s Central University (UCV) in that city.

The strike is over wages, which have not changed in four years, despite massive price inflation. Professors’ wages currently are barely enough to afford half a month’s food supplies for a household.

Government authorities cynically argue that raising wages would make inflation worse.

The strike was observed at the majority of Venezuela’s public university campuses.

The university protest strike is part of a wave of strikes and protests across Venezuela. In 2026, there have been strikes and protests by retirees, government workers, teachers and health workers, defending their labor rights, and demanding wage increases.

Venezuela's 130 bolivar minimum wage at one time represented US\$30. Today it is the equivalent of US\$0.27. As a palliative, workers are often paid in government bonds.

### **California state workers rally as contract talks for 100,000 workers begin**

California state workers rallied at the Sacramento Capitol on April 22 as contract talks between state negotiators and 100,000 workers represented by Service Employees International Union Local 1000 commenced. The negotiations are expected to focus on traditional items such as wages, pensions, healthcare and what the union terms "telework."

Some two years ago, Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom issued a return-to-office order designed to end the policy implemented during the pandemic, allowing work-from-home to curb the spread of COVID. The union is seeking to maintain work-from-home for workers who qualify. For those workers who fall outside those guidelines, the union is requesting additional financial support.

The issue has an economic side, given the lengthy and costly commutes in California. The governor's office claims the return to work will help Sacramento businesses.

### **Chicago school's lunchroom workers protest stalled contract talks**

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) lunchroom workers held a rally April 23 outside the city's Board of Education headquarters to protest stalled negotiations over wages and staffing levels. A section of the rally occupied the street, resulting in the arrest of two dozen workers.

The contract talks between CPS and 1,700 workers, represented by Unite Here Local 1, began 12 months ago, and both sides agreed to mediated talks earlier this month. Lunchroom workers are the lowest-paid workers in the school system, with salaries ranging from \$23,400 to \$37,400 a year.

Other CPS staff represented by the Chicago Teachers Union and the Service Employees International Union have low-end salaries of around \$40,000. CPS's proposal is to raise starting pay for workers from \$16.78 an hour up to \$19.00 an hour, which still leaves workers earning poverty-level wages.

The majority of lunchroom workers make less than \$18.42 an hour. Some 60 percent of lunchroom workers log less than eight hours a day.

CPS is confronting an estimated \$520 million deficit in the coming school year.

### **New Orleans nurses to walk out May 1 over staffing ratios**

Some 600 nurses at University Medical Center New Orleans (UMCNO) announced that they will carry out a five-day strike starting May 1 as hospital management continues to obstruct their demands for improved staffing ratios, nurse-to-patient workload caps and changes to the shift

scheduling system. This will be the sixth walkout by nurses since they first organized with the National Nurses Organizing Committee (NNOC) back in December of 2023.

UMCNO is owned by LCMC Health System. It operates six hospitals and a number of acute care facilities in the New Orleans region. Over the past decade, its executives have raked in a combined \$309 million. CEO Greg Feirn has received \$20.4 million since 2013.

### **Nova Scotia long term care workers' strike continues to expand**

One hundred more nurses, continuing care assistants, therapists and housekeepers joined a province-wide strike now entering its third week in pursuit of a significant wage increase. The workers at the Lunenburg Home for Special Care became the 30th facility to strike. Initially, about 2,200 workers at 22 separate care facilities began strike action on April 13. Since then, another 900 have joined the walkout.

The workers, members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), are providing essential services for the patients in the strike-bound homes.

Some 42 long-term care facilities have voted overwhelmingly for strike action over the past six months. More locals are expected to call strikes soon, once their legal "waiting period" to activate job actions expires. Bargaining with the Conservative government of Premier Tim Houston has been an interminable "slow walk" over contracts that expired more than two years ago. The low-paid workers have been without a new contract since October 2023.

The workers are demanding improvements to address the cost-of-living crisis, chronic understaffing and to bring their pay—often less than \$19 per hour—in line with other Atlantic Canadian provinces. Similarly skilled care workers in nearby Prince Edward Island, for instance, earn \$10 per hour more than their Nova Scotia colleagues. Beyond wages, workers are fighting for better staff retention, guaranteed hours and safety against burnout, with some workers reporting they are forced to take on multiple jobs just to make ends meet.

### **Toronto Transit workers move closer to work stoppage**

Management at the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) has asked the Ontario provincial labour board to accept a "No board report," signaling an impasse in contract negotiations and the beginning of a countdown toward a possible strike or lockout. The collective agreement between the TTC and about 700 communications, electrical and signal workers in the city's above- and below-ground transit system expired on March 31.

The workers, members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), voted by 99.5 percent to authorize strike activity should an agreement not be reached. Negotiations are expected to continue, but a legal strike or lockout would be possible by mid-May. Union officials have said that key issues that remain unresolved include wages and employer concession demands. Looming over the tense negotiations is the beginning of the FIFA World Cup and the Toronto venue kickoff game on June 12.





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