

# Workers Struggles: The Americas

## British Columbia nurses poised to join growing struggles of health care workers across Canada; Political crisis deepens in Bolivia as strikes and blockades continue

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

### Political crisis deepens in Bolivia as strikes and blockades continue

Declaring that they no longer recognize the legitimacy of the current regime, leaders of striking transport workers and of the Bolivian Trade Union Congress (Consejo Obrero Boliviano–COB), whose membership is engaging in a strike of indefinite duration, refused to negotiate with the La Paz administration last week, demanding the resignation of President La Paz.

The strike began on May 7, with blockages in strategic roads by transportation and agricultural workers. Peasant workers in Bolivia's 20 provinces are vowing to make the road closures permanent. Already the effects of the transportation paralysis are being felt in Bolivia's main urban centers.

In addition to the resignation of President La Paz, the strikers are demanding there be no changes in Bolivia's current labor legislation and no increases in fuel prices.

### Uruguay Intellectuals and Artists Network denounces Cuba blockade

On Wednesday May 4 the Uruguay branch of the Intellectuals' and Artists' Network in Defense of Humanity (Red de Intelectuales y Artistas en Defensa de la Humanidad –Red.uy) issued a call to all condemning US military blockade and military threats against Cuba. The organization rejected US sanctions—now expanding— against this Caribbean Island-Nation, including economic, commercial and financial barriers.

The call was triggered by a systematic attack on Cuba's financial transactions on May 1. A day after the issuance of the protest declaration, last Thursday, the Trump administration's escalating its attack on the Cuban economy. On May 7th (Cuba is a major producer of nickel ore) Trump's measures broke up a joint nickel-mining and processing venture with Sherrit International Corporation, headquartered in Canada.

In addition to halting a jointly operated nickel mine battery, Cuba also loses revenue from its share of refining operations in the province of Alberta, Canada and a metals-commercialization operation that it ran, in partnership with Sherrit, out of the Bahamas. At a White House dinner on May 1 President Donald Trump has warned of the possibility of using the

US navy, to surround the island and to take control of Cuba, once the Iran War ends.

The Intellectuals and Artists Network open letter calls on all academicians, artists, social movements "from all over the world" to reject the US economic genocidal choke-hold on Cuba.

### Haitian workers, peasants and youth protest for wages and a better life

Since May first, there have been increasing spontaneous protests across Haiti, with thousands of workers demanding higher wages, improvements in the economy, and a change in government. The protests have intensified. The protests are spontaneous, in part because due to the economic and political collapse of the island, almost 90 percent of workers work in the informal sector.

The protests, which now cover most of the country, are demanding the end of the Alix Didier Fils-Aime administration backed by US president Donald Trump. Also backing the workers' demands are Haitian peasants.

In addition, the protests denounced the incapacity of police to guarantee security for most citizens, including intervening to clear roads blocked by mafia gangs, something that has become common all over Haiti.

Haitian unions have largely ignored the protests.

### Workers at event center in Tulsa, Oklahoma petition for better wages, threaten strike

Dozens of audio-visual workers at the BOK Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma, submitted a petition to the event center's management calling for improved wages. "Our morale is lowered because we see others in the building getting paid so much more than we are for the same tasks, the same jobs, the same duties," AV tech Michael Carrasquillo told KTUL news.

Currently, Oak View Group, which operates the BOK Center pays workers a base wage of \$20 an hour, which is below the industry standard. "Our techs are taking jobs at other places," added Carrasquillo.

The petition submitted by workers is demanding a \$25 an hour base wage. If the demand is not met, workers are threatening a strike.

Oak View Group is a hospitality real estate development company that also manages sports venues. In July 2025, a federal grand jury indicted the

company's CEO Tim Leiweke for "orchestrating a conspiracy to rig the bidding process for an arena at a public university in Austin, Texas."

Leiweke stepped down as CEO. In December of last year, President Donald Trump issued a "full and unconditional pardon."

### **Breakthru Beverage drivers and warehouse workers in Illinois and Missouri strike over wages and contract language protections**

Drivers and warehouse workers for Breakthru Beverage in Cicero, Illinois and St. Louis, Missouri, walked off the job on May 6 over "boiler plate" issues such as wages. The strike involves 115 drivers under Teamsters Local 710 at the company's Illinois operations and more than 100 warehouse workers (Local 688) and drivers (Local 600) in St. Louis, Missouri.

Local 600 drivers in St. Louis joined the Teamsters back in September of last year and are seeking their first contract. Additional conflicts concern Breakthru Beverage's demand to alter contract language governing dues payment and the right of workers to honor Teamsters picket lines. Management is also refusing to accept the Teamsters-based healthcare plan.

Breakthru Beverage operates 45 facilities across multiple states and provinces in the United States and Canada and employs 9,000 workers. In 2022, Teamsters Local 710 endorsed a contract with minimal wage increases, but was forced to call a strike after workers in Cicero and Rochelle voted 89-10 to reject the contract.

### **Ironworkers rally over stalled contract negotiations at Cives Steel facility in Maine**

Workers at Cives Steel in Augusta, Maine, rallied back on April 25 for increased wages, pensions and improved health insurance. Ironworkers Local 852 chief steward Tim Dunlap told Maine AFL-CIO's website, "The company is proposing a new policy that affects the whole bargaining unit of employees," but did not clarify further.

The old three-year agreement expired on March 15 and the two sides agreed to extend it to March 31. Besides its Maine facility, Cives Steel, based in Alpharetta, Georgia, has operations in Idaho, Arizona, Indiana, Mississippi, Virginia and New York. In 2020, it closed its Thomasville, Georgia, facility slashing 130 jobs.

### **British Columbia nurses poised to join growing struggles of health care workers across Canada**

More than 55,000 nurses, members of the B.C. Nurses Union, voted over this past weekend to ratify job actions in pursuit of improved benefits, compensation as well as the implementation of a 2023 agreement on nursing ratios.

Ever-increasing stress levels due to under-staffing is a particular grievance as are injury rates, which have increased by 25 per cent since 2019. Every 16 hours one nurse goes off duty due to violence on the wards and emergency rooms. These issues have not been redressed by the New Democratic Party government of Premier David Eby. The last contract between nurses and the provincial health authorities expired in

March 2025.

Union officials can initiate job action 72 hours after giving notice, but have yet to do so. In any case, as nursing is designated as an essential service, there won't be a full-scale walkout, but some nurses could begin working-to-rule, such as taking breaks or refusing to work overtime. If the strike escalates, some facilities could face a picket line while others remain open.

The brewing unrest in the British Columbia health care system takes place as nurses and other health care workers in Ontario and Nova Scotia battle their own employers and provincial governments.

In Ontario, 4,400 front-line nurses working in nursing homes across Ontario are seeking wage parity with their union colleagues who work in the provincial and municipally run hospitals. The workers, members of the Ontario Nurses Association (ONA), are fighting brutal concession demands by their employers in the for-profit nursing home sector even as private nursing home owners last year claimed millions in profits.

With negotiations deadlocked, the nurses' union – which is prohibited from taking any job actions whatsoever by provincial law – must submit their members to binding arbitration should a settlement not soon be reached. The nurses will head to arbitration on June 15 and 16.

At the same time, more than 30,000 Ontario long-term care and retirement home workers organized by the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and often working in the same facilities as the nurses, are fighting for new contracts that provide a 6 percent wage increase for each year of a new agreement with improved benefits and working conditions. The union is also calling for a \$3.2-billion increase in hospital funding to close the gap between Ontario and the rest of Canada. Unlike the nurses, CUPE members may pursue limited job actions but are also prohibited from striking.

In Nova Scotia, a strike by some 3,400 long-term home care workers, also members of CUPE, is entering its fifth week. Workers there must also maintain essential service coverage, but a significant portion can take strike action. The workers earn poverty wages, with many earning barely above the provincial minimum wage. The employers' associations, bargaining under the austerity umbrella of the provincial government are also resisting worker demands for better staff retention, guaranteed hours and safety against burnout.



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