

Workers Struggles: The Americas

Thousands of Ontario community health and social services workers on picket lines; McClatchy journalists in Idaho and Washington state stage one-day strike

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

Workers and youth protest Fujimori candidacy in Peru

On Saturday, May 30, workers and youth rallied in Plaza San Martín square, in central Lima, against the right-wing presidential candidate and current congresswoman Keiko Fujimori, the daughter of former authoritarian president Alberto Fujimori, who they consider a threat to human rights.

Supporters of left and liberal organizations, trade unionists, students, retired laborers and family members of the victims of mass killings carried out by Keiko's father Alberto Fujimori in the 1990s, and the most recent repression carried out by ex-president Dina Baluarte, supported by Keiko Fujimori, resulting in the death of 50 workers in Puno province.

From San Martín square the demonstrators marched on the Legislature and Palace of Justice buildings, demanding "no more Fujimori-ism, no more repression, no more inequality."

Following a first electoral round in April, in which none of the candidates obtained a majority of the votes, a second round is scheduled on June 7 between the top two candidates, Fujimori and liberal Roberto Sánchez who defines himself as a "Social-Christian." Sánchez campaigned on a promise of economic reform, against corruption and greater equality.

Strikes against cuts to universities sweep Argentina

On Tuesday, May 6, Educators and University employees, members of the Educators and Investigators Union (CONADUH) across Argentina carried out a week-long strike against massive budget cuts by the Milei administration. On Friday they were joined by members of Argentine Federation of Workers of National Universities (FATUN), which announced that it would also carry out a 48-hour work-stoppage on June 3 and 4.

The workers that have declared themselves at war against Milei include those employed by Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA), Universidad Nacional de La Plata (UNLP), Córdoba (UNC), Rosario (UNR), Tucumán (UNT), la Universidad Tecnológica Nacional (UTN), Arturo Jauretche (UNAJ), General Sarmiento (UNGS), Nordeste (UNNE), Chaco Austral

(UNCAUS), Salta (UNSa), Entre Ríos (UNER) and José C. Paz (UNPAZ).

In support of the universities, students at pre-university high schools in Buenos Aires have taken over their campuses.

At issue are the Milei administration's budget cuts and attacks on education. Recently passed university financing legislation imposes severe budget cuts while wages have not gone up in 18 months of hyperinflation; their purchasing power has dropped by more than 34 percent.

Cubans rally against US blockade

On May 30, in Central Cuba, thousands of Cubans rallied in Camagüey Province in Plaza de la Libertad square to condemn the US aggression against Cuba and recent charges by the Trump administration against Raúl Castro.

In addition to speeches by local Communist Party officials, the mic was left open for others.

Among those addressing the demonstrations, representing health professionals, was Roberto Alejandro Carranza, who described the effects on public health of the US naval blockade, and called on all health workers to seek alternative treatments due to the daily lack of health supplies.

The health crisis is impacting Cuba's hospital network, creating very harsh conditions for those that require health services. Universities and schools are nearly totally shut down.

Cuba is going through the devastating effects of the US blockade, which include near-total daily electric blackouts of 20 to 22 hours in major cities and all-day elsewhere. Tourism, Cuba's main source of US dollars has been devastated.

The crisis is taking place under conditions of growing inequality. For the most part, the wealthy, including government and army officials, are exempt from the worst effects of Trump's policies.

McClatchy journalists in Idaho and Washington state stage one-day strike

Journalists at four McClatchy-owned newspapers in Washington state and another in Idaho carried out a one-day strike as they press their demands for wages and contract language governing AI. The strike,

endorsed by 93 percent of members of the Idaho and Washington state News Guilds, comes after a year of bargaining that has failed to meet workers' demands.

The newspapers involved are the *Tacoma News Tribune*, *Bellingham Herald*, *Olympian* and *Tri-City Herald* in Washington and the *Idaho Statesman in Boise*. The union's website states the reporters are fighting for "Ethical limits around the use of AI in news; The freedom to write hard-hitting news stories that take time, and not be punished if we don't churn out clickbait; Higher pay for workers."

Herald reporter Karlee Van de Venter told NonStop Local Multimedia, "[R]ight now the big thing that we're talking about is wages... None of us got into journalism because we thought it would make us rich. We do this because we love it, because we love this community and we want to serve this community. But if we can't make a livable wage while doing this job, we can't continue to report here."

McClatchy currently pays \$45,000 for journalist new hires and \$48,000 for presently working journalists. According to reports, the union has reduced its initial demands and is currently asking for \$50,000 for new hires and \$53,000 for existing reporters. McClatchy has refused to move from its bottom line of a \$52,000 wage floor for senior reporters. Some workers have gone without a raise for two years.

Concerning AI, *Herald* reporter Eric Rosane told NonStop Local Multimedia, "There has been forms of AI in the news industry for a long time. Some stuff that's not generative, like auto transcriptions... but when it comes to their most recent push it's this content scaling agent. They want to take our work and rewrite it, repackage it, and put it out there with our name still on it. We don't think that's ethical. We don't think that's moral, especially when it's making so many mistakes."

Behind the drive to impoverish journalists is the New Jersey hedge fund Chatham Asset Management, which bought out McClatchy in 2020. McClatchy currently owns 30 newspapers in 14 states.

Akron, Ohio, transit workers pack board meeting after going three years without raises

Drivers, mechanics and clerks for the Akron Metro Regional Transit Authority packed the Board of Directors May 26 meeting to air grievances after having gone without a raise since 2023 and failed contract talks that have dragged on for two years. Some 300 members of Transport Workers Union Local 1 are pressing for strike action if the current stalemate is not resolved.

Metro RTA management spokesperson Molly Becker fell back on the excuse the board is awaiting a fact finder report. "We are hoping to receive it in the next week or so and then we will be able to speak more freely about it." But the fact finder report's release was anticipated months ago. The TWU says that if the report's recommendations are rejected, they will strike.

Workers are bitter that Metro RTA management has basked in the glow of a 2025 award that named them the Outstanding Public Transportation System of the Year by the American Public Transportation Association.

Bus driver Joe Topoli told the board, "Operators are the reason this system works. We keep the buses moving, we get the people to work. We are not asking for luxury, we are asking for dignity, we are asking for fairness."

Back in 2025 it came to light that the board voted behind closed doors to give Akron Metro CEO Dawn Distler two secretive pay bonuses in the years 2024 and 2025 totaling around \$72,000 as the board stubbornly refused to consider pay increases for workers.

Lorain County, Ohio social service workers mark 100 days on strike

Workers at the Lorain County, Ohio Job and Family Services office marked 100 days on the picket line May 30. The 140 caseworkers, investigators and social service employees administer benefits such as food stamps and Medicaid for county residents. They are members of UAW Local 2192.

The strike began February 18 and the contract expired last fall. The UAW is demanding a \$1 per hour wage increase for all country employees. Since the start of the walkout the Lorain County Commissioners have refused to resume negotiations.

Gina Jones, chairperson of UAW Local 2192 indicated she did not expect the strike to last this long.

"I did not. I really thought that the commissioners would come back to the table," said Jones. They've been asked repeatedly. The UAW has asked. The members have asked. The community has asked. And every time they give no response, they don't even respond," she said.

UAW officials have suggested a possible return to work if negotiations resume.

Pennsylvania factory workers authorize strike after failed negotiations

Teamsters Local 229 announced May 28 that the 60 workers at Bazooka's Ring Pop plant in Moosic, Pennsylvania, overwhelmingly voted to grant strike authorization after seven months of contract negotiations have failed to produce a new agreement. Workers are demanding a boost in wages and improved healthcare benefits.

Teamsters at the Moosic facility comprise production, maintenance, shipping, packaging and quality control operations workers.

Bazooka Candy Brands markets the fruit-flavored lollipop Ring Top. In 2023 the British private equity firm Apax Partners acquired Bazooka. The average Apax Partners executive compensation is \$211,439 a year.

Thousands of Ontario community health and social services workers on picket lines

About 4,500 Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU/SEFPO) community and social services workers are entering their second week on strike or lockout across the province. These workers, spanning some 26 different bargaining units and agencies, are demanding improved base funding for community services as well as wage increases that include retroactive pay following a 2022 Ontario Supreme Court decision and the belated 2024 Conservative government repeal of its now unconstitutional wage restraint legislation. That legislation, known as Bill 124, had been originally passed in 2019.

The low-paid workers perform critical community support functions in autism programs, palliative care facilities, psychiatric treatment centers, substance abuse programs, women in crisis units, homeless shelters, youth programs and many other fields servicing the most vulnerable people in the province. Management claims it will reduce some services to cover the most essential duties with its contingency plans.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford's Bill 124 had capped annual compensation increases for most public sector workers at 1 percent during the three years of spiking inflation following the legislation. Since the repeal of the

legislation, many public sector workers have bargained retroactive wage increases of 6.5 percent or more. However, the government continues to resist settlements with many in the broader public service that includes the community service workers.

Just as important is the workers' demand that the government reverse its funding cuts to community and social services programs. The government's 2025/26 budget projects a \$1.5 billion budget shortfall for the Ministry of Community and Social Services.



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