

Argentine dockworkers strike; Vancouver municipal bus drivers reject contract for a second time

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

Latin America

A strike by dockworkers in the ports on the Parana and Rio de la Plata rivers against a recent anti-labor decree imposed by the Milei administration paralyzed over 150 ships on August 1-4, interrupting the movement of fuel and cereal exports out of major ports (such as Rosario, and Bahia Blanca). The decree attacked internationally recognized labor rights that ensure safe conditions for transport workers, dockworkers and the ships' crews. In essence, the decree transforms the loading and unloading of ships into precarious "gig" jobs. Milei justified the decree with the argument that the market would become more flexible, and that new participants would lower the costs and make more efficient loading and unloading cargo.

The Milei administration initially attempted to intimidate the strikers using the Navy to threaten workers with prosecution and jail time for striking illegally. When this did not work, on August 4 Milei postponed the decree in an agreement with the dockworkers union apparatus, supposedly in pursuit of a negotiated agreement.

On August 5, Peruvian artists and musicians staged protests against recent legislation that restricts the right to artistic expression to those that have a university degree. The demonstrators condemned the new law for "dividing us" and "making us invisible," with many

pointed out that the new law puts government in control of free speech.

Scores of artists and their supporters mobilized across the country.

At midnight on August 4, subway workers employed by the Sao Paulo Metropolitan Transit Company (CPTM) walked out at three transit rail lines (11-Coral, 12-Safira, and 13-Jade). At issue is the defense of jobs, an end to the privatization of public transit to be run for the benefit of the public, and not for the profit of entrepreneurs.

Two days later the strike was shut down and sold out by the union apparatus that represents the transit workers.

The strike was triggered by an electrical failure due to a train that caught fire that interrupted service at newly privatized lines, forcing passengers to walk the rails. The re-privatization now threatens the jobs of many of the workers, who do not trust the city's promise to find other jobs for them.

United States

Over 350 concrete ready-mix drivers at 15 CalPortland plants across Northern California walked out on strike August 6 as four Teamsters locals seek negotiations over pensions, healthcare, working conditions and wages. The Teamsters also charge that CalPortland made unilateral changes to workers' wage packages.

Teamsters Locals 853, 665, 315 and 150 requested joint negotiations on June 8. Instead, CalPortland

scheduled separate negotiations for each local and wanted to drag out negotiations to as late as November. That will put workers at a disadvantage as the busy summer construction season of ready-mix projects will have concluded.

The Teamsters have indicated that the strike will continue until CalPortland agrees to “realistic bargaining dates,” as opposed to actually winning workers’ contract demands.

The union representing city transit workers in Augusta, Georgia, held a press conference August 6 to issue a warning that the proposal by the contractor MV-Transit is “paltry” and workers are prepared to walk out “at any time.” Transit Workers Union (TWU) Local 527, which represents bus drivers, mechanics, utility workers, customer service and other workers, has been in contract negotiations since January of this year with unresolved issues covering wages, benefits, attendance policies, safety, vacation, staffing levels and other concerns.

Workers rejected MV-Transit’s contract offer on July 19 and voted to authorize a strike the same day. Management is offering a mere 28-cent-per-hour pay increase. Workers are demanding starting pay to be hiked from the current \$17.48 an hour to \$21.70 with 3 percent annual pay increases over the course of a three-year agreement.

MV-Transit contracts with over 100 transit agencies, municipalities, schools and corporations nationwide and has over 10,000 employees. MV-Transit assumed responsibilities for Augusta’s public transportation at the beginning of 2026.

Canada

About 5,000 bus drivers, SeaBus crews and mechanics, members of two Unifor locals in Vancouver, have rejected for a second time an inferior contract offer from Coast Mountain Bus Company management. On June 22 the workers rejected a tentative settlement placed before them by their union. Last week, they voted again to reject another proposed agreement.

Unifor officials, however, worked to block the

workers from taking strike action. Instead, they have stated that should the company offer not be improved, the workers will begin a toothless “job action” on August 17 that simply involves bus drivers wearing their own clothes to work and not their company uniforms.

The workers are fighting for wage improvements and improvements to onerous working conditions and grueling shift schedules.

One hundred fifteen station supervisors, members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), on Toronto’s metro subway system voted by 97 percent last week for strike action after negotiations for a first contract stalled. Union officials have offered to re-start negotiations on August 11 and have put off quick strike action.

The station supervisors are required to ensure that the stations are safe and orderly and to conduct inspections to minimize service disruptions as well as investigating and controlling any potential security incidents.

A major sticking point in the negotiations are provisions to protect supervisors from the ever-increasing violence and general disorder in the Toronto Transit Commission’s expansive subway network. In addition, transit management is attempting to impose a split-shift system on the workers, which would significantly increase the number of hours they would need to be in or around their place of work.



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