Mass protests took place across Argentina against the Milei government while 14,000 healthcare workers in Saskatchewan have taken a strike vote

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

”March of Anger” against Milei government in Argentina

On Saturday, September 19, a mass protest took place in Buenos Aires’ Plaza de Mayo square, across from the Government House, against the Milei administration. Protests also took place in scores of cities across this nation of 48 million. Some 50,000 demonstrators rallied in Plaza de Mayo Square.

The protest marches, dubbed Marches of Anger (Marchas de la Bronca) by organizers, included workers, representatives of so-called independent trade unions, auto workers, dock workers, railroad workers, student groups, human rights organizations, retirees, educators and artists.

In addition to the industrial cities of Rosario and Cordoba, and in the industrial belt on the Parana River north of Buenos Aires protests took place in 30 cities in the mining and agricultural provinces of Jujuy, Salta, Santiago del Estero, on the border with Bolivia Formosa, Catamarca, Tucumán, Misiones, Chaco, La Rioja, San Juan, Entre Ríos, Río Negro, Santa Cruz, Chubut and Tierra del Fuego, on Argentina’s extreme south.

At issue is the implosion in jobs and living standards produced by the neo-liberal economic policies of the Milei administration, with hunger wages, mass layoffs in industrial firms, and indebted families forced to pay usurious interest rates. Many demonstrators called for a general strike to drive out the Milei administration.

Along the route to the rally a contingent of Buenos Aires police attempted unsuccessfully to block the demonstrators with two containers loaded with rocks.

Chilean port workers protest strike

On Tuesday, September 15, port workers rallied at the DP-World terminal in the Port of San Antonio, in Valparaiso, Chile, blocking access to those docks. The demonstration was in opposition to the sacking of 4 dockworkers, supposedly for participating in an “illegal” work stoppage.

The protest comes in the heels of the sacking of 21 dockworkers earlier this month, as a cost-cutting move by DP-World.

Protest march in Caracas against US plunder of Venezuela

On Thursday, September 17, Venezuelan students and workers marched from the Central University to the Plaza Venezuela square in Caracas. The demonstrators carried signs and chanted against the imperialist plunder of Venezuela by the Trump administration.

In addition to UCV students, the demonstrators included university educators and employees, members of the UCV Workers Union (Sinatra-UCV)

As the marchers assembled at the UCV campus, Sinatra-UCV leader Eduardo Sanchez made reference to the worsening conditions affecting university employees since the effective US takeover of Venezuela following the kidnapping of President Maduro. Sinatra-UCV members are demanding wage increases to compensate for the rising cost of living, and the restoration of rights to social security pensions “that have been dismantled.”

More protests are scheduled on October 1.

Paraguayan educators on strike

On September 17 educators belonging to several unions declared a strike that will shut down 60 percent of the country’s schools. In Asuncion, Paraguay’s capital city, the teachers carried out a mass protest. At issue are wages and budget cuts to education. They also protested an agreement between the Education Ministry and the

Paraguayan Educators Federation (FEP), an attempt to break the unity of the education unions.

The agreement with the FEP apparatus, negotiated behind the backs of its membership, grants a 5 percent wage increase for 2027 (the striking educators are demanding a minimum of 8 percent).

United States

New York nursing home workers demonstrate for better wages and benefits

Some 200 healthcare workers at two nursing homes run by Catholic Health in New York state held informational pickets September 16 to call attention to demand increased wages, safe staffing and childcare benefits. The bargaining unit is comprised of a variety of nurses, dietary aides, housekeeping and maintenance workers employed at the St. Catherine Laboure Health Care Center in Buffalo and the McAuley Residence in Kenmore.

Members of 1199 of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) initiated negotiations back in May of this year and the old agreement expired July 30. They charge Catholic Health's compensation lags behind those of other healthcare workers in New York. The poverty pay has made it difficult for workers, especially those with children, to make ends meet.

"A job should lift Workers out of poverty, not keep them there," declared Teresa Ward, a certified nurse assistant. Among the demands is for Catholic Health to accept the SEIU-run Childcare Fund, which would cost the institution less than $40,000 a year.

Bonnie Clausen, an activities aid, said, "I am near retirement and after 19 years. I still care about what happens to my Co-Workers. I wish I could have had access to the 1199 SEIU Childcare Fund when raising my children."

Joyce Markiewicz, president and CEO of Catholic Health made $1.8 million in 2024.

California nurses demand increased wages and expose unsafe staffing

About 250 healthcare workers took part in an informational picket outside Kindred Hospital San Francisco Bay Area in San Leandro, California, to demand increased pay and safe staffing ratios. The old contract covering nurses and medical technicians, represented by the National Union of Healthcare Workers (NUHW), expired back on March 31.

Recently, workers at the facility filed a whistleblower complaint that alleged Kindred Hospital exceeded state-mandated safe staffing ratios for Registered Nurses (RN) in its facility. The RNs also charge the hospital employs an insufficient number of CNAs (Certified Nursing Assistants), forcing them to perform CNA tasks. Healthcare workers also site a shortage of supplies that affect patient care.

Canada

Saskatchewan healthcare workers vote to strike

Some 14,000 healthcare workers in hospitals, long-term care facilities and home care locations voted last week by 99 percent to strike should an acceptable contract not be presented in the coming weeks. The workers, members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), range in job descriptions from clerical staff, licensed practical nurses, medical equipment operators, medical technologists as well as plant operations and maintenance workers. They have been without a contract since March 2023 and have gone without a wage increase for four and a half years.

The bargaining agent for the right-wing provincial government of Premier Scott Moe, the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations, are demanding concessions that would increase the number of contract workers, require workers to travel ever-further from their homes to remote jobs at short notice and are offering paltry wage increases that once again amount to a significant cut in real take-home pay.

About half of the workforce earns less than $50,000 (CDN) per year. Over the last 13 years, inflation in the province amounted to almost 38 percent. During that time, healthcare workers have seen only a 14.3 percent increase, placing them far behind workers doing similar jobs in the rest of Western Canada. Union officials seek to continue bargaining and have not set a strike date.

Manitoba steelworkers strike

Eighty members of the United Steelworkers union are in the second week of a strike at the Gerdau AmeriSteel Manitoba Metals recycling plant in the town of Selkirk. Gerdau is a major global steel producer with headquarters in Brazil. Prior to the strike, the workers overwhelmingly rejected three separate inferior contract offers from the company.

Recycling plant workers supply the next-door mill, also organized by the USW, with production materials but workers are paid significantly less than those employed at the mill. Even the most senior workers at the recycling plant report that they earn $10 per hour less than newly hired workers at the mill site.