

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

Chilean mineworkers strike Centinela Copper Mine

The 709 copper miners at the Centinela Copper Mine in Antofagasta, Chile are continuing a strike that began October 7. At issue are wage and benefit discrepancies between workers who perform the same jobs. Antofagasta Minerals Inc, the multinational owner of the mine, argues that the discrepancy has to do with contracts signed at different times and has offered a miserly 2 percent raise plus a US\$ 23,000 bonus.

The strike was triggered by the rising world price of copper (US\$ 15,000/ton last month), under conditions of deteriorating real wages, benefits and working conditions. Chile is the world's biggest producer of copper.

The strikers are represented by the Minera Centinela (289 strikers) and Minera Esperanza (420 strikers) trade unions.

About 50 strikers also set up camp in Santiago's financial district while three union bureaucrats went on a hunger strike. The Union apparatus has represented the strike as a struggle over "dignity" and called for the 'solidarity' of other trade unions and has refused to call on strike other workers it represents. The striking miners represent 22 percent of the total Centinela workforce.

Dominican workers, peasants and retirees protest social conditions

On October 10, trade unionists, peasants and retirees marched in the city of Higüey demanding big improvements in education and healthcare and charging that the government has turned its back on these essential services. Retirees also demanded decent pensions.

As part of the march rural workers and peasants demanded the return of their homes and lands from which they were expelled in order to build hotels and tourist facilities.

The demonstrators were assaulted by police using water cannons.

One-day protest strikes by Argentine government and health workers

On Wednesday October 7, government workers, employed by the province of Buenos Aires, and health workers in La Plata (Buenos Aires' provincial capital), carried out protest strikes and rallies.

The government workers, represented by the Association of State Workers (ATE), marched on La Plata's government house and legislature. The strikers demand that hundreds of temporary employees be made permanent. Temporary status has become the norm in Buenos Aires province, with workers enjoying few rights and paid hunger wages. Additionally, the strikers are demanding wages that make up for prevailing rates of monthly inflation. In his latest contract offer, provincial governor Axel Kiciloff made no mention of wage increases.

Also on October 7, health workers representing 100 health centers staged a protest strike. The one-day strike included a rally at the La Plata Ministry of Health, to present the workers' demands: they then marched and rallied at the Provincial government house, protesting their "wage-misery."

Wages for resident physicians, responsible for the functioning of hospitals and health centers and often forced to work double-shifts, have lost 36 percent of their buying power since 2020, forcing many to exist on salaries under the official poverty line.

Hundreds of hotel workers walkout in Chicago

More than one month after the contracts expired for roughly 7,000 workers across 46 Chicago hotels, workers at six downtown hotels walked out on strike Friday morning. Unite Here Local 1 leaders said the walkout was timed for Chicago Marathon weekend, when tens of thousands of runners and tourists visit the city. The marathon admitted more than 55,000 runners and drew over 1.5 million spectators from around the world this year. Many area hotels were fully booked.

The struggle of hotel workers is only one front in a class war being waged by the entire capitalist class against the working class, in which real wages have stagnated for decades while the fortunes of the hotel owners and their political allies have multiplied. About 1,500 City Colleges of Chicago faculty and staff plan to walk out next Monday, October 19, after voting 96 percent to authorize strike action.

The hotel workers' agreement expired August 31, when 85 percent of voting members authorized a strike. But only six hotels have walked out, as a tactic to pressure management to reach an agreement: Millennium Hotel Knickerbocker Chicago, Palmer House Hilton, Sheraton Grand Chicago Riverwalk, Waldorf Astoria Chicago, The Westin Chicago River North and The Westin Michigan Avenue Chicago. Union leaders warned that workers at other hotels could "join at any time."

The issues at stake in the dispute between hotel management and

Unite Here Local 1 include wage increases that keep pace with the cost of living, maintaining and improving health insurance, retirement security, civil rights protections and safer workloads. Workers speaking out have cited overwork as a major issue.

Pittsburgh nurses rally over benefit takeaways and staffing ratios

Nurses at Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, rallied October 9 and warned that unless management agrees to resolve differences on staffing ratios and benefits, they will hold a strike vote October 15. Negotiations began in August to replace the three-year contract covering 1,500 members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). The old agreement expires October 14, and the state requires a ten-day strike notice before a walkout can take place.

Allegheny General nurses are one of the few nurse bargaining units that have an established nurse-to-patient staffing ratio that goes back two decades. But the old one-nurse-to-four-patients ratio has been challenged due to the increasing number of patients and management's violation of those ratios has made it a hot topic in the current negotiations.

"It became a daily reality that our contractual ratios were not being met," Kelsey Madden, a nurse in the telemetry observation unit, told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. "When I have seven patients, it is constantly playing a game of catch-up and hoping that I'm not missing something. It absolutely leads to nurse burnout, and that's why a lot of our experienced nurses have been leaving."

Nurses are also opposed to management's demand to eliminate the current pension plan and 403(b) retirement supplement and replace them with the inferior 401(k) plan. Nurses insist the hospital can meet their demands and point to Allegheny Health's parent company Highmark Health's \$2 billion net income for the first half of 2026.

Four-week strike of Solvang, California city workers; a battle over wages

Municipal workers in Solvang, California, are completing their fourth week on strike over a bitter wage dispute. Some 40 workers, members of Teamsters Local 986, are seeking 6 percent annual raises tied to the cost of living running over the course of a three-year agreement. The city is offering annual increases of 6, 5 and 4 percent.

Workers dug in their heels after senior management received wage increases as high as 40 percent. The city council justified the increases as necessary, while City Manager Randy Murphy declared that workers "are not poorly paid," and their demands are "not fiscally sound."

The two sides are also at odds over medical insurance and other benefits.

Unifor finally sets date for strike vote over stalled Stellantis contract

Lana Payne, president of Unifor, has belatedly called for a strike vote for October 17 and 18 for some 9,000 Stellantis auto assembly workers. The results of the vote will be announced the day after voting concludes. Payne had set September 11 as the deadline to reach a tentative agreement with Stellantis management based on the pattern contract already pushed through at Ford and General Motors.

Breaking with past precedent, the union did not hold a strike vote prior to the September 11 deadline. Nor did the union make any attempt to mobilize the members for strike action when the previous contract expired on September 21. As a result, the Stellantis autoworkers were kept on the job even as the company announced that it had no inclination to move towards the union's demand that it withdraw its plans to end auto production at its Brampton assembly operation that has been idled since 2023.

During negotiations the company had announced that it had already agreed to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with military vehicle producer Roshel to purchase the Brampton plant. Any such purchase would not automatically secure the jobs, wages and benefits of the 2,200 laid off workers. Payne has no quarrel with Roshel providing the Canadian military with more combat vehicles but believes that it could best be done elsewhere.

Stellantis' move to end auto production in Brampton directly violates its undertakings given to the federal and provincial governments and the union to place a new model for production at the plant. The Ontario government is already holding back its agreement to provide Stellantis with government funding for operations at Brampton whilst the federal government has stated it will seek the return of millions of dollars in funding it had already provided.

Company management also refused to provide contractual guarantees to Unifor that it would not reduce the third shift workforce at the giant Windsor Assembly Plant or employment numbers at its smaller casting operation in a Toronto suburb for the duration of any proposed three-year deal.

Union officials were quick to state that should workers vote to strike it would not immediately mean a walkout. Rather, they insisted that such a vote would only be seen as a "bargaining tool" and that strike action only remains as "a last resort."

Rather than mobilize the membership, the union has turned to the big business Liberal government of Prime Minister Mark Carney, touting the large profits that Stellantis has made over the years as a result of the string of concessionary contracts pushed through by the union. The response of Unifor—like that of the UAW south of the border—is not to mobilize worker opposition to concessions and layoffs but to intensify their nationalist collaboration with the automakers and "their own" governments in fighting for corporate market share, waging trade war and military escalations.



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