

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

One-day strike in Colombia targets right-wing De la Espriella administration

On October 14, educators, trade unionists, students and native communities carried out a one-day protest strike against government budget cutbacks that attack workers' living standards and working conditions. This was the first national strike since President Abelardo de la Espriella took office less than three months ago. The proposed austerity measures affect education, social benefits, tuition-free university education and wage levels established by the previous administration of Gustavo Petro.

Thousands of strikers marched and rallied in Bogota, Medellin, Cali, Barranquilla, Ibagué, Popayan and Bucaramanga and other cities in Colombia.

Hours before the protests took place, President De la Espriella issued a decree criminalizing protests and giving police a free hand against demonstrators, allegedly to combat "urban terrorism." Strikers marched while armed police observed them from surrounding buildings. Police attacked demonstrators in Bogota, Medellin and other cities.

Across the Atlantic, Irish and British workers declared their support for the Colombian strikers.

Police attack protest by educators outside Argentine federal legislature

On October 15, government gendarmes attacked protests calling for the application of the University Budget Law that would make universities, and their workers, whole. Eyewitnesses reported that among the peaceful protesters were agent provocateurs.

The educators and their supporters had rallied at the Federal Legislature in central Buenos Aires, denouncing the inflation-driven budget cuts in public education, when they were surrounded by water cannon trucks and police armed with tear gas equipment.

The suspected agent provocateurs, 8-hooded individuals that threw rocks at a barrier surrounding parliament, provided an excuse for the police to attack the entire group of demonstrators, some of whom were chanting that the provocateurs did not belong

to the demonstration.

Over 30 protesters were arrested, one demonstrator, the mother of a college student, was hit on the head with a tear gas projectile and hospitalized.

Educators also protested in other cities across the country.

Charlotte Douglas airport workers carry out 24-hour strike in wake of death of coworker

Workers who perform cabin cleaning for the major airlines at Charlotte Douglas International Airport in Charlotte, North Carolina, carried out a one-day strike October 14 to demand increased pay and benefits, holidays, improved safety and clarification of paid time off. Some 100 members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) 32BJ, who are contract workers for ABM, set up picket lines to not only raise their demands, but to call attention to the death on the job of Colleen Coates, a 55-year-old cabin cleaner.

According to co-workers, Coates was not feeling well but showed up for work on September 17 because she needed her paycheck. She had chronic health conditions and was recently hospitalized. Coates was waiting in the scorching heat of a jet bridge to clean her last plane of the day, an American Airlines jet, when she passed out.

CWA Local 3645 had previously submitted a complaint about the temperatures on the jet bridge. Seneca Davis, an organizer for the SEIU, told WFAE, "The jet bridge was really, really hot. She couldn't stand the heat, and she passed out."

Workers charge that ABM has refused to clarify PTO (paid time off). Roger Bennett told the *Charlotte Observer*, "I don't even know how to do it. In three years, I've never done PTO." Workers say that Coates asked management how much PTO she had and was informed that she didn't have any. After her death, it was revealed she had 20 hours of PTO.

Workers, who are paid \$12.50 an hour, also charge ABM with harassment, verbal abuse and intimidation. Michelle Wilson told WBTV, "When this happened with Colleen, it was like, oh my God, we really have to stand up."

Orange County, California, public works employees strike over management refusal to provide wages

Public works employees for Orange County, California, went on strike October 13 after months of stalling by negotiators for the Orange County Board of Supervisors. The 465 members of Teamsters Local 952 turned down a one-year contract with a 3 percent wage increase back in August. This offer followed an initial refusal by the board to even entertain a wage increase.

Tim Martinez, an 18-year veteran who works for the county's compost facility, told Spectrum News, "Really, simply it is more money. We just need more money."

The California Public Employee Relations Board, a state agency, issued a report with a number of charges including one that stated that county negotiators threatened the union that "wage increases for the bargaining unit would result in layoffs."

The strike affects Orange County departments of Public Works, Waste and Recycling, Community Resources and other operations including landfill operations, parks, beach and vehicle maintenance. Teamsters Local 952 officials said they do not expect an immediate offer coming from management to end the strike.

More workers join Chicago hotel strike

Workers at the Hilton Chicago and Hyatt Regency Chicago hotels walked out October 18 over contract issues including better pay and benefits, joining thousands of other hotel workers already on strike. The strikers included attendants, cooks, dishwashers, front desk agents, servers and food service workers.

The previous weekend, as the 2026 Bank of America Chicago Marathon was under way, thousands of hotel workers also went on strike. Those included workers at six hotels—the Sheraton Grand Chicago Riverwalk, Waldorf Astoria Chicago, Palmer House Hilton, Westin Chicago River North, Westin Michigan Avenue and Millennium Hotel Knickerbocker.

The contracts covering roughly 7,000 workers at 46 properties around the city expired on August 31. UNITE HERE Local 1 has kept the overwhelming majority of these workers on the job in defiance of a strike vote and undercutting more effective action.

Canadian Stellantis autoworkers vote by 97 percent to authorize strike action

Unifor announced the results of this past weekend's strike authorization vote for some 9,000 autoworkers employed at Stellantis. About 97 percent of auto assembly workers voted for strike action should negotiations for a new contract prove unsuccessful.

The union has made it clear to the membership that the vote is meant to "send a signal" to company management at the bargaining table to resolve their differences with Unifor, while strike action remains only as a "last resort." No strike date will be

set. Instead, the union said it merely hopes to re-start stalled negotiations.

The union had initially set September 11 as the deadline to settle on the pattern contract already pushed through at Ford and GM operations in Canada. The union, bypassing the tradition of setting a strike date should negotiations fail, did not mobilize workers at that time. Nor was strike action initiated when the previous contract expired on September 21.

The main unresolved issue in negotiations is the company's refusal to throw a lifeline to its Brampton assembly operation. Workers there have been idled since 2023. Stellantis is currently seeking to sell its plant in Brampton to combat vehicle producer Roshel. The company has also hesitated to provide full assurances that it will not introduce layoffs in the third shift at its giant Windsor assembly plant nor guarantee job numbers at its smaller casting facility in a Toronto suburb.

Stellantis imposed a two-week layoff at its Windsor operations at the end of September. After workers briefly returned to the job earlier this month, the company announced that a new three-week layoff period would begin on October 19.

Thunder Bay library workers strike

Seventy library workers across the four branches that service the public in Thunder Bay, Ontario went on strike last week in a struggle to resist a multitude of concessions demanded by the management board. The workers, members of two Canadian Union of Public Employees locals, have been without a contract for one year. Library management is demanding that workers accept a reduction in sick days, vacation days and health and retiree benefits. All four library branches remain closed in the city.



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