Workers Struggles: The Americas

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Venezuelan workers hold nationwide protests over wages and pensions

Public school and university employees, teachers, academic workers, retirees and other workers rallied on Friday October 29 across Venezuela. At issue are inadequate wages and pensions that are not keeping up with inflation.

The protests took place across the country, with workers demanding an accounting of where the money has gone under conditions of the looting of the country's oil revenues by the US Trump administration in collaboration with Venezuelan President Delcy Rodriguez. In addition to demonstrations, there were hunger strikes by workers and retirees of the Guayana Venezuelan Corporation, over year end pay, and slowdown strikes by workers in other cities.

Venezuela's monthly minimum wage of 130 Bolivares has been frozen since March 2022. At today's prices it is the equivalent of US$0.14. In some cases, workers are paid with year-end bonuses, at the discretion of their bosses.

President Rodriguez now assures workers that wage increases will be tied to economic growth, beginning in 2027. However, she provided no concrete details.

Unions and left populists in Ecuador stage protest against Noboa administration

Trade unionists, members of indigenous organizations and left political groups held a protest in Quito on Thursday, October 29 against the Daniel Noboa administration's assault on health, education, jobs and living standards for the poor and working class. Workers accuse Noboa of refusing to respond to the basic needs of the population, as he attacks basic democratic rights and freedoms.

Nelson Erazo, president of the Frente Popular and spokesperson for the protest, declared that the government "has no resources to provide what the people need"— health, education, jobs or investments in the fields to produce food for the population.

This is the first of several protests planned in Ecuador in the lead-up to national elections on November 29. National Teacher's Union President Andres Quishpe, described the purpose of this coalition of workers and farmers: "We will defeat Noboa on the streets and the ballot boxes against his police state, for having put education in debt. Schools are flooded. Hospitals are provided no medicines; social protest is criminalized."

The previous day, Wednesday October 28, health caretakers, patients and their families rallied on the United Nations Blvd. in central Quito, in defense of the right to decent healthcare. They cited lack of medicines, medical instruments and properly trained personnel in public hospitals.

Peruvian educators stage 24-hour protest strike

On Thursday, October 29, Peruvian public-school teachers carried out a 24-hour protest strike demanding increases in wages and health benefits for educators and school workers, together with increases in school budgets to repair schools. The strikers demand that 6 percent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) be allotted to public schools to combat the deterioration of buildings, provide adequate meals for students and provide access to the latest technology, including lap tops connected to the Internet.

The protest, limited to 24 hours, was called by the SUTEP (United Union of Peruvian Education Workers) and involved rallies in cities across Peru.

Oakland, California city workers prepared to strike November 5

A section of Oakland, California's municipal workforce will walk off the job November 5 unless city management finalizes a contract. Some 150 members of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE) Local 21 say that six months of negotiations over their demands to bar the use of outside contractors and impose guardrails against the use of artificial intelligence are deadlocked.

The city's largest union, the Service Employees International Union Local 1021, which represents a variety of workers including emergency dispatchers, librarians, maintenance workers, park staff and building inspectors, voted the previous week to grant strike authorization. But Local 1021 officials have not indicated they will call a strike.

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 1245 and the Confidential Management Employees Association, which represents supervisors, have also not reached settlements.

According to the city, some 20 percent of its job openings have not been filled, affecting work tasks such as road paving and dealing with illegal dumping. The Oakland Public Library system has 20 percent of its jobs unfilled. The IBEW has one-third of its jobs unfilled, the IFPTE is short 20 percent of its jobs and the SEIU is missing 19 percent of its jobs.

UAW members strike Triumph Engine Control Systems in West Hartford, Connecticut

About 175 members of United Auto Workers Local 405 members at

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Triumph Engine Control Systems in West Hartford, Connecticut went on an unfair labor practice strike Monday morning following an October 31 contract expiration.

They walked followed the breakdown in contract negotiations over wages, healthcare costs and job security. The facility builds and overhaul fuel systems for US military aircraft, including the Chinook, Apache and Black Hawk.

Talks broke down when management presented what it called its "last best and final offer" and refused to make any further concessions.

"A deal means two sides coming to an agreement, not the company dictating conditions to make lives harder for our membership and our families. We were always ready to negotiate but they gave us nothing and handed us a take-it-or-leave-it offer instead with none of our priorities even acknowledged" said UAW Local 405 President Ben Wilcox.

The highly profitable Triumph was purchased by private equity firms Warburg Pincus and Berkshire Partners last year for approximately $3 billion. A major stumbling point for the UAW appears to be the refusal of the company to agree to a standard successorship agreement even though management intends to sell the company again.

According to the UAW during the course of the 2021-2026 contract the company shifted tens of thousands of dollars in out-of-pocket healthcare costs onto the shoulders of workers. The UAW didn't say if management violated the contract or what if any action the union took to stop the company's measures. Families facing catastrophic events like car accidents or chronic diseases were hardest hit by the changes.

University of Illinois Chicago hospital workers vote to strike

The union representing Advanced Practice Providers (APP) at the University of Illinois Health (UI) Chicago announced that hospital workers had voted overwhelmingly to authorize a strike. The decision by Physicians Assistants and Nurse Practitioners, members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 73, comes after two years without a raise or cost-of-living adjustment and follows months of management stalling in talks for a first-time contract.

The APPs were certified under the SEIU back in July of 2025. In August of this year, UI refused to give a 2 percent cost-of-living increase that was granted to all other UI workers. Last summer, the UI's board of trustees received a stay from the Fourth District Appellate Court to pause bargaining, which is still in effect.

After the court's decision, workers held a July 21 lunchtime rally to protest the issue. At that rally, Sarah Ehrhardt, a physicians assistant declared, "Recently, we have seen other healthcare institutions close their doors, bringing an influx of patients to safety net facilities such as ours. The vast majority of our patient population is on Medicaid. Our role is vital to ensure the health of our community."

Tracy Woods, a nurse practitioner, told the rally, "Every day I see patients of all kinds. Cancer patients and transplant patients, patients who are young and patients who are old. I love helping and working with my patients but all too often we are working through lunch breaks and working seven days a week to keep up. We understand our working conditions are patient care conditions, and the conditions UI Health puts us under are unacceptable."

Cleveland Cliffs iron miners rally in Michigan's Upper Peninsula

Some 120 miners employed at Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company Tilden Mine rallied in Negaunee, in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, October 29, to demand improvements in wages, healthcare and profit sharing as contract negotiations resumed November 1. The previous four-year contract between Cleveland-Cliffs and United Steelworkers (USW) Locals 4950 and 4974, covering some 900 miners, expired back in August and work continues under contract extensions.

Wages are being negotiated as part of the master agreement covering Cleveland Cliffs and the approximately 14,000 members of the USW.

According to the USW, Cleveland Cliffs is proposing extensive changes to healthcare coverage affecting premiums and deductibles. "To date, the company's proposals on healthcare changes have been unacceptable to the locals and therefore no tentative agreement has yet been reached," said a union contract update.

Ontario Labour Relations Board blocks paramedic strike in Peterborough

With 193 paramedics operating in Peterborough and the surrounding county poised to legally begin a strike on October 31, the Ontario Labour Relations Board at the last minute intervened to stop any job action for at least two more weeks. The anti-worker decision by the OLRB came at the behest of county officials.

The labour board ruled that since an essential services agreement had not been put in place, a strike could not go ahead. However, officials of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) which organizes the paramedics argued that such a deal, negotiated in 2017, was still in place. Provisions in that protocol stipulate that should either party seek to renegotiate that arrangement, 190 days' notice must be given. County officials gave no such notice.

Both provincial and federally regulated workers already face a whole gamut of hoops and hurdles by employer-friendly labour codes. Ever-lengthening conciliation stages, "cooling off" periods, essential service settlements, legalized scabbing, police mobilizations, pro-employer judges, anti-constitutional back-to-work diktats and outright prohibition of some sectors of workers to engage in any job action whatsoever are built into the labour relations process.

Currently, a new act proposed by the big business Liberal Party government is now going through the federal parliament. It seeks to close any remaining avenues that might be used by federal workers in key sectors to walk off the job.

In Peterborough, fully 99 percent of paramedics operating in Peterborough, Ontario and the surrounding county had voted on September 25 to strike in pursuit of a contract that addresses concerns around working conditions, wages and benefits. The workers have been in talks for a new contract since March.

The paramedics are demanding increased mental health coverage in an industry where psychological trauma as well as injuries suffered due to violent attacks are increasing. Currently, the workers only receive an annual benefit of $500 to see a psychologist—roughly enough to cover three sessions. Part-time workers receive no benefits.

Between 2024-2025 studies show an increase of 50 percent in workplace injuries while 14 percent of full-time paramedics were absent from work due to injuries last year. Provincial paramedics are more than five times more vulnerable to workplace injuries than police officers.

According to a press release, Peterborough paramedics earn roughly 20 percent less than other first responders. Due to this pay inequity, poor benefits and dangerous working conditions, 54 paramedics have left the service over the past 3 years.

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