

Workers Struggles: The Americas

22 May 2018

Windsor casino workers reject contract, Mexico City professors strike

Latin America

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

College professors in Mexico strike to demand compliance with contract, salary raise

Professors on 27 campuses of the National Professional Technical Education College (CONALEP) in Mexico City held a one-day work stoppage on May 18 to press their demand that the college administration comply with the terms of their contract. The professors, members of the CONALEP Education Workers Union, warned their students of the walkout beforehand, so the students stayed home.

The professors also complain that they work more hours than are called for in their contract. They are calling for a commission to review their salaries. So far, negotiations with the Education Secretariat have stalled. The professors have already held one-day strikes twice before.

Mexican municipal workers strike over unpaid wages, attack on union official

Municipal water and sewerage workers for the Acapulco Potable Water and Sewerage Commission (Coagua) began a strike May 17 to demand the payment of overdue wages for the first half of May, and for the speedy investigation of and clarification regarding an attack on the general secretary of their local, section 27 of the State of Guerrero Public Service Union (SUSPEG), Gilberto Baños Ramírez.

Some 1,900 Coagua workers, a thousand of whom are contractors and temporary, were not paid for the last payday, due to the failure of the finance administration to cover the money owed. SUSPEG has also accused Coagua of padding the municipal payroll by adding people at high salaries.

In the meantime, Baños Ramírez, who is also a candidate for city alderman, is in hiding and in fear for his life after a group of armed men shot at his car on the morning of May 17. Baños Ramírez, who was talking to workers picketing in front of a Coaguas office, was unharmed. After that incident, the workers decided to return to work on May 18.

Uruguayan secondary teachers vote for two-day strike over delays in budget talks

Uruguay's National Federation of Secondary Teaching Professors (Fenapes) held an assembly on May 18 and voted to strike for two days, June 5 and 6. The reason for the strike vote is to demand an atmosphere of serious negotiations between Fenapes and the government regarding the education budget. Such issues as teachers'

pay and investment in infrastructure and supplies will be among the primary topics of discussion.

Fenapes notes that in 2015 and 2017, the National Public Education Administration (ANEP) dragged its feet on negotiating before submitting its report to the parliament and it is following that pattern this year as well. Fenapes has been calling for talks with ANEP since March. On May 15, federation reps met with Labor Ministry and ANEP officials, but the government had no proposal and rescheduled another meeting for May 30. Fenapes will evaluate the proposal and decide on its response, which could be a strike.

Fenapes carried out some regional 24-hour strikes on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday last week to demand concrete proposals from ANEP.

Brazilian truck drivers threaten strike over fuel prices

Truck drivers associations in Brazil have planned on a national strike if they do not get relief from the cost of diesel and gasoline, reflecting this year's surge in crude oil prices. State-owned Petrobras has passed the increase on to truckers, and the truckers have reacted by demanding that the government lower prices and/or reduce taxes on fuel.

Energy Minister Wellington Moreira Franco has said that discussion of the issue is needed, but that it would need to involve state as well as federal officials, delaying any action.

Argentine Labor Ministry orders suspension of airline unions' one-day strike call over working conditions, job attrition[/subhead]

A planned May 18 24-hour strike involving members of five airline personnel unions in Argentina was suspended following an "obligatory conciliation" order (i.e., binding arbitration) by the Labor Ministry. The five unions, representing pilots and cabin and ground crew workers, had called the walkout at the Jorge Newbery and Ezeiza airports to protest "the adjustment and risk of labor instability for hundreds of employees" of LAN Argentina, a union statement declared.

The statement condemned the "hollowing out of the enterprise" in the midst of "explosive expansion" at LATAM, LAN Argentina's parent company. As the largest airline holding company in South America, LATAM has attempted to increase its competitive edge through consolidation, closures and increasing workloads of workers with attrition and labor "flexibility" policies like layoffs and attrition.

The unions complain that the firm has ignored its repeated complaints, leading to the strike call. At the "explicit request" of LATAM, the Labor Ministry issued the order, which will be in effect for 15 days.

Argentine vegetable oil workers begin indefinite strike over firings

Members of Argentina's Vegetable Oil Industrial Complex, Cottonseed Processing and Associated Industries began an indefinite strike on May 18 following fruitless negotiations with the Labor Ministry. The strike is a response to 34 recent firings at Cargill oilseed crushing plants at three locations.

According to an infobae.com article, Cargill "has managed to position itself as the major Argentine export enterprise, and one of the leaders in foodstuffs, products and services of the agro-industrial sector," with more than 3,000 employees nationwide. It has recently drawn protests as it has closed some plants in the last few months.

The union also lodged a demand that various businesses that are members of the Oilseed Industry Chamber follow through on a May 4 promise to pay a bonus of 26,987 pesos (US\$1,105) on May 15.

The United States

Aerospace strike ends

Striking workers at United Launch Alliance (ULA) voted to ratify a new labor agreement, ending a two-week strike against the launch service provider. The 600 workers, members of the International Association of Machinists, walked out May 6 after rejecting management's initial offer. However, the new contract differed little from the one earlier rejected.

The main issue concerned travel related expenses. Teams are required to move between launch centers and often have to be away from home for as many as 30 days. Wages and health benefits were also issues. Management's final offer included raises of 1.75 percent, 2 percent, 2.5 percent and 3 percent over the course of the four-year deal.

The company called its offer "competitive" and said it would ensure its long-term viability in the launch market.

ULA is a joint venture between Boeing and Lockheed Martin and builds and launches rockets. The strike involved 300 workers in Decatur, Alabama, about 230 at Cape Canaveral, Florida, and about 80 at Vandenberg, California.

Illinois judge threatens to replace striking court workers

A Kane County, Illinois judge ordered 118 striking probation officers and youth counselors to return to work last week or the 16th Judicial Circuit Court would begin hiring replacement workers. Workers launched their strike April 30 after voting down three separate offers by county negotiators.

Members of Teamsters Local 330 want to extend the previous contract that expired last November and retain the 3.7 percent step raises into the new three-year pact. But the county is seeking to end step raises and substitute smaller increases with bonuses and they unilaterally implemented that agreement on the day workers went on strike.

Workers were to have returned to work by May 15 in order to avoid permanent replacement.

Canada

Casino strikers reject union brokered deal

The tentative agreement promoted by their union, Unifor, in the six-week-old strike by 2,300 workers at Caesars Windsor, was narrowly rejected last week, setting union leaders on their heels in shock and dismay.

Workers were reportedly heard booing the union negotiating team at the vote, with many saying that the deal they were being sold was nearly identical to the one that provoked the strike. There are a

number of outstanding issues in dispute for workers, including workplace health and safety as well as the outsourcing of work.

Casino management also expressed their disappointment at the rejection vote, citing the recommendations of both the national and local union leadership. Caesars Windsor has said that the casino would remain closed during the strike and that there were no plans to return to negotiations.

Cornwall, Ontario city workers strike

Two hundred thirty municipal workers in the eastern Ontario city of Cornwall went on strike last week when contract talks hit an impasse following a "final offer" from the employer.

The strike by members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) include outside workers, library workers and paramedics, many of whom are restricted from striking under essential service legislation. According to union negotiators, along with the outstanding issue of wages, the city is asking for numerous other concessions in a new contract.

No talks are scheduled in negotiations. At the same time, a separate local of CUPE that includes 150 inside workers in Cornwall will be in a legal strike position this week although the union has not yet said if they will walk out.

Quebec daycare workers expand strike mandate

Over 1,200 daycare workers in the Montreal area staged the latest in a series of one-day strikes last week to hold an assembly in which they voted to give their union, the *Confédération des syndicats nationaux* (CSN), an unlimited strike mandate.

The workers, who are nearly all women, have been involved in a number of limited job actions in recent months as part of their effort to win a new contract with the Provincial Employers Association of Daycares (APNCPE). Their last contract expired over three years ago but their union has chosen to restrict job action up to this point. The main issue in dispute is scheduling, with the employer insisting on the right to be able to cancel their workday even after they are called in to work if a number of children are absent.

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