

Windsor casino strike ends, teachers protest in Mexico City

## Workers Struggles: The Americas

5 June 2018

### **CNTE teachers protest in Mexico City**

On June 4, thousands of striking teachers marched and rallied in Mexico City, demanding an end to the Education Reform law being imposed by the government of President Peña Nieto. The educators are members of the dissident National Coordinator of Education Workers (CNTE), which represents education workers in the southern states of Mexico: Chiapas, Oaxaca, Michoacán, and Guerrero. A delegation of educators from the state of Veracruz also joined the protest. Teachers in schools in those regions are on strike

The purpose of the Education Reform law approved by the Peña Nieto administration and its political allies (which formed the “Alliance for Mexico”) is to place education in the hands of private capital. The law also attacks past conquests of education workers. The marchers will rally and plan to establish tents across from the Government Ministry and stay there until the government agrees to negotiate an end to the education reform. The marchers are also demanding the abolition of Mexico’s Internal Security Law and the release of all political prisoners.

### **Tens of thousands in Buenos Aires repudiate the IMF and call for general strike**

On Friday June 1, a massive march and rally took place in Buenos Aires Plaza de Mayo Square, across from Argentina’s Government House, to protest the austerity policies of the Macri administration and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The demonstration took place a day after the Argentine president vetoed a law that would have imposed limits on price increases in fuels and public utilities.

Many of the marchers were public employees rejecting “as a provocation” the government’s offer of a 12 percent increase in wages, very much below

expected rates of inflation for this year (ranging from 20 to 30 percent). Many of the demonstrators demanded that the CGT, Argentina’s main trade union federation, organize a general strike. The CGT remains in alliance with the Macri administration, limiting industrial action and diffusing popular anger.

### **Argentine teachers protest**

In southern Argentina, on May 31, some 2,000 education workers, students, and health workers occupied the Education Ministry building in Rawson, Chubut province, in defense of education, social benefits and wage increases that match the rates of price increases. The protest accompanied a weeklong teachers’ strike across the province.

### **Columbian taxi drivers protest in Bogotá over the use of tablets**

On May 28, three taxi drivers were arrested during a protest demonstration in Bogotá, Colombia. The taxi drivers had blocked three lanes and the dedicated lane for the Transmilenio rapid bus system. The mobilization began last Tuesday and involved various contingents of taxi drivers in several locations in central Bogotá. Another group is carrying out a hunger strike at the headquarters of the District Administration that oversees taxi services.

The taxi drivers are protesting a regulation by the taxi authority that they replace their meters with tablet computers by the end of August (up from the initial deadline of May 28). As of now, 200 taxi drivers use tablets, out of the 52,000 that drive in Bogotá. The drivers reject the use of tablets because of their high cost and the possibility of theft. Each driver would be responsible for the cost of the tablet (about US\$500) and for the data plan (about US\$30 a month). This is added to the other costs—approximately 150,000 pesos

(about US\$60), barely leaving 770,000 pesos on average (US\$260) in monthly take home pay.

Assuming that the taxi owner pays the cost of the tablet, the data plan alone would reduce the driver's income to 690,000 pesos (US\$230), which in Bogotá is not enough to live on.

### **Tecnocap strike continues**

Workers at Tecnocap in Glen Dale, West Virginia, are continuing a strike that began April 9. The International Association of Machinists has accused management of unfair labor practices for refusing to bargain in good faith.

The 30 workers make metal closures for glass jars and bottles for the food, beverage and cosmetics industries. The company has hired replacement workers during the walkout.

Other workers at the plant, affiliated with another union, have continued working during the dispute, effectively undermining the struggle.

### **Windsor, Ontario, casino strike ends**

In a vote Monday, workers at Caesar's Windsor voted to approve a new contract submitted for ratification by Unifor covering more than 2,000 casino employees. The three-year contract includes a C\$1,600 signing bonus and general wage increases that average C\$1,500 in the first year, C\$1,500 in the second year and C\$500 the third.

The workers struck April 5 after rejecting a proposed contract recommend by Unifor by a 59 percent margin. They rejected another Unifor deal in May by a 53 percent margin. That contract was for four years, which angered many workers. Unifor reported a 75 ratification margin for the final contract.

The strike was the longest at the Windsor casino, surpassing a 60-day strike in 2004. Workers complain of irregular hours and poverty level wages, with many earning at or just above the Ontario minimum wage of C\$15 an hour. The casino said it plans to re-open Thursday.

For its part, Unifor isolated the casino workers, keeping their struggle separate from other workers across the province as well as from casino workers in nearby Detroit. The strike followed a series of contract rejections by workers across the province, including auto parts workers in Ajax and Windsor.

### **Ontario health and safety workers look to strike**

One-hundred-forty workers employed by the Infrastructure Health and Safety Association (IHSA) in Ontario could be on strike as early as next week following the request by their union, the Ontario Compensation Employees Union (OCEU) for a "no board" report last week, which signals the countdown to strike action.

The IHSA is a government-funded organization providing training and evaluation services to a wide range of industries in the province. Union negotiators say that despite months of negotiations, they have reached an impasse in talks with the employer, prompting them to take this latest action.

Following the report, which is expected later this week, a lockout or strike could come as early as June 12 if no deal is reached before then.

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