

Southern, California trash haulers launch strike, 29,000 Fred Meyers workers take strike vote, 11,000 Quebec public daycare workers end job action

## Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

### Mexican judicial workers strike for pay rise

Members of the Single Union of Professional, Administrative and Manual Workers of the Yucatan Judicial Power (Sutpampjy) began a strike December 1 in the city of Mérida, in the Mexican state of Yucatán. Sutpampjy called the job action to press its demand for a salary hike of 7 percent for its 1,200 members.

On October 15, the State Judicial Power (PJE) had sent the state government its proposed budget for 2022, which included the raise that it estimated would cover the rise in the inflation rate. It would add up to about 24 million pesos, or US\$1.5 million. Judicial workers received no raise in 2021.

Legislators passed a budget that would include about half that amount to be used at the PJE's discretion, either for raises or other expenses. In protest, the workers struck and blocked the entrance to the court building. On December 9, the union agreed to suspend the walkout effective December 14 after receiving promises that the parties would negotiate.

### Bolivian soccer players strike for unpaid wages

Members of the Club Always Ready soccer team based in the town of El Alto, near La Paz, Bolivia, went on strike December 9 over unpaid wages. They had been scheduled to practice for an upcoming national championship playoff match on December 12 but decided not to after a meeting with the coaching staff.

The players' contract provides for wages to be paid for the first 11 months of the year, with another payment in December in case they make the national playoffs. The players have not been paid for October and November.

### Bus drivers in Uruguay strike for 24 hours over pay-hike demand

Interdepartmental drivers for the Tres Cruces bus company in

Montevideo, Uruguay, held a one-day strike on December 10. The National Union of Workers and Transport Workers (Unott) called the walkout after the latest round of negotiations with the National Association of Bus Road Transport Companies (Anetra) failed to reach an agreement.

According to Unott, workers' wages have eroded by 15 percent and the union proposed recovering "part" of the losses in March, though Anetra has proposed payment in June.

Anetra claimed that the action was "absolutely contrary" to collective bargaining Law 18.566, accused striking workers of "a high degree of insensitivity toward the population" who use public transport, and said that striking workers were "only trying to damage the sector and its users." Police units were deployed to the entrance to the Tres Cruces Terminal, where workers were picketing. One protesting worker was injured when the cops fired rubber bullets, supposedly to allow for "free traffic" in and out of the terminal.

Unott also called for one-day strikes on December 17 and 23.

### Bank workers in Argentina hold one-day strike over planned shuttering of branches, other issues

The Banking Association (AB) of Argentina called a one-day strike December 10 to protest various issues with the Santander Río bank, the largest privately owned bank in the nation. Primary among the complaints is the plan to close 98 of its 404 branches, part of "restructuring" that shifts toward "home banking" and, according to Stratico, "a reduction of 25 percent in its structure."

Since the beginning of the pandemic, there have already been 1,060 "covert firings," according to AB. The planned closures would entail between six and eight firings per branch. To add to labor insecurity, Santander Río already contracts 100 workers a month—outside of the framework of the collective agreement—to develop financial technology.

### Huntington Beach, California sanitation workers strike

Trash pickup for residents of Huntington Beach and Fullerton, California, was delayed Friday by a strike of 400 workers employed by Republic Services. The workers, members of the Teamsters, had been without a contract since September 30. Overwork and management

harassment were cited as main concerns.

One striker told local media, "We have no quality of life," he said. "We are being pushed to the limit and are at a breaking point."

Management stated that "critical commercial accounts" would be prioritized during the strike to protect health and safety standards. Residents were encouraged to leave trash out for pickup, indicating management intends to employ strikebreakers.

Republic Services provides trash and recycling services across California. The strike could also impact trash pickup in Santa Ana, Garden Grove as well as Anaheim, including Disneyland. The Teamsters say contracts are still pending in San Jose and Chula Vista. Workers in New Orleans, Louisiana, went on a three-day strike in November.

### **Large strike vote by Santa Cruz County, California, public employees**

The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) announced that public service workers in Santa Cruz County, California, are in a position to strike after workers voted by a 93.5 percent margin to grant strike authorization. No deadline has been set, but a strike this week is possible.

Leaders of SEIU Local 512 said an agreement was possible, claiming union and management were not far apart. Apparently contradicting this, local officials called the cost-of-living adjustments offered by management "insulting." In an earlier memo, Local 521 officials denounced "county management's illegal tactics and bad faith bargaining throughout the course of negotiations."

A walkout would involve some 1,500 county employees and could "cripple" operations, according to the SEIU.

Workers say they are frustrated with the sacrifices they have endured during the pandemic. Workers have faced furloughs and pay has remained stagnant despite rising inflation.

### **Fred Meyer workers in Pacific Northwest vote in favor of strike**

Some 29,000 Fred Meyer Supermarket and Quality Food Center workers in Oregon and southwest Washington state have voted to grant their union, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555, strike authorization. Negotiations for a new contract have dragged on since July. The UFCW is threatening a strike, however, over "unfair labor practices," not contract issues, a standard tactic aimed at allowing workers to let off steam without committing the union to fight for specific contract demands.

In a previous statement, Local 555 had given notice that it was ending further contract extensions as of November 28. However, no strike was called at the time. According to a release by the company, average wages at its stores are \$17.29 an hour, a bare subsistence level, which the company called "industry leading wages." Management called on the UFCW to "quit playing games" and sign a company-friendly deal, an order the union is more than happy to oblige.

Fred Meyer and Quality Food Centers are subsidiaries of the giant Kroger Supermarket chain. Negotiation sessions are set for December 14, 15 and 16.

### **Postal union reaches three-year tentative contract deal**

The American Postal Workers Union and the US Postal Service announced agreement on a new three-year contract December 9. The National Negotiating Committee and the Rank & File Bargaining Advisory Committee unanimously rubber-stamped the deal the next day.

In a press statement, an APWU spokesman declared, "We look forward to the membership having an opportunity to vote on this tentative agreement that we believe offers significant improvements in the wages, hours and working conditions in all APWU crafts."

The contract talks take place during a systematic campaign to hobble and dismantle postal services in preparation for privatization. The contract covers some 200,000 US workers.

The contract will be voted on by mail ballot. A series of information online townhalls are scheduled to take place December 16.

### **Warren, Pennsylvania, health care workers issue 10-day strike notice**

Nurses at Warren General Hospital in Warren, Pennsylvania, issued a strike notice December 11, paving the way for possible strike action in the next 10 days. The approximately 100 members of the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Affiliated Professionals (PASNAP) are demanding safe staffing ratios and are angry that management is seeking cuts in retirement benefits.

The union has calculated cuts in the 403b retirement program would result in a loss of \$2,250 for an individual nurse. The cut is particularly aggravating when the hospital made a \$6 million profit in 2020 and holds over \$72 million in assets. Meanwhile, hospital CEO Rick Allen pulled down a hefty \$537,599 salary in 2020.

### **Quebec and public daycare unions secure contract ratification, end strike**

The Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN) has announced the ratification of a new contract agreement covering 11,000 public daycare workers in the province of Quebec, concluding an open-ended strike. The CSN said 93 percent voted in favor of the deal which provides for an 18 percent increase for educators over three years, along with increases of eight to 12.5 percent for support staff.

The administration of Quebec Premier François Legault had initially offered support staff, including those working in maintenance, kitchen and administration, only a 9 percent increase. Rank-and-file workers had strongly opposed the inequality in treatment, eventually forcing the union to call a strike. The walkout impacted some 400 daycares across the province.

Other unions covering childcare workers including Fédération des intervenantes en petite enfance du Québec, affiliated with the FIPEQ-CSQ labor federation, and the Syndicat québécois des employées et employés de service (SQEES), associated with the FTQ, had reached an agreement with the Quebec government last Wednesday.

### **School custodians and cleaners in 7th week of strike against Manitoba school district**

Twenty-one school support workers in Minnedosa, Manitoba, are now

in the 7th week of a strike against the Rolling River School District. The custodians and cleaners, members of the Canadian Union of Public employees (CUPE), are fighting for contract terms similar to those already negotiated and accepted in 24 other provincial school districts that raised wages slightly above provisions recommended by the provincial government.

The Rolling River School District, however, has insisted that any deal adhere closely to the Manitoba government's vicious 2017 wage restraint legislation that sought to hold any public sector wage increase to no more than 1.75 percent over four years. Scabs have been hired to do the work of the strikers.



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