

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

Latin America

Hundreds of peasants and indigenous people mobilized last Wednesday in Guatemala City demanding that the Arévalo administration organize a Popular Constituent Assembly. They denounced the present constitution as a “colonial” document written in the interests of US capitalism and the US government.

The protesters also raised a series of demands against high food prices and a wave of evictions against the poor, against government impunity and corruption, and for the resignation of the country’s top prosecutor, Consuelo Porras and other government officials.

Demonstrators marched into the city center from various locations and rallied in Constitution Square.

Health workers at Buenos Aires Posada Public Hospital set up tents around the hospital last week and carried out a protest strike demanding that 88 health workers, fired by the Milei administration be rehired. Also at issue are wage increases.

Another purpose of the “health tent” at the Posadas Hospital was to alert workers and patients of the hospital and ask them for their support.

The sacking of the workers coincided with an increase demand for medications and health services due to very cold temperatures in this city and across Argentina.

The Milei administration claims that the hospital is over staffed and that the sacked health workers were slacking off on the job.

On Wednesday July 10, 11,400 supermarket workers went on strike against three market chains owned by Walmart corporation and carried out demonstrations in Santiago and other cities protesting the lack of contract following four failed mediations. Workers shut down 75

supermarkets; another 85 are operating partially.

In addition to higher wages, the protesters demand an end to multiple assignments and arbitrary lay-offs, and the full reinstatement of productivity bonuses.

United States

Some 14,000 Disney workers in Southern California represented by four different unions have scheduled a strike authorization vote July 19. The United Food and Commercial Workers Local 324 President Andrea Zinder told the *Los Angeles Times*, “We haven’t been able to move the company on the issues most important to our members. The unfair labor practices that Disney has committed are so egregious that they interfere with our ability to get a fair contract.”

The coalition of unions reports that more than 500 workers have been subjected to intimidation, surveillance and disciplinary threats for wearing a union button. “The intimidation is stressful for cast members,” said Coleen Palmer.

Negotiations began in April for thousands of theme park workers including ride operators, custodians, cashiers and other staff. The company has offered a 25 cent per hour raise for workers with more than 20 years experience. The city of Anaheim recently enacted a living wage law that boosted workers’ pay from a miserable \$18 an hour under the present contract to \$19.90 an hour. The California Supreme Court refused to hear Disney’s appeal of the wage hike, which claimed the law did not apply to the multibillion dollar company.

Nurses and other staff at the Pioneer Valley Rehabilitation Center in South Hadley, Massachusetts, held a picket outside their nursing home protesting four weeks without pay and five months of bounced checks. The staff has also been overworked, understaffed and undersupplied.

“The owner came in a couple months ago and stated to us that this was all going to be rectified, that they were going to refinance,” nurse Christine MacLure told WGGB/WSHM. “That never came to fruition.”

Workers are quitting and vendors are also not getting paid. “Employees have to go out to CVS, buy aspirin, buy different essential things that the patients need,” said MacLure.

Media reports on the picket at the South Hadley nursing home led to an eruption of similar complaints from Blupoint Healthcare facilities across Massachusetts.

Canada

On July 10, after an 18 day strike at the new Bombardier Aircraft Assembly Center on the grounds of Toronto’s Pearson Airport and at a smaller Waterloo Regional operation, workers finally voted to accept a new contract. The aircraft workers walked off the job immediately after the expiration of their previous contract on June 23.

The following week, the strikers, members of Unifor, rejected a tentative contract presented to them by union officials. Workers had voted by 76 percent to reject that proposed deal. A second tentative agreement was presented to the strikers a week later and was ratified.

The new three year contract provides for a 12.5 percent wage increase spread over the life of the settlement and job ownership provisions as the company moves to launch a new and lucrative Global 8000 ultra-long-range private jet series.

Last year, the Montreal-based company reported annual revenue of over \$8 billion which reflected a 16 percent increase over the previous year. The company has seen an increase in orders with demand for private jets spiking amongst corporations and the ultra-wealthy in the wake of the COVID pandemic.



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