

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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Latin America

São Paulo police attack protesting students and educators

Monday, November 4, students and educators protested the auction of 16 São Paulo public schools at the city's stock market and against the cancellation of night classes. The protest took place across from the stock market. The plan is to privatize 33 schools.

The demonstrators denounced the auction, which subcontracts education to private enterprises, subordinating education to profits, as a negation of democratic education principles.

Military police, under orders from the fascist São Paulo state governor Tarcisio de Freitas, blocked access to the stock market as the auction was taking place, and attacked the demonstrators with tear gas, bullets and batons.

"We came in a democratic way to raise our voice against the privatization of 33 schools, because education is not a commodity. ... Our struggle will go on," declared one of the demonstrators.

Protest strikes and rallies across Argentina against Milei government

On Wednesday, November 5, a one-day national protest strike by transportation workers took place in Argentina.

Participating in the strike were transit workers, truckers, railroad workers, and port and airline workers. The national strike accompanied a day of national pot-banging rallies and soup kitchens held in cities and neighborhoods to denounce the policies of the Milei administration.

In the city of Buenos Aires, thousands rallied in Ledesma Park, demanding the resignation of Milei.

The following day protests continued, with members of the Association of Government Workers Union (ATE) carrying out protest strikes across the country against the austerity and privatization measures being implemented by the Milei administration, which include brutal attacks on wages and the layoff of thousands.

The protests were in response to a year-end government wage raise offer of 2 percent in November and 1 percent in December followed by a hunger level year-end bonus of US\$30 dollars. At the center of the marches and rallies was the demand for the rehiring of all those

that have been laid off since the Milei government took over at the end of 2023.

The protests also said "no" to the plans to privatize the state-owned airline, Aerolíneas Argentinas, and state-owned railroads.

These demonstrations notwithstanding, the Argentine trade union federations (CGT and CTA) have gone along with the government's budget cuts and layoffs. This was recognized positively by Milei's Labor Secretary, Julio Cordero, who last week thanked the bureaucracy of three trade union federations (CGT, CTA1 and CTA2) for "behaving" and cooperating with his brutal economic measures targeting the working class.

The pseudo-left Partido Obrero applauded the Ledesma rally and called for a general strike and "workers' government," but did not elaborate any further perspective.

São Paulo homeless families take over four buildings

On October 27, while votes were being counted for the city's municipal elections, homeless families, members of the Front of Struggle for Housing (FLM), took over four buildings in downtown Sao Paulo.

The families arrived with children and possessions. In each of the four buildings the homeless families fought police forces, which assaulted the buildings from helicopters, using tear gas and bullets. Homeless people, including women and children, were treated like criminals and arrested. Several homeless were injured.

The police were said to have arrived by surprise, with no warrants or judicial order. The last building was "freed" on Monday.

The occupations take place every year around this time as part of the FLM campaign demanding that the city invest in homes for the homeless and provide rent subsidies for families that earn less than three minimum wages (US\$ 860).

During the period December 2021 to December 2023 the number of homeless in Sao Paulo streets skyrocketed from 3,842 to 64,818, according to statistics from the Federal University of Minas Gerais.

United States

Maui Health System workers end three-day strike, but without contract settlement

Some 950 healthcare workers at three hospitals run by Maui Health System in Hawaii returned to work November 7 after a three-day strike over wages, unsafe staffing ratios and benefits. The United

Nurses and Health Care Employees of Hawaii (UNHCEH), which represents the striking workers, said the strike had produced no change in management's stance.

The strike involved nurses, social workers, therapists, technicians, clerks, receptionists and others at the three hospitals—Maui Memorial, Kula Hospital and L?na'i Community Hospital. Maui Health has offered nurses an 18 percent wage increase, but it is spread out over the course of a four-year contract.

Rowan Funes, an ER nurse at Maui Memorial, told Hawaii Public Radio that Maui Health is affiliated with Kaiser Permanente and that Kaiser clinic nurses with work across the street from his hospital "make anywhere from 10 percent to 30 percent more than our staff here at the hospital. So, it's almost like we're second-class citizens within the same organization."

Workers are also demanding the same nurse-to-patient staffing ratios that Kaiser Permanente has agreed to in the state of California, in an effort to maintain patient safety and bring an end to worker burnout. Negotiations will resume November 14.

Indiana operating engineers workers launch unfair labor practices strike against Cranemasters, Inc.

Over two dozen workers launched an unfair labor practice strike against Cranemasters in Merrillville, Indiana. The International Union of Operating Engineers Local 150 charges that Cranemasters has engaged in terminating employees for union activity, making unilateral changes to contract terms and conditions, targeting workers with insulting and coercive remarks, and other violations in relation to contract negotiations.

Company management has relocated work away from the jurisdiction of Local 150 in an effort to break the strike. The Operating Engineers has indicated that it might dispatch pickets to those locations where Cranemasters moves its work.

Cranemasters, Inc, cleans up train derailments and provides car repair services. Workers voted to organize with Local 150 back in August of 2023.

Canada

Work stoppages continue at Port of Montreal and Pacific coast docks

About 1,200 longshoremen, members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees at the Port of Montreal, were locked out Sunday night after their overwhelming rejection of the Maritime Employers Association's (MEA) "final" offer. The rejected deal, like all the previous management proposals, failed to address the central demand of the workers for a significant moderation of the brutal shift scheduling that has destroyed any semblance of a work-life balance.

In addition, the MEA refused to meet the dockers' demand for a 20 percent wage increase over the life of a 4-year contract. The demand would bring the Montreal workers into parity with longshoremen in Halifax and the Pacific Coast.

The MEA initiated the lockout in the wake of a partial strike by 320

dockworkers at two of the port's terminals that began two weeks ago. That action followed on from an unlimited overtime ban by all 1,200 workers. During these job actions, the Port Authority and numerous business interests called on the federal Liberal government to end the strike and force binding arbitration. Sunday night's lockout is meant to further that end.

The lockout in Montreal follows a complete shutdown of all ports on Canada's Pacific Coast 10 days ago after the employers' association there locked out about 730 dock foremen, members of the International Longshoremen's union, in a dispute over the attempt by the cargo handling companies to unilaterally impose new automation without job security provisions. No cargo is now moving in the country's top three ports (Vancouver, Prince Rupert and Montreal).

Brampton, Ontario city workers strike

About 1,200 municipal workers in the City of Brampton, Ontario, just west of Toronto, are in the sixth day of a strike for improved wages and health benefits. Members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 831, the workers are demanding a wage increase of between 4.5 and 6 percent in each of the next five years and benefits similar to those that management has been receiving. The workers suffered a significant erosion of their living standards due to the spike in inflation in recent years. Management has responded with a meager 3 percent per year offer.

The city workers provide administrative services within city hall as well as in road maintenance, parks and recreation, building inspections, parking enforcement, animal services and at the municipal call center. Although bus drivers are not part of the striking local, pickets that have been deployed to the bus depots are being honoured by bus drivers. In a climbdown by union officials, pickets were instructed to allow buses to move beginning this past weekend.

Municipal strikers nonetheless continued their picketing, which caused continuing and significant disruption of transit schedules on Saturday and Sunday. Patrick Brown, the mayor of Brampton and a former leader of the Ontario Conservatives, has threatened to seek a court injunction against the picketers.



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