

# Canadian rail workers back strike action by their US colleagues

CP Workers Rank-and-File Committee  
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*Rail workers, we want to hear about your working conditions and how you think you should fight back. Contact the CP Workers Rank-and-File Committee at [cpworkersrfc@gmail.com](mailto:cpworkersrfc@gmail.com) or request to join the committee's Facebook group.*

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Over 100,000 rail workers in the United States, including conductors, engineers, machinists, carmen and yard workers, are defying the aggressive drive by the Class I rail operators to continue making massive profits through ruthless exploitation and inflation triggered by the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. More than 500 rank-and-file rail workers participated in a meeting called by the Rail Workers Rank-and-File Committee (RWRFC) to prepare for action. The meeting was co-sponsored by the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).

Railroaders were set to walk out in a nationwide strike at 12:01 a.m. Eastern Time on Friday, September 16, before a tentative agreement between the unions and companies hashed out in coordination with the Biden administration was announced Thursday morning.

Workers are resisting efforts by the rail unions to sabotage their struggle by imposing wage-cutting agreements modeled on a ruling by the Presidential Emergency Board (PEB). The unions have sought to avert a strike by claiming that the PEB, a state-sponsored body that has time and again imposed concessions and defends the interests of the employers, would respond favourably to the workers' demands.

In addition to wages that keep pace with inflation, work scheduling is a major issue for US railroaders. The rail operators have imposed grueling schedules that prevent workers from enjoying a family life or taking

time off for medical appointments.

Rail workers across Canada confront the same essential issues and are closely following the strike preparations by their brothers and sisters south of the border. Several members of the CP Workers Rank-and-File Committee Facebook group sent messages of support to the strikers.

"I support them! Fully!" said one rail worker. "I am a railway worker in Canada and am disgusted by how we (both countries) have been treated by the railway management!" Another rail worker stated, "I'm fully in support of them going out and fighting for their just treatment. I hope our union sees the power the employees can have and instead of bowing down and accepting government-imposed contracts that we actually get to fight for our rights for a change."

A worker at a rail car manufacturing plant in Ontario, which counts CP Rail and CN Rail among its major customers, said, "I think if the railroaders do defy their 'union' bureaucracies and go out on strike, we will see something akin to the PATCO strike in the early 80s. Unlike that time, that would be done by the most 'pro-union' president. This will allow for the Democrats to be exposed openly for what they are and allow for a serious discussion about labour making a break from not only the Democratic Party in the US but also the pro-business 'unions' that no longer represent the rank and file in any way, shape or form."

Another worker wrote, "The rail workers should be supported by everyone. And they should have the right to strike without the permission of the [Biden] Administration."

The CP Workers Rank-and-File Committee was established in March following the betrayal of a struggle for improved wages, safe working conditions and better scheduling by the Teamsters union. Despite

an overwhelming strike vote by 3,000 engineers, conductors and yardmen to strike, the Teamsters sold out their struggle and agreed to binding arbitration, which robs workers of any right to vote on their terms of employment and conduct collective job action or bargaining for the duration of the deal.

Predictably, the binding arbitration promoted by the Teamsters as the best way to achieve workers' demands turned out to be a farce. The arbitrator imposed a 3.5 percent per year pay increase, which amounts to a huge pay cut with inflation running at over 8 percent. More importantly, not a thing was said about the inhumane scheduling practices of the railroad operators, which have led to numerous derailments, injuries and deaths over recent years.

In its founding statement, the CP Workers Rank-and-File Committee explicitly declared its intention to fight for a continent-wide counteroffensive by rail workers in opposition to the foul nationalism peddled by the unions in Canada and the US. The CPWRFC declared:

We issue a special appeal to our brothers and sisters at BNSF, who have already established a rank-and-file committee to fight for their demands, at CN, Canada's largest railway, and at all Class I railroads in the US. Let us organize a common struggle against the rampant profiteering and corporate/union-imposed dictatorship that currently dominates North America's railroads! If [CP chief executive Keith] Creel and his corporate buddies plan on building a multi-national railway to ship cargo and exploit workers from the Canadian Arctic to tropical Mexico, then we will build a multi-national worker-led counter-offensive of Canadian, American, and Mexican railroaders to stop corporate profiteering at the expense of our health, safety, and very lives. To do this we must reject Canadian and American nationalism, which the unions have used to divide workers for decades and facilitate company-dictated attacks on working conditions, jobs, and wages. We must also oppose the Trudeau and Biden administrations' vast spending on the military and subsidies to the corporations and stock markets. Rail

workers and all working people have no interest in supporting wars for profit and geopolitical influence!

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To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)**