

# In show of defiance, JBS workers in Greeley, Colorado extend strike into third week

Jacob Crosse  
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The strike by 3,800 JBS meatpackers in Greeley, Colorado has now been extended into its third week, a significant development in the growing confrontation between workers and one of the largest meatpacking corporations in the world.

Previously, officials from the United Food Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 7 had indicated that it would limit the strike to two weeks. That workers remain out shows both their determination and the depth of the anger over poverty wages, dangerous working conditions and soaring healthcare costs and the company's refusal to meet their demands.

Eduardo and Ezekiel, two workers at the Greeley plant, told the WSWs the company, "treats the animals better than us. They don't care about us. We are not going back until we get something good. Without us they don't make any money."

Mac, another meatpacker said he supports "equal conditions for workers everywhere." Jose noted the exorbitant costs imposed on workers' for their personal protective equipment: "It's \$800. We shouldn't have to pay for that out of pocket."

In a March 26 press release announcing the extension, UFCW Local 7 said JBS had refused to meet and bargain, had unlawfully conditioned further negotiations on the union's acceptance of terms negotiated with other unions, and had made no effort to address the unfair labor practices that led workers to walk out. The union says that the company continues to insist on its ability to punish workers for exercising their democratic right to strike.

The defiance by JBS management must be answered by workers through a deepening of the struggle. Rank-and-file workers must organize themselves to expand

the strike to other facilities and appeal for support from workers at employers across the food supply chain. This includes tens of thousands of grocery store workers in UFCW Local 7, who have carried out several strikes themselves in recent years.

This must be organized by workers themselves from below because The UFCW bureaucracy is doing the opposite. It has been isolating and containing the struggle from the beginning. Greeley, with arguably the most militant workforce, was excluded from a national contract with JBS last summer, and then workers were left on the job without a contract for months.

Before the strike even started, JBS had already begun winding down operations and diverting cattle to other plants, including its facility in Cactus, Texas, which is also staffed by UFCW members. Instead of organizing opposition to the transfer of production, the union apparatus has allowed it to continue. This has provided JBS with a crucial lifeline and reduced the pressure that a unified strike by meatpacking workers could otherwise exert.

At the same time, even at the struck Greeley plant, production has not been reduced to zero. As reported last week by the *World Socialist Web Site*, UFCW officials themselves acknowledged that so-called "replacement workers" have been allowed into the factory and are processing cattle. Workers estimated that roughly 300 cattle a day were still being handled, far below the thousands normally processed, but still enough to weaken the strike and signal to management that the union will not organize a genuine struggle.

Under these conditions, the company is gambling that it can outlast the strike, utilizing grinding poverty and government threats against immigrants—who are a large majority of the workforce at the plant—to soften workers up.

The proposed wage offer only underscores the contempt with which the corporation views workers. The 60 cent initial raise does not even keep pace with inflation and amounts to a real pay cut, before proposed increases to workers' health insurance plans. Workers are being told to sacrifice while JBS reports enormous revenues and profits.

The UFCW itself says it remains "ready to meet with JBS at any time." But talks could only lead to gains for workers if they are the ones taking the initiative, not the company. Instead, the bureaucracy's perspective remains one of resuming normal production as soon as possible, not broadening the struggle into an industry-wide and international fight.

The decisive issue is not simply whether JBS will return to the table, but what strategy workers need in order to win. To defeat a multinational corporation, workers need a strategy based on the independent mobilization of the working class on the broadest possible scale. The fight in Greeley cannot be won while production is shifted elsewhere and while workers are kept separated plant by plant, state by state and country by country.

JBS is a multinational corporation with enormous resources. The UFCW's own press release notes that JBS recorded \$86 billion in revenue in 2025 and \$2 billion in profits, while its stock rose on the basis of improved margins in the beef industry.

JBS workers across the country should organize with the Greeley workers to shut down scab cattle processing at Cactus and other plants. Lines of communication must be established immediately between meatpackers in Greeley and workers at Cactus and other JBS facilities to accomplish this.

Workers must appeal for support across the industry and internationally. Meatpacking workers in every plant confront the same corporations, the same attacks on wages and benefits, and the same union apparatuses that seek to suppress a common fight.

This is a struggle with world dimensions because it is an international workforce fighting a multinational with operations in over two dozen countries. Recent statements of support for strike from JBS workers in Brazil shows enormous sympathy for the strike, which must be activated through global collaboration.

This requires new organs of struggle, rank-and-file committees democratically controlled by workers

themselves, independent of the UFCW bureaucracy. Such committees could organize direct communication between plants, share information being hidden by the union officials and management, formulate workers' actual demands and prepare collective action to shut down the corporation's operations.

The Greeley strike has already demonstrated the immense fighting spirit of meatpacking workers. The issue now is how that strength is to be used. If the strike remains in the hands of the bureaucracy, it will continue to be isolated, worn down and ultimately betrayed. If workers take the struggle into their own hands and expand it to their brothers and sisters in other plants, it can become the spearhead of a broader offensive by the working class against corporate exploitation.

Now is the time to draw the necessary conclusions. Workers have shown they are ready to fight. What is needed is an independent, socialist perspective, that can lead to victory. Workers in Greeley interested in forming a rank-and-file committee should contact the *World Socialist Web Site*.



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