

UFCW preparing to sell out 3-week strike by JBS meatpacking workers in Greeley, Colorado

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Organize to fight the UFCW's sellout! Fill out the form below for assistance in building a rank-and-file committee.

Even though the company has not improved its offer by a single cent, the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 7 has ordered 3,800 meatpackers at JBS in Greeley, Colorado, back to work, three weeks into a strike at one of the largest beef-processing plants in the United States.

In statements released Saturday, both the union bureaucracy and the company acknowledged that no new contract proposal exists. UFCW Local 7 announced that JBS had merely agreed “to resume contract negotiations” on April 9 and 10 and that “as such, workers will return to work for shifts starting at or after 5 am on April 7, 2026.”

Even as Local 7 President Kim Cordova claimed that the “fight will continue,” her statement admitted that workers are still seeking “a contract offer that protects them” and “pays them a livable wage.”

The company's statement to the press was even more blunt. Reuters and the Associated Press reported that JBS had not changed its original offer. According to UFCW Local 7, JBS has insisted on wage increases of “barely 1.5% on average per year.” Workers on the picket line told the *World Socialist Web Site* the offer was 60 cents the first year and then 30 cents each year after that.

The proposal amounts to a real wage cut from a corporation that reported \$415 million in quarterly profits on \$23.06 billion in revenue, as rising fuel costs continue to erode workers' incomes.

Even by the low standards of the meatpacking industry, conditions in the plant are miserable. At least

six workers died in the first year of the coronavirus pandemic and another died in 2021. Last year, a whistleblower filed a lawsuit alleging systematic safety failures. Haitian immigrants have filed suit against JBS, which they say lured them to the country with promises of work and housing only to cram them into overcrowded conditions with no water or electricity.

Workers should defy the back-to-work order under conditions where nothing has been secured. Instead, they should continue the strike under rank-and-file control, elect a new strike committee consisting solely of workers from the rank and file.

According to Local 7 itself, the plant had been “almost completely idle,” with only “a miniscule fraction of production occurring.” Workers must use that leverage to expand the struggle to other JBS plants and appeal for support from workers across Colorado, including tens of thousands of UFCW Local 7 workers across the food supply chain.

In particular, they should link up with rank-and-file workers at other plants to stop the handling of scab cattle. The UFCW has allowed JBS to divert cattle to other facilities, including the Cactus, Texas plant, whose workers are also in the UFCW.

Moreover, the strike takes place as social struggles are growing across the United States. The year began with strikes by over 45,000 nurses in New York City, California and Hawaii. Around 800 BP refinery workers in Whiting, Indiana, are being locked out, auto parts workers at Nexteer are pushing for strike action, and tens of thousands of Los Angeles teachers are scheduled to strike April 14.

Around 80 percent of JBS workers are immigrants, and the strike is in defiance of Trump's campaign to

terrorize immigrants as part of his broader attack on democratic rights. More than 8 million people took to the streets on March 28 in the third “No Kings” protest against the Trump administration, indicating huge opposition to dictatorship and war.

This is one of the biggest strikes at a US slaughterhouse since the bitter Hormel strike in 1985-1986. For four decades, the UFCW has kept workers on the job as their wages and working conditions have been thrown back decades.

In that strike, when Hormel workers in Local P-9 rejected concessions and sought to expand their struggle, the UFCW bureaucracy placed the local under trusteeship and ultimately enabled a settlement ratified with the participation of strikebreakers and workers who had crossed the picket line. Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party Governor Rudy Perpich deployed the National Guard against the strike, carrying out mass arrests.

The UFCW is trying to shut down the strike because of the possibility of it developing into a broader struggle; in other words, because of its strength. This is not the first time. Last year, UFCW Local 7 shut down and sabotaged strikes by Colorado grocery workers, sending King Soopers workers back with a “labor peace” agreement in a transparent attempt to keep them from striking the same time as Safeway workers.

The Greeley plant handles about 6 percent of total US beef slaughterhouse capacity, making these workers exceptionally powerful. The strike was beginning to exert real pressure because the workers occupy a strategic chokepoint in the food supply chain.

But the Greeley workers cannot defeat a multinational corporation by fighting alone. They need a broader strategy based on mobilizing in a class movement in defense of the strike, not only in the US but around the world, including Brazil and the two dozen other countries where JBS operates.

Rank-and-file committees, made up of trusted workers on the shop floor and entirely independent of UFCW officials, must be built to transfer control of the struggle from the bureaucracy to the workers themselves. Special efforts should be made to unite immigrant workers with their “native-born” brothers and sisters.

The struggle at Greeley is part of a broader fight by the working class against corporate exploitation,

dictatorship and war. Workers produce society’s wealth and hold enormous power, but that power can be realized only through a rebellion against the pro-corporate union apparatus and the building of new organs of struggle controlled by the rank and file themselves.



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