

Direct Action Gets the Goods

A brief timeline of strikes in what is now known as Canada

Illustrations by Gord Hill, Kara Sievewright, David Lester, Orion Keresztesi, Sean Carleton, and Althea Balmes. Designed by Kara Sievewright.

Text adapted by the Graphic History Collective from a list compiled by Dale McCartney and Kristin Schachtel for an article written by Mark Leier for the Hospital Employees' Union.



1829

Oxford House, MB: Cree boatmen refuse to work for the Hudson Bay Company for only ten pelts per season and demand they receive the same pay, forty pelts, as their counterparts at York Factory for the same work.

1840s

Ontario: Irish canal workers walk off the job to demand adequate housing conditions, health services, and better pay. The government sends magistrates, police, and troops.



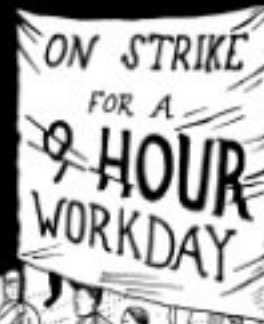
1872

Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia: A general strike for the nine-hour day and for the state to recognize trade unions as legal entities spreads across Southern Ontario and to Montreal and Halifax.



1868

Halifax, NS: Members of the Journeymen Bakers' Friendly Society strike for three weeks to reduce their working day from over sixteen hours to twelve.



1894

British Columbia: Indigenous fishermen strike on the Skeena River.



1898

Winnipeg, MB: American Railway Union members strike in sympathy with Pullman workers in the United States.



1907

Toronto, ON: Bell Telephone workers strike to protest long hours and to demand government regulation of work hours.



1901

Rossland, BC: Miners strike when employers try to dismantle the union and refuse to recognize it.



1917

Nova Scotia: Black workers organize the Order of Sleeping Car Porters to fight racist discrimination on the railway and to secure higher wages.



1911

British Columbia: Coal miners in Crow's Nest Pass and Vancouver Island shut down the industry to gain union recognition and the right to collective bargaining.



1904

British Columbia: 1,000 Indigenous fishermen strike on the Skeena River.



1918

Vancouver, BC: Longshore, street railway, metal trades, construction, and service workers walk out in a one-day general strike to respond to the death of union organizer Albert "Ginger" Goodwin.



1919

Winnipeg, MB: 35,000 workers stage a six-week general strike, one of the longest and largest strikes in Canadian history.



1920

Halifax, NS: Waitresses strike for a provincial minimum wage.



1925

New Waterford, NS: Company police shoot into a crowd of striking workers, killing William Davis.



1937

Calgary, AB: Meat packers stop work and occupy the factory of United Packing to protest discrimination against the union, unfair treatment, and unsafe conditions.



1937-1938

Blubber Bay, BC: Lime workers strike for eleven months for union recognition and an end to discrimination against union members by employers and the state.



Windsor, ON: Auto workers strike to maintain union security.

1946



1938

Canada: Relief camp workers stop work to protest conditions in government camps and occupy a number of buildings.

1966

Montreal, QC: Longshore workers strike to protest police ticketing their cars and Expo 67 wage levels.

1972

Quebec: Workers organize a general strike. Hundreds of thousands of people walk off the job, in part to defy the provincial government.



1949

Quebec: Asbestos workers strike to protest, in part, the operation of foreign businesses in Quebec and to protest the lack of wage increases.



1976

Canada: One million workers across the country walk out to protest the federal government's attempts to restrict wages.



2016

Montreal, QC: When an IWW member is fired in a local poutine shop, several union members occupy the building, stopping business. The employee is rehired by the end of the day.



1978
Vancouver, BC: Indigenous workers at an "Indian" themed restaurant join the Service, Office, and Retail Workers' Union of Canada (SORWUC), a grassroots feminist union, and begin a three-year strike.

1979

Clearbrook, BC: More than 200 farm workers refuse to work until back wages are paid. They win, and their success lays the foundation for the Canadian Farmworkers Union.

2012

Toronto, ON: Air Canada baggage handlers and ground staff stage a wildcat strike in solidarity with co-workers suspended for heckling the federal labour minister.

1981

Canada: Members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers strike to secure maternity leave.

1983

British Columbia: The Operation Solidarity movement organizes strikes to protest the provincial government's recession policies.

2004

British Columbia: 40,000 members of the Hospital Employees' Union strike to prevent the privatization of their jobs and health services. With calls for a general strike, 30,000 unionized workers in the public and private sectors take sympathetic action in support.

1986

Newfoundland and Labrador: Thousands of workers walk off the job to protest new limits on their right to strike.

1995-1998

Ontario: Workers across the province participate in a series of one-day demonstrations and general strikes known as the Days of Action.

