

## **Decant the Strike from Union Control!**

It has been four months since the two day walk out of the SAQ workers at the end of April of 2024. Since then the strike has been effectively stalled as the union indefinitely ‘negotiates’. Despite a fifteen day strike mandate overwhelmingly approved by the workers, the union seems entirely disinterested in pursuing any real militant action, leaving the workers themselves in a state of limbo. But in the face of a cost of living crisis, perhaps represented best by 70% of SAQ workers having part time status, it’s clear that what is required is militant working class action.

Indeed, workers in Canada and the world over continue to be hit with an ever-deepening economic crisis, and wages for the vast majority of the class continue to be chipped away bit by bit. The current struggle by SAQ workers reflects this ever-deepening precarity, particularly through the ways in which the tier system imperils the vast majority of its workforce. The tiers ensure that access to liveable wages is always in the control of quotas and middle management, which, through the necessity of capital to maximize the returns on labour, ensures that it will always be profitable to hire more laborers at lower tiers. Tolerable wages therefore remain for the select few who managed to tough it out for nearly a decade, as access to the highest tier for cashiers averages out to 12 years of continuous full-time employment. It is one of many mechanisms which service workers in particular are faced with that make their conditions more precarious, and the SAQ workers are not the only ones in the past couple of years who have taken to fighting against measures imposed by the bosses.

For instance, at the beginning of July 2024 in Ontario the LCBO workers also went on strike. Their demands were based on the points of wages, part time status, and the conservative government's policy on beer and wine distribution. The strike would end on concessions on all these points, however, the new contract only determined an 8% raise over the next 3 years, which will not even return the real wages to the point they were prior to the state of inflation let alone match the projected current rate. The Casino and BANQ workers all faced similar outcomes in recent strikes. This is just one of many examples of the union framework undermining the real needs of workers, and how real progress can only be leveraged by the self organization of the strike itself. In place of such negotiations behind closed doors, we workers must organize amongst ourselves to determine the direction and demands of the strike. Lessons can be taken from the FTQ daycare workers in Little Burgundy, who, in 2021, organized an email chain amongst themselves and went to the CSN and CSQ pickets against the FTQs wishes.

The workers of the SAQ organizing the strike beyond union control would not only position themselves better to achieve their demands but could also serve as a reference point for the wider working class in the face of this general crisis. It is only on the basis of a class-wide, active and political struggle that workers can truly combat the massive assaults of capital.



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