The lengthy and bitter strike by 2,000 United Aircraft workers (later called Pratt and Whitney) in Quebec, members of Local 510 of the UAW, began on January 7, 1974 and continued for 20 months. It was one of the longest and most violent strikes in Canadian history. The strike focused initially on wages and benefits but became a strike about union recognition and the Rand Formula. It was a key confrontation of the 1970s:

- It established the UAW in Quebec as a militant union that supported Quebec national rights and that was not afraid to take on the toughest battles of the workers’ movement;
- The United Aircraft strike created tensions between the Canadian UAW and the International leadership that led to growing Canadian nationalism and to Quebec’s demand for autonomy within the union;
- The brutal police repression against the UAW workers turned many people against the Liberal government and contributed to the election of the Parti Québécois (PQ) in 1976;
- The strike helped pressure the PQ government to bring in the Rand Formula (dues check-off) for all unionized Quebec workers in 1977.
In a strange twist of events, sensitivity to Quebec nationalism had led to a crucial expression of Canadian sovereignty and nationalism.

Sam Gindin, The Canadian Auto Workers, 1995

The company operated the plant with scabs. Following a failed attempt at mediation in May, 1975, a group of strikers occupied the plant and demanded a settlement to the strike. The Quebec Federation of Labour (FTQ) staged a massive rally outside the plant with 100,000 supporters.

With the arrival of provincial riot police, the strikers attempted to surrender peacefully. Strikers bearing white flags of surrender were beaten by police and many were severely injured. Thirty-four faced trial and three were jailed for almost four months.

Finally, with the strike entering its twentieth month, Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa came up with a settlement that both the company and the UAW agreed to recommend. On August 26, 1975, the membership of Local 510 voted to accept the agreement.

While the union won many of its demands including voluntary overtime, it failed to win the Rand Formula. In 1977, the newly elected Parti Québécois government brought in major reforms to the Labour Code including the Rand Formula and anti-scab legislation.