

Reject blackmail by the IAM, Boeing and Democrats!

For a new political strategy to defend the working class

The Socialist Equality Party
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The following statement is being distributed to Boeing workers in Washington state and Portland, Oregon who are voting today on the eight-year contract extension being pushed by the International Association of Machinists (IAM) on behalf of the giant airline manufacturer.

Boeing workers should vote “no” and reject the conspiracy by the IAM, corporate management and the Democratic Party in Washington to blackmail them into accepting conditions of industrial servitude. The rejection of this deal should become the starting point for a counteroffensive by the working class against the incessant demands of the corporations and big business politicians to destroy the achievements won over generations of struggle.

Working behind the backs of workers for months, the IAM—at both the International and District 751 level—concocted a deal with Boeing that strips workers of the right to strike, ends company-paid pensions and imposes higher health costs and inferior medical plans on workers. The deal would condemn the next generation to poverty-level wages and impose a de facto 10 percent wage cut on current workers given inflation projections until 2024.

Boeing has threatened to move production of its new 777X airliner from the Everett factory to South Carolina unless workers accept these draconian demands. In an effort to bribe workers into committing what amounts to suicide, the company and the IAM are dangling a \$10,000 signing bonus in front of them.

Top management and the IAM have not even used the pretext that such concessions are necessary to rescue the company from difficult economic conditions. On the contrary, CEO Jim McNerny is boasting to

investors that the company is highly profitable—with third-quarter earnings up 12 percent to \$2.2 billion—and stocks have hit a record high. McNerny has certainly reaped the benefits, pocketing \$27.5 million in salary and incentive pay last year, up 20 percent from 2011.

In addition to attacking workers, the company is extorting \$9 billion in tax cuts from the state of Washington with the help of Governor Jay Inslee and the state legislature.

It is increasingly apparent to tens of thousands of Boeing workers that the IAM functions as nothing more than a company union and the errand boys for the Democratic Party. Any organization that would impose such a sellout cannot in any sense of the word be called a “workers’ organization.”

The impoverishment of Boeing workers will have no impact on the high salaries of the affluent businessmen who run the IAM. After overseeing the betrayal of the strikes at Boeing in 2008 and the Caterpillar plant in Joliet, Illinois in 2012, International President Tom Buffenbarger pocketed \$304,114 in annual compensation last year. For his part, District 751 President Tom Wroblewski pulled in \$178,000.

Despite claims by various local officials in Washington that the IAM can return to the days of the “fighting Machinists” through new union elections, the truth is the IAM and the rest of the unions cannot be reformed.

The transformation of the unions into anti-labor organizations is not the product simply of the corruption of such figures as Buffenbarger, Wroblewski & Co. It is the result of decades of degeneration that has its roots in the pro-capitalist and nationalist character of the unions. Under conditions of the

globalization of production, unions in the US and around the world have established “labor-management partnerships” to drive down labor costs and boost the profitability and international competitiveness of the corporations.

For decades, the IAM, the United Auto Workers, the United Steelworkers, Teamsters and other unions have argued that the only way to “save” jobs was to accept concession after concession. American workers were pitted against our brothers and sisters around the world in a race to the bottom, while corporations like Boeing outsourced operations and destroyed tens of thousands of jobs anyway. The argument that everything must be done to defend the profits of the corporations has now resulted in the IAM seeking to impose what amounts to a 12-year slave’s charter on workers, complete with a ban on strikes for more than the next decade!

Workers are confronting not just one greedy corporation but the entire capitalist economic and political system. Over the last three years, the wealth of the world’s 2,000 billionaires has doubled while workers all over the world have seen nothing but wage-cutting, mass unemployment and austerity. Since the financial crash of 2008 and the bailout of the big banks, 95 percent of all income gains have gone to the richest one percent of the US population. McNerny, who is demanding that Boeing workers give up their pensions, is guaranteed \$250,000 a month in retirement benefits for the rest of his life.

The entire political establishment—from the Obama administration, to the Congress and state and local Democrats and Republicans—all insist that the working class must sacrifice everything to defend the profits and wealth of the capitalist class. The union’s alliance with Democrats like Obama and Inslee has nothing to do with defending the working class.

On the contrary, the savage cost cutting the IAM is imposing at Boeing is part of Obama’s policy of “insourcing” jobs from low-wage countries by slashing pay in the United States, just as it did in the auto industry with the collaboration of the UAW. Moreover, Obama’s Affordable Care Act, which taxes so-called expensive “Cadillac” health care plans, is being cited by the IAM and Boeing to reduce benefits to workers.

The opposition of Boeing workers is part of a growing mood of resistance in the working class in the United States and around the world, including struggles

by German Airbus workers, teachers in Chicago, school bus drivers in New York and Boston, and general strikes by Greek, Spanish and other European workers.

The working class needs new organizations of industrial and political struggle, independent of the unions and both big business parties. Boeing workers should form rank-and-file committees to take the conduct of the struggle out of the hands of the IAM and reach out to workers throughout the aerospace and other industries, in the US and internationally, to forge a common struggle.

The defense of the social right to a decent and secure paying job, a comfortable retirement and health care and other basic necessities for workers and their families can only be secured by rejecting the profit demands of the capitalist system and asserting the social rights of the working class—the vast majority of the population—as the priorities of society.

It is not a matter of scarce resources but the monopolization of society’s wealth by a parasitic few. Society can no longer afford the outrageous appetites of the super-rich. To defend the interests of those who produce society’s wealth, the working class must organize itself as an independent political force to take power.

The stranglehold of the corporate elite can only be broken when their ill-gotten gains are confiscated and economic life is reorganized on the basis of human need, not private profit. This can be done only when the big banks and corporations like Boeing—built up through the labor of generations of workers—are taken into the hands of workers ourselves and transformed into publicly owned industries.

We call on all Boeing workers who agree on the need for a new strategy for the working class to contact the Socialist Equality Party today.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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