

American Airlines announces 25,000 job cuts

Steve Filips
18 July 2020

American Airlines (AA) stock shot up over 16 percent yesterday as Wall Street learned of the company's plan to cut up to 25,000 employees from its workforce of 133,700. Behind the sharp rise is the recognition by investors that the brutal cuts will help the company extort further concessions from workers under conditions where the trade unions can be relied upon to suppress any resistance.

The accelerating spread of COVID-19 has been the major factor curtailing the limited return of airline passengers that began in June. There are few still willing to risk their health under conditions where there are not federally mandated health precautions in place. Meanwhile, the states of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut have added four more states to their tri-state 14-day quarantine list for travelers, bringing to 22 the number of states slapped with travel restrictions. Pennsylvania has a similar list containing 18 states.

On July 1, AA took the decision to lift safety precautions requiring distancing in seating, an action revealing that it and other airlines such as United are in effect placing profits over the safety of passengers and crew.

AA Flight attendants will bear the majority of the cuts, 10,000 jobs, followed by 4,500 ground crew workers, 3,200 mechanics, and 2,500 pilots.

The AA announcement follows last week's threat by United Airlines of 36,000 job cuts if there isn't an extension of federal support. Delta Air Lines has seen 17,000 job cuts from their 91,000 total workforce. The cuts were made by forcing some into early retirement and giving others cash payouts. The company did not rule out seeking more aid and enforcing additional cuts.

The unions have not taken any action to fight for airline safety or defend jobs. Their only response has been to plead for another government bailout for the airlines. American Federation of Flight Attendants (AFA) President Sara Nelson, who during the 2019

federal government shutdown issued a bogus call for a general strike, exemplifies the duplicity of the unions.

The AFA as of Friday had yet to make a statement outlining a defense against AA's job cuts other than pleading with the two parties of big business to grant another bailout to the airline companies and their major investors.

The federal \$25 billion bailout package, or CARES Act Payroll Support Program, was designed to fortify airline profits and nominally prohibit airlines from cutting workers before September 30. The program was supported by the unions and AFA President Nelson.

The situation is no different with the other airline unions such as Transport Workers Union and International Association of Machinists (TWU-IAM). TWU Local 512 in Itasca, Illinois near Chicago posted on Facebook only offering this pathetic advice in response to the attack on workers' jobs: 'If possible, concentrate on the good things in your life and take good care of yourself through healthy eating, exercise, and sleep.'

A further indication of the role of the unions in aiding management was revealed in a statement about the impact of the layoff announcement to local media by IAM Local 513 President Greg Cosey at American's hub at Dallas-Ft. Worth International (DFW), San Antonio, and Austin. Rather than calling for unity with other workers in the aviation industry to defend jobs and conditions, Cosey declared, "We try to calm our members down," complacently citing supposed job protections in the union contract. As workers know from long and bitter experience, the value of these supposed guarantees is zero.

The airline companies are hoping for an eventual pickup in air travel in the near term, which shows their confidence that the government's back-to-work drive will not encounter opposition from the trade unions. At the same time, they are looking for another government

bailout, which even if it happens will not prevent further layoffs and pay reductions.

For workers to mount serious and effective opposition to the job cuts they must organize and carry out action independent of the trade unions. We urge airline workers to form independent rank-and-file committees uniting pilots, ground crew and flight attendants. The *World Socialist Web Site* and Socialist Equality Party will do everything in our power to aid in this effort.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact