

As anger over union's stall tactics builds

IATSE sets Sunday strike deadline for 60,000 movie and television production workers

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The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) has set a strike day for Sunday night for 60,000 movie and television production workers if the union does not reach a deal with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP), the union announced on Wednesday.

The setting of the strike date is being presented as a negotiating tactic by IATSE. "The pace of bargaining doesn't reflect any sense of urgency," union President Matthew Loeb said. "Without an end date, we could keep talking forever. Our members deserve to have their basic needs addressed now." The AMPTP responded to the strike deadline by holding out hope for a deal stating, "There are five whole days left to reach a deal, and the studios will continue to negotiate in good faith in an effort to reach an agreement for a new contract that will keep the industry working."

There can be no doubt that the union, which has kept its members on the job since the August 1 without a contract, will now work furiously through the end of the week to come up with some deal which they can use to avert a strike. But sentiment for a strike is overwhelming among the workers, who voted by 98.6 percent to authorize job action earlier this month.

The IATSE union only called a strike authorization vote months after the contract expired and even had allowed a "pause" in negotiations in order to implement less stringent COVID-19 protocols so that management could ramp up production while exposing workers to infection. Moreover, the union is seeking a 10-hour turnaround time between shifts, in defiance of workers' demands for a maximum 12-hour workday, as well as 54-hour weekends which would not eliminate the hated "Fraturdays," or working on Friday until

early Saturday morning

Workers expressed frustration with the five-day delay. "It's time to poop or get off the pot. This has been going on since MAY. We're going to be seen as all bark and no bite. Let's do this. Let's do it now," one worker said on social media. The worker was admonished by a union Facebook page administrator, whose comment was made to keep this kind of conversation off of social media. Several such attempts at gagging expressions of opposition from workers have been made on the IATSE Facebook page in recent days.

Another worker retorted, "Good to know we warned them. Wtf guys this is not how it is supposed to work. They had their chance and failed so now we give them a warning and time to button up whatever needs to be buttoned. Jesus Loeb could you be more bought out. The point of this is to get what we want. Who are you working for? Because right now it's not us."

Another said, "Should pull the trigger now. Stop giving them time to overload those already pushed to the brink."

One worker posted the following to the IATSE Facebook page, "Let's strike!!!! They are working us like dogs right now and come holidays they won't even care if we are striking. What the hell are we doing??!!"

Another said, "I am a IATSE union member. I don't agree with what is going on either. Double up crews working around the clock, 7 days a week. I'm currently not working one of those shows. I just worry about everyone who is."

There has been no communication from the union to the membership on even basic questions on strike pay, such as whether there will be any, when it will kick in

or how much it will be. In reference to questions on the union's Facebook page, union bureaucrats told people to go to the union hall or call them. Workers responded by saying they had emailed and repeatedly tried calling, but there was no reply. One commentator summed up the attitude of IATSE with the words, "You are on your own."

Jonas Loeb, IATSE communications director, attempted unsuccessfully to redbait the *World Socialist Web Site*, whose articles on the struggle have been widely read by IATSE workers. "Would love for reporters like this to actually call me before they publish literal nonsense. If we are forced to strike beware, WSWs is known to show up and harass workers for not being communists."

A worker responded, "Nonsense? I wouldn't call it that. What's nonsense is that we're going to work 12-14 hours a day with 10-hour turn arounds and call it a win."

The film and TV production workers, who form the numerically largest part of a growing strike wave across the United States, are in a powerful position and can win their demands. To do this, however, they must begin preparing now to take the conduct of a strike out of the hands of the IATSE union and develop their own independent initiatives through the building of a network of rank-and-file strike committees.



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