

# Workers at Harley-Davidson in York, Pennsylvania face second sellout contract vote as union hides the details from its members

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*Organize a fight against the IAM's betrayal! Fill out the form below for information about how to form an independent rank-and-file committee at the York plant. All submissions will be kept anonymous.*

Opposition is mounting among the workforce at Harley-Davidson's York, Pennsylvania, operations against officials in the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), who are attempting to push through a sellout agreement at all costs.

In June, the almost 1,000-strong workforce at Harley-Davidson in south-central Pennsylvania unanimously rejected the first agreement brought to a vote by IAM Local 175. The proposal had kept the hated tier system and imposed wage cuts on the workers. The IAM is now attempting to pass an identical concessionary contract in a more undemocratic and hamfisted manner.

"IAM 175 sent a text today stating: 'Harley Davidson just offered their final, best, fair contract,' a worker at the facility told the *World Socialist Web Site*. Despite the claims of this being the "final, best" offer, workers are not being given an opportunity to review its contents until the day of the vote, August 16.

One worker commented on the local's social media page, "So let me get this straight. The last 'tentative agreement' was reached on June 3rd and contracts were handed out on June 10th. The 'Last best and final' offer was reached on July 29th and they are not sure they are going to have the copies back from the printer before the 16th of August? Seems odd."

Another worker exclaimed, "The contract is already typed up in a PDF file! Why can't we have the PDF file sent to our email or even a hot link put on the union's website so we can access the contract ASAP."

The worker added "[t]he union doesn't wait to take our dues out of our paycheck, they get it right away!"

During the first vote in June, Harley workers only had the weekend to review many pages of jargon-laced contract language without the advantage of discussing it on the shop floor, raising questions or formulating their own demands. Despite that, workers rejected the contract unanimously.

With workers paying monthly dues of \$76 dollars, IAM coffers are bloated enough to buy hundreds of high-quality, workable printers or just one computer to send emails.

The scheduling and location of the vote at the Wyndham Garden York Hotel is another indication that the IAM is working to lower the turnout and increase the likelihood that the new tentative agreement (TA) will pass. The timing for the ratification vote is either directly after or before the start of a shift on workers' own time. It is almost a 10 minute drive away from the plant excluding traffic, indicating the goal is to minimize turnout and debate as much as possible.

One worker told the *World Socialist Web Site*, "We got to vote on our own time, after work. No one is going to do it. They got stuff to do. Union won't have it at the HQ [union hall] at different times. Useless union man." Workers asking on social media if they would be compensated for taking time out of their shifts to vote were informed that they would not be.

On top of these underhanded moves, the local leadership is using scare tactics and smoke and mirrors to frighten workers into accepting the contract by saying Harley prearranged the hiring of a scab workforce in the event of a strike. Even if this is the case, this is more an exposure of the IAM for keeping

workers on the job after their unanimous contract rejection. Rather than drawing the lines and preparing for a struggle, IAM 175 is using the corporation's predictable preparations for a strike as an excuse to drop any pretense of resistance.

Local 175 has promised that the hated tier system will be eliminated in the far-off year of 2027. No one should believe these false promises. Contacts at the York facility have told the WSWS that a majority of the current higher-paid tier 1 workers are scheduled to retire, thus "leveling" the current system by sweeping out all the higher-paid employees.

The contract struggle comes amid a serious downturn in Harley-Davidson's profit. In July, the corporation reported that its sales were down by nearly 20 percent since last year. "Harley-Davidson dealerships have lacked new-motorcycle inventory to meet demand since supply-chain challenges hit the company during the pandemic," wrote the *Business Journal*.

A strike at the York facility, which produces all Harley-Davidson models, would seriously impact the company's ability to improve its profit margins.

But the main deterrent to a strike is the IAM bureaucracy, which has refused to set a deadline after the first contract rejection, playing right into the hands of the multinational giant.

The efforts to railroad Harley workers into accepting a sellout follows IAM's successful ramming through of a concessions-laden contract at the defense contractor Boeing.

Earlier this month at Boeing, the IAM sabotaged the massive opposition among workers. After a July 24 "no" vote rejection of a first TA, IAM canceled a strike at three Boeing plants in St. Louis and pushed through virtually the same concessionary contract workers rejected by huge margins two weeks prior. In doing so, the IAM came together with the company in order to support the US military's proxy war efforts in Ukraine.

Workers need to show the company they mean business. Harley workers should form their own independent rank and file workplace committee to first demand the timely release of the new TA. In addition, the vote must be held at a time and place accessible to all Harley workers with full rank-and-file oversight of the voting.

Ultimately, Harley workers face a battle on two fronts: against the company and the IAM. To overcome

this opposition and win the rights and concessions that they demand, workers at Harley must appeal to workers throughout their industry and in manufacturing more broadly. Workers at Boeing and in Harley plants located in Tomahawk, Wisconsin and Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, can be relied on to support a struggle, as can workers at Harley factories in Brazil, India, Thailand, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Italy and Taiwan.



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