

Spirit AeroSystems workers: Vote “no” on IAM sellout contract! Build rank-and-file committee to expand the strike!

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Are you a Spirit AeroSystems worker? Get more information about building a rank-and-file strike committee by filling out the form at the end of the article.

The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) bureaucracy is forcing 6,000 workers at Spirit Aerosystems in Wichita, Kansas, to vote today on a tentative agreement (TA) reached on Tuesday. The snap vote on the deal, which has the unanimous backing of the IAM Bargaining Committee, is a transparent attempt to end the powerful strike, even as it begins to take a major toll on the civilian and military aircraft supplier and its customers, including Boeing.

On June 21, workers overwhelmingly rejected a previous IAM-backed deal and forced the union to call a strike, which began on June 24. IAM officials say they hope to end the strike by July 5 with a simple majority vote for the TA, claiming it “addresses our members’ concerns with substantial wage increases, maintaining the CORE healthcare plan benefits that the membership insisted on, and includes no mandatory overtime.”

The stock markets took note of the deal with Spirit shares closing up 1.95 percent after falling precipitously in response to the strike.

According to the highlights of the contract released by Spirit, the proposal includes a 23.5 percent increase over four years, which barely keeps up with the current rate of inflation. It claims that workers will have the “exact same core healthcare plan,” that there will be “no mandatory weekend overtime” and a \$3,000 signing bonus.

Workers should not take any of the selected details

released by the union or management at face value. At the same time, the vote is being rushed through before workers have had sufficient time to study the entire 95-page “contract with new offer” that has been dumped onto the company’s website.

Even if management and the IAM made minor retreats from the first deal, this would only indicate what would be possible if workers conducted a sustained strike to win all of their demands. Workers cannot allow the IAM bureaucracy to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory!

It is highly significant that both management and the union are going all out to push this contract through, knowing in one way or another that anything the company gives up with one hand will be taken away with the other.

IAM officials have sought to dodge the fact that they were completely ready to accept the previous 16 percent offer. District 70 President Cornell Beard told a local ABC affiliate, “I am super, super proud of this membership. This would not have happened if they didn’t stand up and I’d also like to say that the only way you really get what you deserve is to stand up for it and that’s exactly what they’ve done.”

In fact, the workers had to stand up not only to the company, but the pro-company stooges in the IAM bureaucracy, which had insisted that nothing better was possible. Once again, rank-and-file workers must assert their own interests and fight for what they need, not what the Spirit executives and the IAM bureaucrats say is affordable.

The *World Socialist Web Site* urges workers to vote “no” on the tentative agreement and establish a rank-and-file strike committee to outline workers’ own non-

negotiable demands and reach out to Spirit and other aerospace workers in the US and internationally to expand the strike.

This deal should be rejected in principle because workers have not had sufficient time to read over a contract which will dictate their working conditions for the next four years or more.

The deal also retains the myriad of labor-management committees that are nothing less than a conspiracy against workers to boost productivity, undermine health and safety and increase profits at the expense of workers. As part of their demands, a rank-and-file strike committee should call for the elimination of all these corporatist bodies and their replacement with worker-controlled committees to oversee the pace of work and health and safety.

In the runup to the announcement of this sellout, the IAM agreed to a strikebreaking injunction with the company (available here and archived here) that flagrantly violates workers' democratic right to strike as well as to the basic First Amendment right to freedom of speech.

The injunction, which was heard by the judge on June 26, 2023, "upon joint application of the parties [company and union]" stipulates that workers must allow strikebreakers and trucks to pass through their picket lines "unobstructed." The prohibition includes, but is not limited to, "any attempt to intimidate, obstruct, or harass the officers, employees, members, present or prospective customers, or agents of Defendants or Plaintiff for the families, friends, acquaintances or supporters of such individuals. This prohibition also includes any attempt to intimidate, obstruct, or harass any person having business with Plaintiff or attempting to serve Plaintiff while at home or work or going to or from work for Plaintiff or entering, attempting to enter, leaving or attempting to leave [the plant]."

In other words, the IAM agreed to a consent decree that would render the strike totally ineffective and leave workers vulnerable to arrest and prison for any strike activity, including "making insulting or offensive remarks or speaking in an intimidating manner to anyone who is seeking to enter or to leave Plaintiffs offices, plants, warehouses, parking lots, or other property in Sedgwick County, Kansas..."

Meanwhile, scabs and hired security thugs are left

completely untouched by the injunction. To make that perfectly clear, the order says the terms of the injunction "shall not preclude Plaintiffs security personnel" from "exercising their duties."

For all the phony talk by the corporate press, government and political establishment about fighting for "freedom" and "democracy" in Ukraine, the US government runs a dictatorship against the working class and relies on the union bureaucracy to enforce the type of "labor discipline" necessary to wage endless wars for corporate profit.

As the WSWs has pointed out, "The intervention of a federal mediator is a clear indication that the union is working to end the strike as quickly as possible and impose a pro-management settlement. The Biden administration's intervention to block a strike by railroad workers and impose a pro-company contract shows the federal government is not a 'neutral arbiter' but an agent of US capitalism."

The strike by Spirit AeroSystems workers is part of a growing movement of the working class in the US and internationally against the efforts of the multinational corporations and their bought-and-paid-for politicians to force the working class to pay for the economic crisis and the cost of war. In recent weeks, hundreds of Clarios auto battery workers in Toledo, Ohio, and Wabtec locomotive manufacturing workers in Erie, Pennsylvania, have walked out, joining the growing wave of strikes by rail, airline and other workers in the UK, Germany, France, Italy and other countries.

In coming weeks, half a million UPS and GM, Ford and Stellantis workers will be entering contract fights. Now is not the time for Spirit workers to give up the fight. Instead, it is time to oppose the sabotage of the IAM bureaucrats and send a signal to all workers: now is the time to take matters into our own hands, transfer power from the union bureaucrats to the workers on the shop floor and unite to fight for what we need!

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To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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