

IATSE locals negotiate secret deals with movie producers with no details released after one week

Hong Jian
31 March 2024

As of Friday, six out of 13 International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) West Coast locals had reached tentative agreements (TAs) with the Alliance of Motion Picture & Television Producers (AMPTP). The agreements have been struck in record time, with two of the three largest locals coming to an agreement last week. The contracts expire July 31, involving some 60,000 workers in the industry.

The largest IATSE local, Cinematographers Guild Local 600, began negotiating with the AMPTP March 18 and had signed off on a TA early in the afternoon two days later. The third-largest local, Art Directors Guild Local 800, took only three days to come to an agreement, announcing a TA on the afternoon of March 21.

Local 729—set painters and sign writers—reached a TA after two days, while Local 695, which bargains for production sound technicians, television engineers, video assist technicians and studio projectionists, was able to come to an agreement in record time March 20, not even requiring a full day of negotiations before they were able to set pen to paper.

According to *Deadline*, “Motion Picture Studio Grips (Local 80) and the Make-Up Artists and Hairstylists Guild (Local 706) both finalized negotiations with the studios” last week as well.

The second-largest guild, Editors Guild Local 700, has not come to an agreement after a week, with union officials pausing their negotiations and resuming on Monday.

The rapidity and secrecy with which these guilds have come to agreements with the AMPTP should arouse the greatest suspicion and doubt on the part of IATSE members. The union is preparing another stab in the back.

None of the details of the agreement have been released yet, and this is over a week after certain locals reached

their agreements. Nor has the union communicated any information on the TAs to its membership, contrary to the claims before negotiations began that these negotiations would be as transparent as possible.

The falsity of the latter claim is further demonstrated by the fact that IATSE still has not released the minutes of the secret meetings it held with the AMPTP a month before contract negotiations began. In fact, union officials have not as yet even acknowledged the talks took place.

As for the TAs, according to the *Hollywood Reporter*, “Local 600 members won’t know the specifics of what was agreed to in this Local-specific negotiation until a larger agreement is reached between the AMPTP and all 13 Locals. The Art Directors Guild included similar language in its announcement on Thursday.”

The WSWs spoke to a member of Local 600 who explained, “I got a number of emails from the 600 that they have a tentative agreement, but couldn’t find any details either. There’s nothing on the website. ... It’s messed up, as I don’t even remember there being much dialog about it. They have these grievance sessions that usually devolve to a bitch fest where little gets accomplished.”

In response to queries from workers about the TAs, IATSE was forced to respond on Tuesday, stating in a press release that more “information regarding these Local agreements will be provided to members by their Local Unions once Memorandums of Agreement have been formally drafted by the lawyers of both parties and submitted to the corresponding Local for approval.”

This is just another deception in a long series of deceptions by the union tops. Matthew Loeb, the president of IATSE, who collects more than \$560,000 from workers’ dues, has proclaimed time and again that these negotiations would be the most transparent in

history, yet TAs have been reached and workers do not even know the details of the proposals, much less what officials have agreed to in secret.

Negotiations are carried on behind closed doors and only management and the union leaders are privy to the details, while workers are kept in the dark for as long as possible, often not finding out the “finer points” of the concession contract until months later.

Workers should demand that all negotiations be carried out publicly, and livestreamed. Every section of management knows exactly what is happening in every negotiation, and so should every worker. It is their lives and future that are being determined after all.

UPS drivers are currently undergoing a jobs massacre only months after signing what was billed as a “historic” agreement by Teamsters President Sean O’Brien and his cronies. The same is true of another “historic” agreement signed by the UAW’s Shawn Fain (who is promoted by pseudo-left groups such as Labor Notes and the Democratic Socialists of America). The UAW is presently overseeing layoffs throughout the auto industry.

The entertainment unions do everything in their power to keep workers divided by craft, city, region and every other possible means. In this way, coupled with secrecy and anti-democratic by-laws, IATSE and the rest have been able to push through one rotten contract after another, for decades.

Workers need to take the process out of the hands of the highly paid, pro-corporate union officials, through building democratically controlled rank-and-file committees independent of both the bureaucracy and the two parties of big business.

The union bureaucracies need to be dismantled and their resources returned to the workers, who will reach out to other workers in the entertainment industry, and across all industries, while also formulating real demands and devising a strategy to win them.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact