

Boeing machinists ready to strike ahead of September 12 contract expiration

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4 September 2024

Do you work at Boeing? Tell us what you're demanding in the next contract by filling out the form below. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

As their September 12 contract expiration date approaches, Boeing machinists are determined to fight and strike to ensure their demands from the company are met. The more than 33,000 members of International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) Local 751, who assemble Boeing's 737 and 777 aircraft, voted in July by 99.9 percent to strike.

Among the workers' main demands are a wage increase of at least 40 percent, increased healthcare benefits, better job security and the reinstatement of pensions.

Similar demands are being pressed by other sections of the working class who are also preparing for major confrontations, including East Coast dockworkers, teachers, railroaders and others. The stage is set for a powerful unified movement of all these workers and more.

At the same time, Boeing workers are also confronting the corporatist IAM bureaucracy. While claiming it remains "far apart" on key issues such as wages, the union has nevertheless scheduled a vote for September 12 on a contract which officially does not exist.

The IAM is also laying the framework to impose the contract even with a majority no vote. They are making workers vote again on whether to strike during the vote on the contract, with the proviso that any vote to strike below a two-thirds majority results in the automatic ratification of the contract.

Several Boeing workers have taken to social media to voice their support for strike action. One commented. "Always vote yes to reaffirm the strike! To those who

witnessed all the past events unfold it still is fresh in our minds.

"We got this if we stick together and don't fold too early. Expect mass propaganda! We don't do this for the company, politicians, community or even the union. We do this for ourselves and our families."

Another said, "I grew up in South Everett in the late 70's and 80's, so I know Boeing used to be a good company to work for. These days, Boeing is a s*** company, with a terrible and unsafe product. The leadership are scumbags from the top down, with only a few exceptions. Safety is a convenience when necessary, and training is laughable. The only people the Boeing cares about is their shareholders and profit is the only goal. I just want people to think about all this when we go to vote on the 12th."

And another spoke on the role of the IAM in gutting pensions for Boeing workers. "Both the IAM and SPEEA allowed contracts to stop pensions for new hires. It was baffling how few cared or could foresee the obvious schism this would cause with new vs. old members. And wouldn't you know it, fast forward a few years and the pension gets frozen for everyone. After all, why would a new hire—who doesn't even get a pension—care?"

The worker was referring to the 10-year contract extension, which was narrowly ratified in 2014, under dubious circumstances. At the time, Boeing threatened to shift production of the 777 airplane out of Washington state in order to eliminate its pension obligations.

Rather than mobilize its membership for a strike, bringing together the tens of thousands in District 751 and the hundreds of thousands across the union as a whole, the IAM betrayed the interests of its membership and let pensions go without a fight in order

to help maintain Boeing's profitability.

Similar maneuvers are again underway. Hiding behind rules set by the corporate National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), the IAM has not released any details of the discussions between itself and the company, not even on the most critical demands of wages and pensions.

In its September 3 update, the IAM noted, "We remain at odds over several items: wages, healthcare, retirement, additional time off, and job security." Yet workers are expected to vote in less than two weeks on a contract that does not officially exist, one which they will have essentially no time to study.

In reality, the vote shows that a deal has existed all along, and that the real substance of the talks between management and union bureaucrats is how to get it passed through widespread rank-and-file opposition.

If a strike does occur, workers will not get strike pay from the IAM until the third week of the strike. And the pay itself will be just \$250 per week, not nearly enough to survive in the Puget Sound region. The IAM also called on workers to donate to their own "Individual Strike Fund," forcing even more burdens on the backs of the rank and file.

Workers should also be wary of the meeting between IAM District 751 President Jon Holden and acting Labor Secretary Julie Su, at which he gave her "a clear picture of where we stand." Su has played a key role in ensuring sellout deals are put in place, including among West Coast dockworkers and Nevada culinary workers last year. Dockworkers had begun wildcat strikes after being left on the job without a contract for 12 months, and Su stepped in to quell the rank-and-file rebellion.

Su also spoke at the IAM's 41st Grand Lodge Convention, falsely claiming that the Biden administration is pro-worker. She demagogically stated, "We're building an economy where workers come first and where no workers are left behind."

In reality, the Biden administration is allied with the bureaucrats against the workers. This was shown at the Democratic National Convention, where United Auto Workers President Shawn Fain spoke. Through a new contract which was personally endorsed by Biden, automakers are slashing thousands of jobs, while the UAW apparatus has not lifted a finger to defend them.

That the Biden administration is in direct talks with the IAM leadership must be taken as a serious warning

by rank-and-file workers. A pro-corporate sellout is being prepared. In every industry, but especially at an aerospace giant like Boeing, a strike would critically disrupt the US government's war aims and attempts at geopolitical conquests. Industrial action at Boeing would have serious consequences for the American war machine to function.

It is thus imperative that workers begin taking the preparation for a strike into their own hands. They must demand that the July vote be respected if the membership has not approved a deal by September 12, that they have adequate time to read and study the contract put forward and that the contract can be rejected by a simple majority. Rank-and-file workers must also have oversight of the balloting process to ensure against "irregularities."

Above all, this means building new sections of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) at Boeing and related industries. They must connect themselves to committees all over the world fighting against sellouts by the companies and union bureaucracies and become centers of international working class opposition to capitalism.



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