# In massive repudiation of IAM bureaucracy, Boeing workers overwhelmingly reject sellout contract

**Bryan Dyne**
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*Join the Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee to take up the fight for workers' control! Text (406) 414-7648 or email boeingworkersrfc@gmail.com. Alternatively, fill out the form at the bottom of this article to be put in touch.*

Boeing workers overwhelmingly rejected a contract backed by the leadership of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) on Thursday and voted to immediately strike. Workers began the walk out at the giant aircraft manufacturer's plants in Washington, Oregon and California Friday morning. The strike, involving 33,000 workers, is the first at Boeing since the eight-week strike in 2008.

According to the official count, rank-and-file workers voted by 94.6 percent to reject the IAM-backed deal and by 96 percent to strike. The vote is a massive repudiation of the IAM bureaucracy and the Biden-Harris administration, which has worked closely with IAM leaders to prevent a walkout at the key US aerospace and defense corporation.

The revolt is part of a growing movement of the working class in the US and internationally to assert workers basic social rights, and oppose eroding living standards and massive increase in social inequality.

Outrage has exploded over the steep loss in real income that workers have suffered over the last 12 years of contract extensions overseen by the IAM bureaucracy. Young workers, some making less than $20 an hour, are unable to pay skyrocketing rents, particularly in Seattle, one of the most expensive metropolitan areas in which to live in the country.

The four-year offer backed by union officials included an insulting 25 percent pay raise, along with the elimination of the annual AMPP (Aerospace Machinists Performance Program) bonus, which would result in a de facto 16 percent pay cut over the life of the contract. The deal also ignored workers' demands for the restoration of company-paid pensions.

In addition, the agreement included loopholes allowing "emergency" overtime, it added a probation period where new workers can be fired at will, and included a worthless pledge to build a new jet that would not even exist during the life of the contract.

IAM leaders attempted to prevent the strike by requiring two-thirds of voters to authorize a strike again, even though workers had voted by 99.9 percent in July to strike. This dirty trick failed, however, with workers at all of the company's facilities voting nearly unanimously to walk out.

Throughout the day on Thursday, workers were watching for voting irregularities, mindful of how the IAM rammed through a two-year contract extension in 2014, which gave up pensions for new hires. Workers told WSWS reporters that after the first contract proposal was rejected in 2014, the IAM held a revote while many workers were away on holiday and announced that the deal had passed by a 51-49 percent margin amid widespread charges of ballot stuffing.

On the eve of the vote, the newly founded Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee issued a widely circulated statement calling for a rejection of the contract and for workers to take the conduct of the struggle into their own hands.

The statement declared in part,

> That the IAM officials had the nerve to send this contract to us is a declaration that they, including District 751 President Jon Holden, don't speak for us but for Boeing.

"The union officials," the statement continued, were,

> helping Boeing to force the cost of their crisis onto us. But we aren't responsible for the reckless cost-cutting which has killed hundreds. We take pride in our work and take safety seriously. We refuse to be made to pay for the criminality of Boeing's executives and shareholders!

There was an outpouring of opposition at voting locations on Thursday, with workers at the giant Everett, Washington facility carrying homemade signs and t-shirts calling for a no vote and a strike. Typical was one sign declaring, "No pensions, No planes."

A veteran worker at the Everett, Washington facility who was urging his fellow workers to strike told WSWS reporters, "I've heard that some of our co-workers can't afford food and that they have to go to food banks. Why is that? This corporation makes money hand over fist. So, we're here every day, 6-7 days a week, 10-12 hours a day sacrificing our lives for this corporation. They spent billions of dollars to artificially inflate their stock, but they can't pay us.

"It's the young workers that we're most concerned about. It's important that they have the same benefits as we do, if not more. They are our legacy, and they are going to be here 25 years building airplanes when we're gone. They should be able to have kids and have health insurance for their kids. Otherwise there won't be any future, and it won't be any different than any other corporation that

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treats their employees like slaves."

His co-worker said, "We've had three extensions since 2008, and with every one of them they've taken something away from us. I've worked at Boeing for 18 years. I came here for a pension at year 10. We were blackmailed to give up our pension and accept 1 percent raises every other year. I put almost 40 percent of my paycheck [into a 401K], and everybody knows it isn't guaranteed money. If the stock market crashes, you lose tons of money."

Another worker rejected the company's demands that workers sacrifice for the criminal actions of corporate executives that led to the deadly crashes of two 737 Max jets in 2018-19, and the blow out of an Alaskan Airlines door plug on a similar jet in January 2024.

"Management decisions were responsible for those deaths. Then they inflated the value of the company with stock buybacks, and received bonuses based on that. So they robbed the company of $150 billion minimum, and now they are complaining about being $60 billion in debt. They want to punch down and make the people who build the airplanes by hand pay for that. No way!"

Another worker added, "Every single time we have a contract negotiation, Boeing takes more away, and they never give. Now they want to claim that because they're $60 billion in debt that they can't afford to pay us. Well, when they had money and record profits, they just threatened to leave. So you know what, if you trust Boeing to do the right thing when they are in a good place they never will. We put our bodies on the line every day working with rivet guns and drills. Carpal tunnel is a very common problem and the blowing out of your joints, not to mention your hearing."

The relentless assault on workers' jobs and living standards is fully backed by Kamala Harris and the Democrats and Donald Trump and the Republicans. Both back Boeing, which is a critical defense contractor, supplying jet fighters and missiles for American imperialism's expanding wars for global domination.

In contrast to the two corporate-controlled parties, Socialist Equality Party vice presidential candidate Jerry White issued a statement supporting the rebellion of the Boeing workers and traveled to Everett, Washington to speak to workers voting on the sellout deal.

In a statement to workers, White said:

> The fight at Boeing is part of a growing movement of the working class against an entire social system: capitalism. This is a system of exploitation in which the wealth produced by the collective labor of workers is monopolized by a handful of oligarchs who own everything. Workers must oppose the dictatorship of the ruling elites through the fight for workers' power.
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> Boeing is a strategically vital US defense contractor and exporter. A stand here will embolden workers everywhere. Boeing workers must appeal to the working class across the United States and around the world, including 50,000 Washington state public workers who struck Tuesday, 45,000 dockworkers whose contract expires this month, striking oil refinery workers from Detroit, autoworkers and others.
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> Everywhere, the working class is fighting against the same thing: the erosion of their living standards by inflation and automation-driven layoffs. They are fighting for their social rights to a decent job, safe working conditions, ample time off to spend with their families, which the capitalists violate at every turn.

In the face of the wholesale shift to the right by the American political establishment, with a presidential contest between the fascist Trump and warmonger Harris, the Boeing strike has the potential to become a catalyst for an industrial and political counter-offensive by the working class against inequality, war and dictatorship.

The struggle, however, cannot be left in the hands of the IAM bureaucracy. The union officials will no doubt claim that they have "heard the members loud and clear" and will renegotiate a better contract. Repeating the playbook from the sellout of last year's auto contract battle by the United Auto Workers apparatus, various Democrats will shower workers with false praise.

Behind the scenes, however, the union bureaucracy and both corporate-controlled parties will conspire to wear workers down and force them to vote on the same deal, with a few cosmetic changes.

As the Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee warned:

> The first step is to send this contract into the garbage. But we must take matters into our own hands. We can't waste any time on wishful thinking that a "no" vote will "force" the IAM bureaucrats to hear us. They won't be won over because their bread is buttered on the other side.

The committee demanded that workers be paid full strike benefits from day one, paid out of the IAM's $300 million in assets. It called on workers to establish lines of communication with workers in other industries and "turn our struggle into a movement of the whole working class, who are fighting the same issues we are."

In addition to workers in the US, the committee states, Boeing workers should appeal for worldwide support, including from Airbus workers who are facing similar attacks in Europe.

*To contact the committee, text (406) 414-7648 or email boeingworkersrfc@gmail.com. Alternatively, fill out the form at the bottom of this article to be put in touch.*

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