

Seattle dockworkers support Boeing strikers

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On Sunday, September 22, at 2:00 p.m. Pacific/5:00 p.m. Eastern, the Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee is holding an online meeting to mobilize the broadest support in the working class for the 33,000 striking Boeing machinists. Register for the event by clicking here.

Dockworkers at the Port of Seattle are speaking out in support of the strike by 33,000 Boeing workers and expressing their solidarity with the rank-and-file revolt against the International Association of Machinists (IAM) leadership, which failed to impose another pro-company contract.

Today is the one-week mark of the strike at Boeing facilities in the states of Washington, Oregon and California. The IAM has reported that negotiations over a new contract proposal, which have been overseen by federal mediator, ended Wednesday and that there are no new meetings scheduled. This makes it clear that the company and the Biden-Harris administration is leaving it up to the IAM bureaucracy to wear down the strikers and starve them into submission with \$250 a week strike pay (which does not start until the third week) before attempting to push through another sellout deal.

Spouting the empty and false slogan, “One day longer, one day stronger,” the IAM and AFL-CIO bureaucracy is seeking to isolate the strike. Above all, they fear that Boeing workers will unite with other sections of workers who are looking to fight decades of union-backed concessions and impossibly high living costs.

The Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee is hosting an online meeting this Sunday to mobilize the working class behind the strike and break the isolation of the struggle by the union bureaucracy.

In a statement earlier this week, the committee said, “We cannot win this struggle alone. The strike must be expanded to all sections of Boeing workers, including the engineers in SPEEA and non-union workers at the South Carolina plant. Informational pickets should be sent to win support from dockworkers, railroaders, Washington state employees, healthcare workers, education workers.

A special campaign to reach airline workers internationally at Air Canada and Airbus.”

There is widespread support for common action to defend the Boeing workers. A *World Socialist Web Site* reporting team visited the local International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) hall Thursday morning where casual workers were lining up for their daily work assignments. Several dockworkers said they also worked at Boeing because they needed two paychecks to keep up with the high living costs in the Seattle area.

“I’ve been on the picket lines a couple of days already. When I don’t get a job here, I go out there. We are really upset with the IAM leaders. The employees at Boeing, we voice our concerns about the contract, about our future. They hired thousands of new workers, trying to get them to vote on the contract. The boomers thought these young kids were going go for the contract, but these young kids they listened. They want a better future for themselves.”

“At Boeing, it’s push, push, push. The company wants to make us look bad, but they are the ones who are not training people. They are supposed to get a couple of months of training but they’re getting a couple of weeks.”

He continued: “There has been talk here about going to the picket lines. I was there Monday when the pilots came out to support us. This strike is changing things. Everybody should be supporting us. The CEO just made \$33 million for stepping down. We’ve been making the same thing for the last 16 years.

“We have to support one another. We are the ones that build America, and the world. I’ve seen strikers in Paris. We should come together, not just say, ‘I have my career here, I’m not worried about other people.’ But we all make this world work, and we should come together.”

Describing the situation facing dockworkers, he said, “We’ve worked every day during Covid. I live in Tacoma, and I work in Renton, and they sent me 40 miles to Everett when Covid first hit. They were trying to make workers quit without look bad about firing people during Covid. I just hope they don’t bring the government in. All

these politicians are paid off by Boeing.”

“Stand together, and get what you’re worth,” said a dockworker who used to work at Boeing. “A lot of guys work both jobs,” she said. Commenting on the similarity of the struggle of workers on the docks, at Boeing and other workplaces, the worker added, “The employers are being cheap, and they need to pay their workers. And we need to stand together and fight for what we’re worth.”

“The dockworkers on the East Coast are about to go on strike. We want our wages, our pensions, our insurance for our families and ourselves. In the long term, we want to have what we worked for when we retire. We’re casuals and we have been doing this for the last eight years. There is a huge difference in wages between the casuals and the full-time workers. We make about \$30 depending on the work. We just come in [to the union hall], whatever jobs have not been filled, we take over.”

“I don’t think the government should intervene at all. The employers need to pay up.” She concluded with a message to the Boeing workers: “We’re with you, keep fighting.”

Another casual worker said, “Boeing workers, keep the faith, and stay strong. We support them 100%. I’m just coming in as a new hire, my buddies are putting me to school. The housing costs are terrible. I was raised in West Seattle, and it is just so expensive. They got us moving down south. Out here it’s so expensive, you could pick up a rock in West Seattle and it’s a hundred dollars. It’s crazy.”

Like the Boeing workers, dockworkers are not only fighting the employers in the Pacific Maritime Association but also the ILWU bureaucracy. In 2022-23, ILWU leaders kept 22,000 West Coast dockworkers on the job for 22 months after the expiration of their contract before pushing through a contract backed by the Biden administration.

During the time, the ILWU apparatus enforced a no-strike, no lockout pledge even as British Columbia dockworkers, who are also ILWU members, went on strike, with Canadian traffic being diverted to US West Coast ports. The deal was pushed through to clamp down on a growing wave of job actions by rank-and-file dockworkers in defiance of the no-strike pledge, which threatened to link up with Canadian dockworkers.

In Seattle, there are only a few hundred top-paid “A” and “B” dockworkers, 600 “C” casual workers and around 1,000 more even lower-tier “D” casuals.

Commenting on younger workers at Boeing insisting that they have living wages too, he said, “Yes, we are

definitely human.”

Dockworkers are angered over the fact that they were being forced to handle cargo from the strikebound Everett, Washington Boeing plant, and are ready to take solidarity action to defend the striking Boeing workers.

Referring to the overwhelming vote to reject the IAM-backed contract, a veteran dockworker said, “Good for them, that they rejected the contract. I would have too. We are all in this together. We all need the living wage. I heard that Boeing workers don’t have good representatives. You have the [union leaders], and you have the workers.”

“Top union execs, the president or whoever is making \$600,000 a year, telling the low wage guys, ‘You should take this.’ What was the deal? Twenty-five percent and they would lose their bonus. That’s not even 2 or 3 percent a year. That’s not close to living wages. You got guys at Dick’s Burgers who are making \$26 an hour and the starting wages at Boeing are around \$20. And these guys are building planes for our country and the world.”

“The politicians are getting money from the corporations, and they are screwing workers. As union workers we should be fighting the big dogs, including the government because they are playing a big role in this. All of us workers, we have to hook up together.”

Join the Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee to take up the fight for workers’ control! Text (406) 414-7648 or email boeingworkersrffc@gmail.com. Alternatively, fill out the form below to be put in touch.



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