

Boeing strike at the crossroads: What workers need to fight intervention by government and Wall Street

Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee
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The following statement was issued by the Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee. To join the committee, text (406) 414-7648, email boeingworkersrfc@gmail.com or fill out the form at the end of this article.

Brothers and Sisters,

Our strike is at a crossroads. The news that Boeing is looking to raise an additional \$25 billion is a declaration that the company, and Wall Street behind it, is determined to crush our strike.

They were thrown off balance in September by the overwhelming vote to strike, and again after we made clear on social media and the picket lines that the company's "Best and Final" offer did not at all meet our demands. We have made it clear that to stay above water, we need a 40 percent wage increase and restored pensions, and that a mere 30 percent increase is not enough.

Now Boeing is retaliating. They have announced layoffs for 17,000 of our brothers and sisters across the company, which will no doubt include thousands of machinists. They have withdrawn their offer and are no doubt preparing a far worse one. The strike has cost them \$5 billion, and they are determined to make workers pay.

The company is taking these measures because it feels confident in its position, for three reasons:

First, behind Boeing is Wall Street, which has already backed the company with another \$10 billion in loans. Kelly Ortberg and Boeing's other executives know that the company is a major linchpin of the American economy, including a major exporter, and the corporate oligarchy considers it "too big to fail."

Second, Boeing knows it has the support of the Biden-

Harris administration. Boeing is a major defense contractor. Behind the backs of the working class, including ourselves, war with Iran being prepared. The proxy war with Russia is escalating, and a future war with China, which would no doubt involve nuclear weapons, is on the horizon. To prepare, the ruling class has to shore up the domestic front. This means the strike at Boeing has to be shut down.

That's the real purpose behind the visits of acting Labor Secretary Julie Su, Pramila Jayapal and Maria Cantwell to the picket lines and yesterday's rally. The Democrats, as well as the Republicans, are determined to wage war around the world and have deployed some of their most high level operatives to ensure production goes smoothly.

No one should forget that in 2023, Julie Su visited the West Coast docks and just days later, the ILWU bureaucracy announced it had reached a deal with the shipping companies. She was also key in shutting down the strike this month on the East Coast docks.

They pose as friends of workers now, but Jayapal and Cantwell received \$200,000 in campaign contributions from Boeing, and both voted in 2022 to outlaw a national rail strike. Now, SMART-TD and the other union leaderships are imposing contracts that have everything the rank and file fought against, especially the dangerous one-man crews. On both the docks and the railroads, safety standards are being shredded.

Third, Boeing can count on the support of the union bureaucracy, which never wanted this strike in the first place. In the face of Boeing's massive provocations against the strike, attacks on our jobs and those of other Boeing workers and open preparations for a prolonged strike, the IAM merely repeated the word chants of

“Our future, our fight” and “One day longer, one day stronger,” while starving us on the picket lines with \$250 a week, forcing us to get second jobs. The IAM has effectively abandoned even adequately staffing the picket lines.

And more importantly, the bureaucracy has kept us isolated from our brothers and sisters in Seattle and around the world. During the first week of October, 45,000 East Coast dockworkers went on strike, facing the same basic problems we are: stagnating wages, eroded benefits and collapsed quality and safety standards. But there was not a peep about waging a collective fight between machinists and dockworkers and really showing our collective strength.

Nor has there even been any connection between our strike and other ongoing strikes in aerospace, including the 525 workers at Eaton Aerospace and the 5,000 machinists, *also in the IAM*, at Textron Aviation.

We must speak plainly: We need a new strategy. We have shown our immense power in this strike, and there is enormous support for us. Recently, Australian doctors issued a statement supporting us, while Brazilian Embraer workers have also voted down a sellout contract.

Everything depends wholly on the initiative of the rank-and-file to expand our struggle and unite with other sections of the working class. When we formed the Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee, it was on the eve of the strike vote to encourage the broadest possible mobilization to strike.

We explained a new form of struggle had to be built. No one should forget that it was the IAM bureaucracy that first brought us a rotten deal of a 25 percent raise and no pension after promising us 40 percent and restored pensions back in July. And no one should forget that the business reps and other bureaucrats have continued to draw their six-figure salaries, while we have been out on the picket lines on \$250 a week, which only started on the third week.

The only way to win our strike is to expand the fight as much as possible. We have to reach dockworkers, railroaders, Seattle teachers, nurses, Washington state employees, flight attendants and all the sections of the working class coming into struggle, both in the US and especially internationally.

We are not just facing Boeing but an entire profit system that is bearing down on our strike with

enormous force. That Boeing has had to raise so much cash testifies to the impact we have had, but now we must turn toward our natural allies in other sections of the working class and mobilize them as well. Good wages, a secure retirement and high safety standards are our rights and it is only through unifying with other workers can they be won.

We propose a three-point program to defeat Boeing escalations:

- **An immediate increase of strike pay to \$750 a week, retroactive to the first week, to show them we mean business. The strike fund is the property of the rank and file, not the union bureaucrats, and those resources are needed especially now that Boeing has an extra \$35 billion from its Wall Street backers.**

- **Rank-and-file oversight of all talks. We must make clear that we view any agreement produced through backroom discussions involving IAM bureaucrats with corporate executives and White House officials as illegitimate. Only through full transparency, including the livestreaming of all talks and rank-and-file control over negotiations, can we obtain a contract which meets our demands.**

- **We must fan out to the docks, the schools, the factories and other workplaces, setting up informational pickets and using other methods to urge them to support our fight. This must not be limited to moral solidarity: Preparations must be made for mass industrial action. The whole of corporate America is lining up behind Boeing; the working class must line up behind us.**



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