

IAM bureaucrats seek to ram through Textron deal to isolate Boeing strike

Bryan Dyne
19 October 2024

On Thursday, Textron Aviation announced it gave an “updated contract” to officials of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) District 70, Local Lodge 774, in an effort to shut down the ongoing strike of 5,000 machinists.

The only difference in the new proposal, as admitted in Textron’s own FAQ about the updated offer, is that the contract is now for five years instead of four, with an added 5 percent general wage increase in 2028. In other words, it is really a worse contract than what workers voted *no* on last month, locking workers into a below-inflation agreement for an extra year.

The same announcement from Textron also menacingly asserted, “We expect union members will have the opportunity to vote on the updated contract offer this weekend,” all but demanding that the strike end by Sunday.

In what was clearly a planned maneuver, the IAM bureaucracy acquiesced almost immediately. Despite District Lodge 70 Secretary-Treasurer Teresa Peart’s claims that “when we fight, we win,” the union leadership announced a vote on the essentially unchanged contract almost immediately. The vote is scheduled for this Saturday and Sunday.

That the IAM apparatus even brought this contract to a vote is a clear indication that the bureaucracy never had any intention of waging a serious strike. It has not provided the full contract details and will only provide “packets of changes” at the vote itself. Moreover, one of the main demands of workers, the restoration of pensions stolen in 2014, has been completely dropped.

“They didn’t change anything,” a striking Textron worker in Wichita told the WSWS. “I honestly don’t think the union negotiating committee is even trying to ask for the things the workers are demanding.

“There is not enough communication or transparency between the average union worker and the ‘union

negotiating committee.’ Nobody seems to be real sure what’s going on.”

Describing the impact of the rising cost of living and eroding wages, he continued, “New hires start at \$20 per hour, which is only a few dollars more than the starting wage at McDonald’s and less than you make working at Walmart.

“Rent has doubled, and buying a starter home will cost you over \$150,000. A brand new Toyota Corolla that would have cost less than \$10,000 10 years ago now costs over \$30,000.

“They nonstop talk about how legendary their employees are, but the only thing ‘legendary’ is the company’s profits and the executives’ pockets, filled from the hard work of a very talented and irreplaceable workforce.

“It’s time for the tables to turn. We are building airplanes. People’s lives are in our hands, and we respect and understand that importance.”

The attempt to impose a sellout contract on Textron machinists comes the same week the IAM bureaucracy held a rally in Seattle for the 33,000 striking Boeing machinists to lay the groundwork for ending that strike.

In a clear indication that it is preparing to sell out the Boeing strike, IAM Local 851 wrote on Friday that it is “actively engaged in indirect discussions” with Boeing, facilitated by Acting Labor Secretary Julie Su. “We are fully committed to these talks,” the union wrote. “It is our responsibility to attempt to reach a resolution.”

From the perspective of the companies and union bureaucracies, both strikes, as well as the one by aerospace workers at Eaton Aerospace, have gone on long enough, and the membership has to be brought to heel.

This outlook was summarized in comments made by Ryanair CEO Michael O’Leary, who told the *Telegraph* that Boeing executives “have to see out this strike, and if that means all our deliveries get delayed by a couple of

months, frankly, we would support that.”

O’Leary continued, voicing his support for Boeing’s provocative withdrawal of its “best and final” offer: “They’ve said fine, we’ll walk away from the negotiations because the negotiations are going nowhere. There’s nothing else they can do at the moment other than play the longer game.”

The Ryanair executive’s remarks are a further demonstration that the strikers, whether at Boeing, Textron or Eaton, are not just up against one particularly greedy company; they are in a struggle against a ruling class determined to deepen the exploitation of the working class.

Boeing, in particular, is determined to make workers pay for its self-inflicted crisis. The aerospace giant is at least \$60 billion in debt after years of stock buybacks and a collapse in stock value following the two deadly 737 MAX 8 crashes in 2018 and 2019, and further declines in its market capitalization after the door blowout on a MAX 9 in January.

To make up for this, Boeing is seeking immense cuts to its labor costs. It has already begun retaliating, starting with the announcement that it is going to lay off 17,000 people—10 percent of its global workforce.

One of its chief allies is the IAM bureaucracy, which never wanted a strike at Boeing. It endorsed a pro-company contract that provided a paltry 25 percent raise after a decade of flat wages—well below the demand by workers for a 40 percent pay increase. The strike only began because of a rebellion by the rank and file, who voted down the contract by 95 percent and voted to strike by 96 percent.

The IAM sees the strike as a threat to its own interests and assets. That is why strike pay has been limited to an unlivable \$250 a week, which only started in the third week of the strike. Strike pay is only \$200 a week for Textron machinists, with the same stipulation. The IAM and Boeing are counting on workers being starved out while Wall Street supplies \$35 billion to sustain the company.

Workers also face both the Democrats and Republicans, who are wholly behind Boeing. When Su visited the West Coast docks in 2023, only a few days later, a sellout contract was imposed by the ILWU apparatus. Her visits to Seattle to have “discussions” with Boeing and IAM leadership are of the same character: to figure out the best way to starve workers out and force them to accept pro-company diktats.

Above all, her job is to ensure that the US war machine

resumes unimpeded. Boeing and Textron are major defense contractors, and any strike at these companies is seen as a direct threat to the war aims of American imperialism in the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Asia. Boeing, in particular, produces planes and bombs used in Israel’s genocide in Gaza, the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and in potential wars against Iran and China.

There is still vast determination among workers for a fight, both at Boeing, Textron, and Eaton, and in other workplaces and industries. On Tuesday alone, pilots at Frontier Airlines voted by 99 percent to strike, coming after last month’s vote by 4,000 Frontier flight attendants to authorize a strike by 99 percent.

But any real fight must come from the initiative of the rank and file. The question of strike pay is immediate and critical; it must be tripled and made retroactive to the beginning of the strike if workers are to have the resources to fight against Boeing and its Wall Street backers.

Workers must raise the demand for the nationalization of Boeing, Textron and other companies under workers’ control. It is the subordination of the airline industry to profit that is responsible for both the ongoing threats to safety and the attack on workers. The aerospace companies, moreover, are playing a critical role in the escalating global war of US imperialism, including the genocide in Gaza and the war against Russia, which threatens the entire world.

Workers engaged in these struggles must connect their fights with one another and with the broader emerging movement of the working class. Workers in every industry—from railroaders and dockworkers to teachers and nurses, from autoworkers to UPS and other logistics workers—must be reached and called out.

As the Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee wrote on Wednesday, “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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