

# Eaton workers in southern Illinois call for globally unified fight with Boeing workers: “We’re small individually, but together we can become huge”

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*On Sunday, October 27, at 3:00 p.m. Eastern/12:00 p.m. Pacific, the Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee (BWRFC) and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) will be holding an online meeting to build support in the working class behind the Boeing strike. Register for the meeting by clicking here.*

*Eaton workers: Tell us what you’re fighting for. We want to hear from you. Contact us by filling out the form below. All comments will only be published anonymously.*

On Monday, nearly 400 Eaton workers at the Troy and Highland facilities in southern Illinois went on strike and joined a global strike wave of their coworkers in the United States and in Britain. The “B-Line” plants manufacture power management systems and equipment for energy utilities and other companies.

On Thursday, workers at a Jackson, Michigan, facility in Eaton’s aerospace division rejected a third sellout agreement brought back the United Auto Workers union, hot on the heels of 33,000 Boeing workers rejecting an International Association of Machinists agreement by 64 percent on Wednesday. Eaton produces key components for Boeing’s commercial and military operations.

Both deals at Boeing and Eaton were brokered with close collaboration with Labor Secretary Julie Su and the Biden-Harris administration. Su has worked aggressively to shut down these strikes before they begin to undermine the war aims of US imperialism in the Middle East and Ukraine. But it has only intensified the anger of workers.

Workers at the Jackson facility rejected a deal that maintained a two-tier system, growing healthcare costs, and failed to address any of their needs, much as the Eaton workers in Britain have noted.

Eaton workers at the Highland and Troy facilities—located in the St. Louis, Missouri, metro area—also rejected a deal that they viewed as a slap in the face. The company and the IAM bureaucracy came back with an agreement offering a 12 percent raise over three years that was rejected overwhelmingly by 266-22 on October 20.

“By the time our vote took place the employees were so disgruntled, you could have cut the tension with a knife,” a striking worker at the Troy facility told the *World Socialist Web Site* about the atmosphere during the vote.

“I mean, they seriously did not think that Eaton would propose such a low contract. And then, instead of adding anything to the contract they just took more away?” In a similar vein to the Boeing workers fighting for a good retirement, the worker said, “They refuse, utterly refuse, to entertain a 401k and they add nothing to the pension.”

The worker also was furious at the company’s attempts to lure workers back to the plant, despite widespread opposition. “The company sent out a letter that’s letting the employees know that they are able to opt out of the union temporarily, that they can go back to work and once the strike is over get back in the union and face no penalties.

“The issue that we’re most concerned about is just bringing us up to the economy. I mean, right now we

are already 15 percent behind so that 12 percent that they wanted to give us over the next three years — that’s a slap in our face.”

“We just really want fair wages. That’s what we want. The economy is constantly changing. Inflation is constantly growing, and our pay has stagnated.”

Drawing a line in the sand, workers are determined to fight back against Eaton and the major corporations to secure a better future.

“If we accept this contract right now,” the Eaton worker said, “it is just going to continuously be a struggle just to keep day-to-day living going and then, not to say what’s going to happen, three years from now.”

Workers at Eaton are also seething at the high cost of living they face daily. “For the most part we are basically living paycheck to paycheck,” the worker added. “I mean we have to pay rent, mortgages, car payments. We have to buy food that you must buy, we have family to support, we have children and grandchildren— it’s just everything.”

“We just want our checks after taxes to be able to support us at a 40-hour week without having to constantly work overtime. We would like a work-family-life balance as well.”

Throughout both strikes, the IAM has been starving workers at Boeing and Eaton on the pickets without adequate strike pay, even as the IAM bureaucracy possesses hundreds in millions in assets from the dues of workers.

As a result, workers have already begun to face financial difficulties. “Right now, being on strike is very scary and hard for some of my co-workers,” the worker said of the sacrifices made, “because they’re already anticipating losing homes, losing vehicles, getting behind on bills. This is rough.

“However, we need to stand strong,” the worker noted, “because we suffer now and for better later.”

The strike of Boeing workers has galvanized many of the workers at Eaton, who see a joint struggle as critical for them to win. “We have been following the Boeing strike carefully at our job location,” the worker said. “And to be honest with you, I do believe the Boeing strike is what really gave the older long-term generation that’s been there for a while the push that they needed — that change needed to happen, and it needed to happen now.”

On the need for a unified, international fight with the workers in Europe and with Boeing workers, the worker added, “Yes, we completely agree with that because we were just saying that’s why I ended up getting in contact is the fact that if we all can link up. We’re all small individually, but together we can become huge. Turn one into a thousand and things can happen.”

“And if they [Boeing workers] hold the line, we need to hold the line. And if we do connect with Europe, that just will be major. I mean major. I really hope we do. I really hope there is a way that we can connect with them and let them know just as much as they support us. We support them because we need to stay united.”

To mount such a fight, however, workers must take the conduct of the strike out of the hands of the IAM or UAW bureaucrats, who keep bringing back sellout deals worked out with the company and the government behind closed doors.

A unified strike movement, composed of a network of rank-and-file committees, built by workers at Eaton in collaboration with workers at Boeing can fight for significantly higher wages, better healthcare, increased strike pay and a powerful counteroffensive for the social rights of the working class.

*Interested in learning more about building rank-and-file committees at Eaton? Tell us what you’re fighting for. Contact us by filling out the form below. All comments will only be published anonymously.*



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