

Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee hosts public meeting to discuss international strategy to win strike

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The Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee (BWRFC) hosted a public meeting Sunday in the aftermath of a rejection of a second sellout contract, brokered through the Biden-Harris administration, by the Boeing machinists.

The meeting was attended by 175 workers and youth from multiple industries, including autoworkers, railroaders, postal workers, nurses and bus drivers, responding to the call by the BWRFC to break the isolation of Boeing machinists by the IAM bureaucracy and build a movement of the working class around the world to unite behind Boeing workers.

In addition, workers from Australia, Canada, Germany, Britain and Brazil attended the meeting, all in international solidarity with the fight by Boeing workers for better wages, more time off to spend with family, lower healthcare premiums and for a secure and high quality retirement.

The strike is now in its seventh week and is being closely followed by Wall Street and the White House. Within the ruling class, there is a growing concern that the strike will galvanize other sections of the working class and thereby threaten the war aims of US imperialism against Iran, Russia and China.

Speaking to these issues, WSWS writer Tom Hall noted that, “The vote was above all a blow to the corporate political establishment. The Biden White House had brokered this deal and was relying on the IAM to shut down the strike. Boeing is a major defense contractor and just as attacks on the working class are being launched to defend Wall Street profits, US imperialism is launching new wars to conquer foreign markets, natural resources and supply chains.”

Hall also made clear, “Boeing will not back down ... it already announced 17,000 layoffs worldwide. No doubt even more attacks are being planned for immediately after the strike. It feels it can do this because it has the backing of Wall Street and the government.

“In other words, the strike is escalating into a general

conflict between the working class and the capitalist class, which lives by exploiting the labor of workers for profit.”

The meeting was addressed by a Boeing worker and a member of the BWRFC, who began by commenting on the secrecy surrounding the so-called negotiations. “Nobody really knows what is being discussed with the company. Everything is completely quiet until they put out an offer.”

“The majority of us are still holding ground. There are definitely a lot of people looking for a pension but we don’t see that in the contract. It’s possible to get it. However, it depends on how long we can hold this strike.”

The Boeing worker also spoke on the need for workers to unite internationally. “There are talented people working here in the United States. There are talented people working in Europe. If the companies want to go to Europe or South America or Central America or Asia or any other part of the world, they make it a race to the bottom.

“Workers need to support each other, to upgrade our standard of living. Companies go to low-cost countries to try and bring everybody down, so the executives have a good life and we live a miserable life. But we can help each other to have better medical, better retirement, have a better quality life.”

Following the Boeing worker there were many contributions from workers internationally, expressing a fundamental tenet of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), to which the BWRFC is affiliated, to connect the struggles of workers all over the world with each other. We will publish longer versions of several of the contributions in the coming days.

Daniel, a rural postal worker at Canada Post and a member of the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (Canada), spoke on the struggle against the union bureaucracy in that industry. “Canada Post employs approximately 55,000 delivery agents. When our agreements were set to expire at the beginning of 2022, almost three years ago, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) unilaterally acceded to

collective agreement extensions of two years.

“And this was in the middle of the COVID pandemic when it was first ravaging the world. Now, after a 96 percent vote to strike, the CUPW bureaucracy is claiming that the votes only count if the National Executive Board determines strike action is ‘necessary to secure our demands and prevent employer rollbacks.’

“The fact remains that our unions are aligned in a corporate tripartite alliance with the government and with management. The cowardly union bureaucrats, IAM and CUPW included, would never dream of defying strike-breaking legislation, which would require the broad mobilization of workers across industry and across geographic lines, such as we are doing right now.”

Andy Niklaus, a bus driver from Germany, spoke on the need for workers’ control of the economic levers of society. “I would like to start by expressing our unreserved solidarity and support for your strike. We are very impressed that for the second time you have rejected, by a large majority, the miserable collective agreement drawn up and signed by the bureaucrats of the IAM. We must fight back all attacks on wages, working conditions and pensions. And we have to defend all jobs,” he said, noting that more than 120,000 jobs in the German auto sector were threatened.

“Workers are the ones who produce all the wealth in society. Our rights and the needs of our families are more important than the profit interests of the corporations, management and the super rich. This is why we have founded the rank-and-file committee at the transport companies. We need structures of struggle that enable us to combine resistance against redundancies and social cuts with a struggle against war.”

Jerry White, the vice presidential candidate for the Socialist Equality Party, was also invited to speak. He said:

“The class struggle is emerging in a definite political context, less than two weeks away from what is the most crisis ridden election in US history. There is a protracted conflict within the American ruling class and its political representatives over the forms of rule that are necessary for two fundamental issues.

“One, for the mobilization of all American resources and the resources of the capitalist countries around the world for war. An escalating war, as we’ve seen this week with Israel’s attack on Iran, the extending of the US-NATO proxy war against Russia, and the ever-growing conflict with China.

“And a corollary of the wars abroad is the war against the working class in the United States and in every country to force workers to pay for these wars. With the lives of their sons and daughters and with a massive attack on whatever is left of the social welfare system, of the social rights of the

working class.

“While there is an absolutely bitter conflict between the Democrats and Republicans, the fascist Trump and the warmonger Harris, these are fundamentally over tactical issues. When it comes to war abroad and war at home, they are in absolute agreement.

“Trump is seeking to build a fascist movement, exploiting the deep economic distress and the endless hypocritical lies that the Democrats will address the needs of working people. At the same time he is seeking to, on the basis of the big lie, incite violence against immigrant workers, claiming that the cause of the economic distress, the cause of high housing costs, of overcrowded schools, is not the capitalist class but so-called illegal immigrants.”

As for Harris and the Democrats, White said, they are utilizing the trade union bureaucracy to suppress working class opposition to the demands for sacrifice needed for total war.

“It is critical to build the IWA-RFC, to do as we have done today on a much grander scale,” he continued. “We must work to integrate the communication, collaboration and coordination of resistance of workers across all borders. Above all, the decisive question is the building of a politically conscious movement of the working class, its own socialist and international party.

“The working class must take the reins of political power into its own hands, expropriate the exploiters, take the ill-gotten gains from the capitalist financial oligarchy and turn giant industries like Boeing into public utilities where workers will control production democratically, on the basis of human need and not private profit. That way all of society’s resources can be marshaled not for World War Three and the slaughter of one worker by another, but to vastly improve the living standards of all working people and end inequality. This is the program of the Socialist Equality Party.”



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