

IAM union announces third sellout deal to end Boeing strike, with vote the day before US presidential election

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The International Association of Machinists announced a third tentative agreement with Boeing Thursday night in a bid to shut down the seven-week strike of 33,000 aerospace workers. The vote is scheduled for next Monday, the day before the US presidential election.

Once again, the IAM bureaucracy has put forward a contract which meets none of workers' demands. The wage proposal is only 38 percent, 3 percent more than the contract workers voted down last week and still less than the 40 percent minimum workers have made clear they will accept.

Most importantly, the deal does not budge at all on restoring pensions, workers' main demand. The pensions were stolen in 2014 when Boeing coerced workers into a 10-year extension under threat of moving production to its nonunion plant in South Carolina. Instead of waging a struggle, the IAM helped Boeing ram that deal through by a narrow margin.

The only other change to the proposal workers rejected by 64 percent is moving money from the 401(k) to the signing bonus. This is an attempt to utilize the economic insecurity of workers, caused by the union stringing them out on \$250 a week in strike pay, in order to ram through basically the same deal.

The deal also allows the company to continue 17,000 global layoffs to make workers pay for the safety crisis caused by profit-driven cost-cutting. There can be no doubt the company is holding even deeper cuts in reserve to announce the moment the strike is shut

down, as took place last year after the passage of contracts in the US auto industry and at UPS.

This is now the third consecutive sellout agreement which the IAM bureaucracy has brought back in violation of the membership's clear mandates. This underscores the fact that victory is only possible if workers seize control of the strike from the sellout bureaucracy. The Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee must be expanded so that workers can take control of the strike, from adequately staffing picket lines, to real control over all future talks, to expanding the fight to broader sections of the working class.

The IAM bureaucracy has a strategy not for victory, but to help the government and management impose a betrayal. After workers humiliated the bureaucrats before the White House last week by rejecting a deal brokered by Biden's acting Labor Secretary Julie Su, the government gave its marching orders to the union to make them vote again. IAM officials have again cited Su's central role in the "new" agreement.

Significantly, the IAM has officially endorsed the latest TA after it had declined to officially take a position on the last one. The bureaucracy is clearly under pressure from both the government and Wall Street to finally shut down a strike which has cost them billions of dollars.

Workers responded furiously to the announcement Thursday night. "This is a terrible offer," one worker told the WSWS. "They just moved the \$5,000 401k contribution (which is un-taxed), to the signing bonus (which is taxed), so the only thing that changed is a 3 percent general wage increase. It's not even worth voting on if I was the one negotiating. The union also sold out in 2014. I completely disagree with endorsing

any of these offers.”

“This is the same as the last one!” said another worker. By scheduling the contract vote before the presidential election, the worker said that the union was trying to improve Kamala Harris’ chance of winning. “I talked to many of my coworkers and we all said we will vote before the election. The union bureaucrats are selling us out to gain something for themselves. We all can see that.”

The decision to schedule the vote before the general election is a highly conscious decision. Even beyond whatever impact it may have on the Democrats’ election chances, the whole ruling class is determined to shut the strike down before the post-election political warfare begins. Trump and the Republicans, having learned from the “mistakes” of January 6, 2021, have well-advanced plans to take power regardless of the results, inciting violence with the aim of establishing a fascist dictatorship.

Even though it is the immediate target of these conspiracies, the Biden White House is aiding and abetting Trump’s plans by suppressing the class struggle. The Democratic Party fears mobilizing the population even more than it fears Trump. That is because workers will intervene in the political crisis with their own demands against social inequality and war, which would cut across the Democrats’ efforts to form what amounts to a government of national unity with the Republicans.

Positioning Harris as the candidate of “stability,” the Democrats’ sole fixation is preparing the country for war. This includes not only the escalating conflicts with Russia and Iran, but developing plans for a massive shooting war with China. This requires brutal austerity, the suppression of strikes and democratic rights and a vast increase in the exploitation of the working class.

This is why both capitalist parties agree on the need to shut down the strike at Boeing, a major defense contractor. Earlier this week, three Republican governors issued a public letter against the strike, threatening economic blackmail through furloughs and layoffs.

The seven-week strike at Boeing has now reached a decisive stage. Workers are openly engaged in a struggle not just against management, but in a fight against the pro-corporate political system. The decisive question, as the Boeing Workers Rank-and-File

Committee discussed in a public meeting last weekend, is mobilizing the independent power of the working class on a world scale to meet the united front of the ruling class against the strike.

The precondition for this is developing new structures which give workers the ability to act independently of the union bureaucrats and establish lines of communication with workers around the world who are also facing cuts. On Tuesday, the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees issued a call for a global campaign in response to mass layoffs in the auto industry, “including worldwide pickets and rallies and culminating in international strike action.”

“The ground for this must be prepared by establishing lines of communication between autoworkers in the US, Germany and other countries, in alliance with workers in other industries facing cuts, including at Boeing, which has announced 17,000 layoffs in retaliation against the nearly seven-week strike,” the IWA-RFC stated.



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