

IAM bureaucracy runs roughshod over rank and file to force through sellout contract at Boeing

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On Monday, the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) rammed through a sellout contract on striking Boeing machinists. According to the IAM, the vote to accept the contract passed by 59 percent.

The deal is a miserable betrayal. It is essentially the same deal that workers rejected by 64 percent two weeks ago, “with an extra 3 percent in wages thrown in and money moved around between the signing bonus and the 401(k),” as noted by Sunday’s statement of the Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee (BWRFC) calling on machinists to reject the contract.

The offer still falls short of workers’ demands for a 40 percent raise, improved safety measures, lower out-of-pocket healthcare costs and, above all, the restoration of the defined benefit pension stolen from machinists in 2014.

From the beginning, IAM District 751 President Jon Holden and the entire IAM bureaucracy have been working to pass a contract that “saves Boeing from itself,” or helps restore profits for the company’s shareholders after a massive safety scandal which has killed hundreds. Significantly, on Monday night Holden claimed workers “secured a victory” that will help “bring this company back to financial success.”

Holden avoided a question about whether Boeing would go ahead with 17,000 layoffs, or 10 percent of its global workforce, blandly stating that “layoffs would be shortsighted.” No doubt Holden and other officials know about even more cuts that Boeing has

planned. At UPS and the auto industry last year, new contracts touted by the bureaucracy as major “victories” were followed within weeks with thousands of layoffs.

He also dodged a question about why the IAM had chosen to endorse this tentative agreement, after officially remaining “neutral” in the second deal. Instead, Holden claimed the IAM was “a democratic union” and that he was “proud of our members.”

In reality, the bureaucracy deliberately violated the clear will of the rank and file at every turn. The first contract, endorsed by the IAM, included only a 25 percent raise and the removal of the workers’ annual bonus. When workers expressed outrage at the low-ball offer, which they then rejected by 95 percent, the union tried to scare workers by claiming that they probably would not “achieve more in a strike.”

During the press conference Monday night, furious workers denounced the bureaucracy on the union’s Facebook livestream, with comments such as “Rigged,” “sold out” and “Spineless union leadership.” Many more were deleted by IAM moderators.

The result is an illegitimate contract produced by a corrupt process. Boeing machinists endured starvation strike pay of \$250 a week from the IAM. Union officials also kept the machinists isolated from their brothers and sisters at Textron Aviation and Eaton Aerospace, who went out concurrently with Boeing machinists fighting for essentially the same demands of inflation-busting wage increases and the necessary medical and retirement benefits for a secure future.

At Textron, the IAM rammed through a deal many workers described as worse as the initial offer that was overwhelmingly rejected in September. And at Eaton

Aerospace, the company is now bringing in scabs to replace the striking workers.

As the BWRFC wrote Sunday, the IAM bureaucracy has been “acting as errand boys for Boeing executives and for the government. They ‘negotiated’ this contract in defiance of the clear message we sent only two weeks ago when we voted down the last White House-sponsored deal by 64 percent.”

The new contract, like the deal workers rejected last month, was brokered by acting Labor Secretary Julie Su. The White House intervention, especially the timing of the contract vote the day before the presidential election, was aimed at shutting down the growing opposition in the working class which could erupt amid the political civil warfare which will follow Tuesday’s vote. While Trump has laid out plans to overturn a result that goes against him, the Democrats are more terrified about this triggering a movement from below, which will also disrupt plans for escalating war in Ukraine and the Middle East.

The fact that the vote passed by such a slim margin also expresses how much opposition remains in the rank and file. Workers were not convinced to support the deal so much as threatened and blackmailed by the IAM and Boeing. CEO Kelly Ortberg threatened that any further contract negotiations would produce only “regressive” contracts. The union apparatus rolled over in the face of such retaliation and threats, which the IAM bureaucrats loyally repeated.

Workers demonstrated their immense social power in the strike, by some estimates the costliest strike of the 21st century in the United States. But as the *World Socialist Web Site* has insisted from the beginning, the only way rank-and-file workers can win their demands is through their own independent initiative.

The bureaucracy cannot be pressured from below because it answers not to the workers but to Wall Street and White House. Instead, workers must organize independently to shatter the authority of the apparatus and transfer power to the rank and file.

The new contract at Boeing only opens up the next phase of the struggle. With the strike over, management will move ahead with the 17,000 job cuts worldwide it had already announced, and more.

Moreover, whatever government takes office will demand that workers at Boeing, the largest US exporter and a major defense contractor, make “sacrifices” for

the supposed “national interest.” Trillions of dollars being laid out for war are being extracted from the labor of the working class.

Workers at Boeing must continue the fight for workers’ control, developing the Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee as the organizing center of a rebellion against the sellout bureaucrats, management and both pro-war Wall Street parties.



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