

# Boeing machinist, victimized for supporting last year's strike, denounces inaction by the IAM union

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*Boeing workers: tell us what conditions have been at your workplace since the end of the strike by filling out the form below. All submissions will be kept anonymous.*

Four months ago, 33,000 Boeing machinists launched a seven-week strike for inflation-busting wage increases, the restoration of pensions and improved quality assurance measures at the company, whose aircraft have been mired in serious safety problems for years. While workers showed determination throughout the strike, it was ultimately betrayed by the bureaucracy of the International Association of Machinists.

Today, Boeing workers also face mass layoffs, originally announced during the strike. So far, more than 5,100 have been discharged out of the 17,000 cuts that were announced. The latest round will be 71 employees at the company's site in Huntsville, Alabama and 77 layoffs in North Charleston, South Carolina.

The situation for workers is poised to get worse now that Trump's announced tariffs against Canada, China and Mexico are in effect. Boeing has dozens of suppliers in both Canada and Mexico, and planes cross both borders multiple times as they are being built, inevitably skyrocketing the cost of building aircraft. There are concerns that the tariffs against China will further freeze new orders in that market and delay deliveries.

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke with a machinist who was terminated by Boeing in the leadup to the strike, with little support from the IAM.

The interviewee is using the alias "Mo" to protect him from further retaliation from Boeing and the IAM. He described the real culture within Boeing, including intimidation by management, the fecklessness of the union and a callous attitude toward the health and well-being of the workforce.

**WSWS:** Can you provide a timeline for your employment and termination?

**Mo:** I started at Boeing in the summer of 2023. I set out to my area after training around September and I was there for about three months. I got my first warning, or corrective action measure (CAM) for attendance towards the end of that year. Management claimed it was because I left four minutes early.

The next CAM was next June. I got sick and wasn't able to get a doctor's note and didn't have any sick time to use. I let my boss know I wasn't going to be able to come in, and said it would be another corrective action.

The third was even more ridiculous. I was helping a co-worker who was injured pump gas for one of the work vans. This was during my lunch time, when Boeing employees are even allowed to leave campus as long as you let your manager know. I just went to a different part of the job site to learn how to properly gas up the vans, as well as helping another machinist.

When I was done and made it back to my station, I was told by my manager, "Don't do it again." At the time, he said I wasn't going to get a warning. But then two months later, I got a CAM for the incident, which was the pretext for getting fired.

**WSWS:** And that was just before the strike, correct?

**Mo:** Yes, my second CAM was after the big vote in the Major League Baseball stadium in downtown Seattle. I was very happy about the potential strike. I wanted so much better for the contract and I was very outspoken. I let it be known to everybody who approached me on the situation. I wasn't scared about it.

And when the initial contract was released, I was telling everyone, "This is not a good contract." You can see it wasn't a good contract. It was just something to try to get us to not strike. And so when we voted to go on strike, I was thinking that we're finally going to get what we deserve. We're finally going to get something that we can actually call a job—not just come to a work area and feel like we're working for crumbs.

When I wrote on my vest, "Yes for the strike, no for the contract," that's when management's opinion of me turned very sour. I remember my manager seeing my vest and going, "Oh, okay, so that's what it is." I responded, "Yeah, we're voting for this strike."

Then, two days before the strike, he said, "Hey, I need you to come into my office." That's when he fired me. And he waited until I had worked almost a full day before doing it.

And I wasn't the only one. Around that time, I was one of the first casualties in that plant who got fired. After me, I think about 40 people got fired. Each person that got fired were all people who were very unhappy about the contract and very outspoken in support of the strike. They fired us in retaliation.

**WSWS:** What was the reaction of the union?

**Mo:** It was basically nothing. When I got terminated, I didn't even have a union representative in the room. There wasn't even the officer that walks you out of the building, just me and my manager. And really, I should have been reinstated immediately just on the grounds that the company violated my OSHA rights.

I'm surprised that my own union didn't fight that hard for me. Definitely not to the fullest extent. I worked all across the plant and everyone, even the quality assurance employees, knew I did my job well. The first thing the IAM should have done is challenge my firing on the basis I was denied a union rep. When I got in contact with them, they just said they were waiting for my file to come up.

I made reports about these situations to HR and to ethics. Even my union knew about it. Nothing was done. They put it under investigation, but only months after I was fired. When I got word the investigation was complete, it was three months after I was fired.

I even took it to the [National Labor Relations Board] and the woman

who was handling the case said, “Well, if I give you your job back, I’ve got to give the job back to everyone that got messed over with by their manager.”

I also appealed my case to [IAM President Jon] Holden. I wrote a long letter detailing what had happened. A few days ago, I finally got back the final response, which is that they’ll do nothing. He discussed it with the business representative and they both saw that there was nothing that Boeing did that was wrong with my termination. So he’s going to stand on the decision, and not fight to hire me back or do anything about my termination.

**WSWS:** What have your thoughts been throughout this whole process on the role of the IAM?

**Mo:** When I first started working for Boeing, I really thought that good things were about to happen to me. When we went to orientation, the IAM talked so highly about how the union was going to treat us and how we could come to them for anything. They said they were ready to help us regardless of the situation to make sure that our words were valued and that we were heard. They said we would be protected.

I learned in the past year that it was all a facade. It was all a face just to collect our dollars that we’re putting into their pockets. It’s a sick game. They take so much from us and from our families. I thought the union was going to help. I put my career in their hands, and they threw it right back in my face.

**WSWS:** What were your other experiences while working at Boeing?

**Mo:** Between the first CAM all the way to the last one, I was getting harassed. My manager actually cussed me out in front of the pod. I was putting my equipment away, and he comes up to me and said, “How many times do I gotta tell you?” I was just with him like five or ten minutes ago. I had just gotten done cleaning my equipment and then put it away. He knew that I was cleaning the equipment, but he’s trying to make a name for himself or a statement in front of the pod.

After that second CAM, my team leader really joined and it felt like it went from being a work thing to something religious. I would say to everybody, “God bless you guys” because it’s always been embedded in me to say that. This guy would then go, “Man, F Jesus Christ” right to my face.

It got so bad that a group of visiting managers and an executive actually asked, “What are you guys doing up here harassing him? He’s doing his job. I don’t know why you guys are up here yelling at him and saying he’s not doing his job when he’s doing it correctly. He’s doing it safely. He’s letting us know when he’s doing the work and when he’s done. He’s putting all his equipment away. Why are you up here harassing him?” The team lead responded, “Well, that’s none of your business. That’s none of your concern.”

**WSWS:** What was Boeing’s attitude toward the spread of COVID-19 in the plant?

**Mo:** Between the second CAM and third, this team lead—the person that was cussing at me and saying stuff about my religion—tried to have me work with somebody who just got done with COVID. This person was still sick though—that’s the thing. He wasn’t really wearing his mask, was still coughing and sneezing, and not putting his arm up or anything.”

I was concerned because my mom had just gotten out of the hospital, and my brother has autism. I also have little ones at the house. I can’t afford to get sick—there are too many people around me with weak immune systems. I let my manager know about my concerns, saying, “Hey, you’re trying to have me work with somebody who’s sick, and I have people around me that have weak immune systems. I’m not trying to get sick.”

He told me, “That’s not my problem. You got to talk to your lead about that.” I talked to my lead about it—he didn’t care at all. He said, “You’re still going to work with him. How about you wear a mask?” I said, “It doesn’t matter if I wear a mask or not because he’s not wearing his mask.

I can wear a mask to protect myself, no problem, but you’re trying to deflect the situation.”

I told him I’d work with the guy when he feels better, but asked if I could just work with somebody else or by myself because I’m not trying to get sick. He doesn’t care. He just sat there and said, “I’m sorry, but my mind’s made up and you’re going to work with this person.”

I wound up getting sick. It was not from COVID, I’m pretty sure, but it was like a cold that I caught after working with him. Thank God I didn’t give it to my mom, because she had just gotten out of the hospital. My mom had COVID and an infection in her brain, so she was in the hospital. It was very bad at that time.

**WSWS:** What’s happened in the aftermath of your termination?

**Mo:** I didn’t even get my recertification bonus because they discharged me on September 11th, and everyone who came to work on the 12th was eligible for the bonus. So I didn’t even get that after working a whole year.

I’ve also been told by Boeing that I’m “unhirable” or “unethical” which means I can’t even reapply anymore to get back in the company. I had been trying to get a job at Boeing for eight years before being hired, and that’s what they really think of me. I really do want my job back, but at the same time, if they don’t want me that bad, then it’s obviously not worth it.

I also won a case to get my unemployment. I had to go in front of a judge and explain my situation. The judge told me, “We don’t see anything that you did wrong.”

At the time, my girlfriend was pregnant and I had, and still have, bills, rent, car notes, insurance and a ton of other things we needed the unemployment for. I just had my car repossessed, which has made everything so much worse.

The judge also said that I’m owed everything for my unemployment benefits because they didn’t find any misconduct with me at all at Boeing. With unemployment, you can’t get unemployment if you have an attendance problem. If you’re fired or terminated for attendance, that’s the first thing unemployment doesn’t cover—they don’t care about that.

So the judge went through everything with my Boeing case, and there was nothing that showed misconduct about me getting terminated. So I won my appeal and my case.

What happened to me was wild, but others have gone through it too. Workers have to stick together to stop any more of this from happening. All I want is my job back and all of what I’m owed.

**WSWS:** What are your thoughts on workers’ control of the strike, as well as the defense of workers’ rights, as put forward by the Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee?

**Mo:** I think workers should be in charge. I also think workers should definitely be treated better. What’s happened to me is happening to multiple people and nothing’s been done about it. So I think that idea is a step in the right direction.

Boeing used to be a juggernaut in the aircraft business, but how they treat people and their employees is very disgusting. The union is supposed to be protecting us, but really they’re not doing their job. If someone is outspoken, they won’t get their hands dirty fighting for them and won’t step up. There really needs to be a change.



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