

IAM bureaucracy appeals to fascist Senator Hawley to intervene in Boeing strike

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The International Association of Machinists (IAM) bureaucracy has appealed for an intervention by extreme-right politicians in the strike of 3,200 Boeing machinists in St. Louis and St. Charles, Missouri, and Mascoutah, Illinois. Workers are currently in the second week of their strike and are demanding an inflation- and tariff-busting wage increase, a reduction in healthcare premiums, the elimination of the two-tier wage system and the restoration of the defined benefit pension plan.

The appeal took the form of letters written to the Missouri Congressional Delegation, dated August 11 and released to the media Wednesday. In them, IAM International President Brian Bryant called on lawmakers to “urge the Boeing Company to return to the bargaining table” and produce a “good faith agreement.”

One of the delegation, Senator Josh Hawley, played a central role in the January 6, 2021 coup attempt to overturn the 2020 presidential election. During the insurrection itself, he “riled up the crowd” in an effort to encourage the insurrectionists to storm the US Capitol.

And as a Trump loyalist, he voted to keep the electoral votes of Arizona and Pennsylvania from being counted, which would have swung the election to the would-be dictator. Within the Trump camp, Hawley is particularly associated with appeals for support from the union bureaucracy, using right-wing “America First” populism as a cover. He has close ties to figures such as Teamsters General President Sean O’Brien, who spoke at last year’s Republican National Convention.

The state’s second senator is Eric Schmitt, a former Missouri attorney general. He “tied himself to Trump” in his bid for the Senate and also supported Trump’s

2020 coup attempt. Schmitt was also considered a top candidate for attorney general in Trump’s current administration before withdrawing his name from consideration.

In appealing to such figures, the IAM is declaring its hostility to the interests of the working class. The real allies of the strikers are neither of the two capitalist parties, and especially not in the fascist right grouped around Trump. In reality, their allies are the workers of the United States and around the world. The IAM bureaucracy, however, is doing its utmost to isolate the strike from acquiring broader, active working class support.

The letter can only be understood as preparation for a sellout. During last year’s strike of 33,000 Boeing machinists in Washington, Oregon and California, the so-called mediation provided by the Biden administration, through then-Acting Labor Secretary Julie Su and National Economic Adviser Lael Brainard, produced a deal that explicitly fell short of workers’ wage demands.

The supposedly “historic agreement” also left out the restoration of company-paid pensions, which had been stolen from workers in a conspiracy between Boeing and the IAM bureaucracy which forced through the 2014 contract extensions.

Now, the IAM bureaucracy itself is calling for such mediation. Contrary to the illusions promoted by the apparatus and the media, the government is not a neutral arbiter of labor disputes but the chief defender of the capitalist economic order and the private ownership of the means of production.

The goal of federal mediation is not a “good faith” contract but to use the power of the US state to force workers back to work on Boeing’s terms and those of corporate America.

Workers must be on guard against this open treachery by the bureaucracy. An appeal to the capitalist political establishment, especially under conditions in which the extreme right dominates American politics, only demobilizes workers and leaves them unprepared for attacks from the state.

Boeing machinists should set up rank-and-file committees to mobilize other sections of workers behind them, their real allies in this fight, and prepare for a break with the IAM apparatus and political struggle against both big business parties.

Bryant is also explicitly aligning the union apparatus with the interests of American imperialism. In both letters he boasts that Boeing produces “the finest planes and other defense equipment the world has ever seen.” He then proclaims that government intervention is necessary so that “the necessary skilled workforce is available to continue to build the world’s greatest planes and military equipment.”

The war materiel to which Bryant is referring includes the F-15 and F-18 fighter jets, T-7A trainer and MQ-25 refueling drone, all of which are critical to the ongoing US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza and the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

He is not speaking on behalf of the rank-and-file membership but out of concern that the strike is directly impacting the murderous campaigns and wars abroad currently being carried out and the plans for numerous more.

Bryant is also joining the ranks of other members of the American trade union bureaucracy openly turning toward fascism. Other leading bureaucrats who have embraced Trump include the aforementioned Teamsters President Sean O’Brien, United Auto Workers President Shawn Fain, who supports Trump’s tariffs, and International Longshoremens’ Association President Harold Daggett, who praised the illegal US/Israeli airstrikes against Iran earlier this summer.

The integration of the union apparatus with imperialism did not begin with Trump. American Federation of Teachers (AFT) President Randi Weingarten has served for many years as a key overseas operative promoting the Nazi-infested regime of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. She has met with Lviv’s Mayor Andriy Sadovyi, a far-right politician with a long association with the Ukrainian fascist legacy of Stepan Bandera and worked since

2014 to conceal the fascist lineage of the government installed by the US during the Maidan coup.

The support for the extreme right and for imperialism is the logical outcome of the social interests of trade union bureaucracy. They sit above the working class as labor contractors, and their six-figure salaries and corrupt ties with management and the state depend upon their ability to provide “labor peace.” The union apparatus has long ago been transformed into a corporatist labor police, crafting sellout contracts and openly suppressing working class opposition.

Bryant’s appeal again raises the urgent necessity that Boeing workers break immediately and permanently from the union apparatus. The conduct of the strike must be taken out of the hands of the bureaucrats and carried out by the rank and file themselves.

Committees must be set up at every factory and plant to lay out a program that speaks for the interests of those on the shop floor, not the bureaucrats or the executives and politicians they serve. And this must be combined into a broader political struggle armed with a socialist perspective against militarism and the capitalist social order as a whole.



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