

As Boeing strike enters third week, rank-and-file opposition to IAM bureaucracy grows

Andy Thompson
21 August 2025

Build a movement against the betrayal of the IAM officials! Fill out the form below to learn more about rank-and-file committees.

As the strike by 2,500 Boeing defense workers in St. Louis, Missouri enters its third week, opposition is growing among the rank and file, not only to the corporate giant but also to the isolating and defeatist strategy of the International Association of Machinists (IAM).

Workers, who began receiving their first meager strike paychecks of \$200 per week only this week, are increasingly concluding that the IAM bureaucracy is not fighting to win their demands but is instead working to wear them down and force through another pro-company contract.

The strike, which began on July 25 after workers voted to reject a contract that failed to meet their demands on wages, retirement and job security, remains completely isolated by the IAM. The union has made no effort to mobilize the tens of thousands of other IAM members at Boeing, let alone the broader working class, in a unified struggle against the transnational aerospace corporation.

Workers have only been able to receive access to strike pay funds starting this week. However the full funds that workers are owed has not been paid. According to workers who spoke to the WSWS the IAM has only made a total of \$100 available to each worker, less than the cost of groceries for one week. Workers reported that they were told starting next week they would receive strike “backpay.”

This is a deliberate strategy by the IAM to bleed workers of their resources and resolve, in order to push through a sellout. “Basically, we’re paying for union committee representatives, and the money goes into their pockets for their salaries, but we don’t get very

good representation,” one striking worker told the WSWS.

Workers shared that the IAM has threatened to increase union dues on workers when they have raised demands for increased strike pay. “They told us that if they increase strike pay, that means they’re going to increase the union dues.”

A second worker described to the WSWS the semi-rebellion of rank-and-file workers directed at union officials during the contract vote meeting before the strike.

“They held a mass meeting for the contract vote with thousands of people. They got everybody into this stadium with microphones set up. A good portion of the discussion was taken up by people cursing out the officials,” he said. “There is not a lot of confidence in what they’re doing.”

He explained that the bureaucracy feigns ignorance of workers’ demands, a tactic meant to demoralize the membership. “They claim that they can’t fight for what we want if they don’t know what we want. But before the talks began they sent out two surveys. We even had demands printed on t-shirts.”

Instead of fighting for these demands, the IAM and Boeing collaborated to create a diversion. “The first thing they did was put priority on the Alternative Work Schedule,” the worker noted. “The company added this, with workers doing 4 10-hour shifts or 3 12’s to their demands so that they could make it look like a concession when it was not in the final contract proposal. It wasn’t even on the table and they made a big deal about it.”

The core issues for workers are wages and a clear path to the top pay rate. The company’s last offer, which the IAM promoted, was deliberately deceptive.

“The company bragged that the last offer had 21 percent pay increases. But that included COLA, the attendance bonus and a couple of other things that many people won’t qualify for,” the worker said. “They need a pay raise for everybody.”

He continued, “The big issue for us is pay. We don’t have a specific timeline to top out. People would be happy even with 8 years, because at least that’s a set number and we can work to shorten it in the next contract. There is no top out now. We have people working for 16 years that haven’t topped out. Nobody does.”

When the rank and file demand that the union fight on these issues, they are met with capitulation. “The problem is that they are not bringing our requests to the table. When we ask for resolution on the top rate issue, the company says no, and then as far as the IAM negotiators are concerned that’s it, it’s gone just like that, like smoke in the breeze.”

Workers are acutely aware that Boeing can afford to meet their demands. “Boeing has so much money and they’re just sitting on this big cash reserve,” the worker stated.

Another worker spoke out against the isolation of the strike by the IAM and called for a united strategy throughout the company. “Why don’t we just overthrow Local 837 and join unions with Local 751 as a whole?” He said, “If we’re Boeing, it doesn’t really matter if we’re building fighter jets or commercial airplanes. We should represent as one entity instead of being divided. It doesn’t make sense to say the cost of living is different in St. Louis versus Seattle. That shouldn’t matter. The cost of living has risen all across the United States, not just the Midwest. We should just be in one union.”

For the first time since the strike began, IAM president Brian Bryant traveled to St. Louis for a photo op at the picket lines. In an interview with local press Bryant stated that while there were no official bargaining sessions scheduled the IAM has held “informal talks” with Boeing.

The reason Bryant, who is paid over \$430,000 per year from workers dues, has traveled to St. Louis is to plot a backroom deal with Boeing to betray the strike. This

must be a major warning for the Rank-and-File: The IAM bureaucracy is plotting against you, it is time to take matters into your own hands.

The experience of the strike is making it clear to a growing number of workers that the IAM bureaucracy has no intention of waging a real fight. The only way forward is for workers to take the conduct of the strike into their own hands. This means forming a rank-and-file strike committee to formulate a list of non-negotiable demands based on what workers actually need, not what the company claims is acceptable. Lines of communication must be extended to their rank-and-file brothers and sisters in Seattle and across the country. Such a committee can fight to seize control of the struggle from the pro-company IAM apparatus and lead a genuine counter-offensive against Boeing.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact