

IAM bureaucracy holds “pre-ratification” vote on nonexistent contract to shut down Boeing defense workers’ strike

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The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) announced Tuesday that union members will vote Friday on a non-existent contract. The move represents a brazen attempt by the IAM bureaucracy to shut down the six-week strike by 3,200 defense workers in the St. Louis area.

What workers are being made to vote on is a proposal by the union that Boeing has not agreed to accept. The union did not share specific details of the new settlement in its news release.

It claimed, “If IAM Union members ratify the offer, it will be submitted to Boeing as a pre-ratified agreement subject to Boeing’s acceptance.” The apparatus continued, “If Boeing declines the IAM’s offer, members will continue to remain on strike, and stand ready to return to the bargaining table. The strike will continue until Boeing has accepted the offer.”

Also on Friday, the United Auto Workers is holding a vote on a new tentative agreement to shut down a strike at GE Aerospace. UAW President Shawn Fain is an advocate of a war economy, calling for the retooling of closed auto plants to make military vehicles and citing World War II as a model for today.

The *World Socialist Web Site* urges workers in both strikes to reject their contracts by the widest possible margin. The bargaining committees, which produced these deals, must be thrown out and replaced with new ones elected solely from the rank and file, not bureaucrats with intimate ties to management. They must make plans for an expansion of the struggle and to break out of the isolation being imposed by the union officials.

Boeing immediately denounced the maneuver as a “publicity stunt” and “a waste of time that will not help

the parties reach a deal.” Dan Gillian, Boeing Air Dominance vice president and general manager, stated that “the union continues to create false expectations by voting on an offer we never made, including terms we’ve expressly told them we won’t accept.”

In reality, the vote is a “stunt” directed at rank-and-file workers themselves. It is being presented as the workers having “the final say in their futures,” but it is actually an attempted back-to-work order from the IAM in all but name.

Any “pre-ratified” contract will undoubtedly be subject to hidden revisions with the company, allowing Boeing and the IAM to make backroom deals after workers have supposedly approved the agreement.

Even if the contract is voted down, the IAM hopes to wear down workers’ resistance through repeated votes. This latest maneuver comes one week after striking workers rejected a third tentative agreement in a powerful display of determination. That contract was worse than previous offers, extending the term to five years while offering only 24 percent wage increases, less per year than the 20 percent over four years workers had already rejected in July.

Boeing has already begun hiring permanent scab workers in an attempt to break the morale of the rank and file. The company’s confidence in this provocative measure rests on the services of the IAM bureaucracy, which has worked from the beginning to isolate the strike and wear workers down.

Despite the union’s \$300 million in net assets and \$200 million in annual expenditures, the IAM has left strikers to survive on just \$200 per week in strike pay. The national leadership has issued only perfunctory statements and has done nothing to mobilize the

union's estimated 600,000 members in support of the St. Louis workers.

The IAM bureaucrats are acting as enforcers for the government, not just Boeing. The Pentagon needs its fighter jets and missiles for Gaza, Ukraine and a future war against China.

Many of the same weapons being deployed halfway around the world are also being prepared against the American population. Trump has deployed the National Guard and other federal armed forces in Los Angeles and Washington D.C., threatening to do so in many other major cities, in an attempt to suppress opposition to the administration's full-scale assault on immigrants and democratic rights.

The IAM officials have publicly asked for Trump to intervene, which amounts to a request for the would-be dictator to crush the strike. Trump admitted over the weekend that he is working with corporate executives to decide where to send troops, with St. Louis singled out by Union Pacific CEO Jim Vena.

Trump's plan for a dictatorship of the oligarchy must be stopped by the working class. This can only be done through a fight against the sellout bureaucrats, who are only concerned with their own positions under such a regime, not with workers' rights.

The rail unions have also sought and obtained an intervention from Trump to prevent a strike on the Long Island Rail Road, New York City's largest commuter rail system. New York Democratic Governor Kathy Hochul's response was to attack Trump for not intervening against workers fast enough. The Democrats have refused to lift a finger against Trump because they are a party of the same ruling class that Trump represents. They are far more afraid of a mass movement in the working class than they are of a dictatorship.

It is urgent that Boeing workers take matters into their own hands. Without a new leadership and a new strategy, the strike will be betrayed. Rank-and-file committees must be formed, excluding union officials, to appeal throughout St. Louis and across Boeing for support.

The IAM's latest maneuver echoes the same pattern used to sabotage last year's strike by 30,000 Boeing civilian workers in Seattle. Though their strike was betrayed after a month, for these workers the struggle is not over and they would welcome an appeal from the

defense workers to mobilize against these management criminals, responsible for a safety scandal which has led to airliner crashes and hundreds of deaths.

Other demands taken up by a committee should include \$800 per week in strike pay and full transparency in all negotiations.

Only through developing their own organs of struggle can the rank and file clearly lay out their demands and enforce the democratic will of the membership. Workers must reject all forms of collaboration with the capitalist state, including corporate management, the union bureaucracies and the two big business parties, the Republicans and Democrats, and instead turn to their most powerful allies: the American and international working class.



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