

Libbey Glass workers: Reject the sellout contract! Take the struggle out of the hands of the USW bureaucracy!

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After nearly three months on strike, the United Steelworkers International is trying to ram through a sellout contract behind the backs of 650 workers at Libbey Glass in Toledo, Ohio. The USW bureaucracy has scheduled a snap vote for Wednesday, November 18, immediately after short “explanation meetings.” This is a deliberate effort to suppress debate and stampede workers into accepting a deal that cannot withstand serious scrutiny.

USW District 1 Director Donnie Blatt reportedly bypassed the local union bargaining committee, which considered this offer so rotten that it would not bring it back to the membership—and instead cut a unilateral deal directly with the company. This is not negotiation; it is collusion and open strikebreaking on behalf of Libbey’s corporate executives and top shareholders.

Just days before announcing the deal, USW officials were denouncing Libbey’s months-long “bad faith unwillingness to agree to fair contract.” Overnight, a breakthrough has supposedly occurred. The USW’s own statement reveals the truth:

“We knew we could not just sit back and say nothing, so we met with Libbey in an effort to end this strike.”

Not win it—end it. Their priority is to shut the strike down on terms acceptable to the company, not to secure what workers need and deserve.

The wage “increases”: a scam built on poverty pay and sweeping concessions

USW officials boast about a 14.25 percent first-year raise. But workers know the truth: the raise is meaningless when starting wages are an insult. As one Libbey worker put it plainly:

“You can make more at gas stations such as Sheetz than you can at starting wages for Libbey.”

The wage package is not “historic.” It is a desperate attempt to dress up poverty pay at a company that cannot attract or retain workers. And even this inadequate wage package comes tied to massive concessions, which the USW has intentionally left out of its bogus “highlights.”

As workers have noted, the phrase “at management’s discretion” has been inserted into the proposal at least 14 times.” This language gives management blanket authority over:

- Scheduling
- Forced overtime
- Layoffs
- Hiring
- Transfers
- Department assignments
- Work rules
- Discipline
- Production standards

This is not a contract—it is a blank check for management dictatorship.

As one worker told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “What that does is essentially hands Libbey free rein to what and how they schedule, force overtime, layoff, hire and nearly every aspect of their business.”

This is the most significant danger in the entire agreement, even more consequential than the wage percentage. The wage “increases” are a Trojan horse for total management control, including expanded forced overtime, 12-hour shifts, loss of schedule protections and stripping of seniority rights.

The “management’s discretion” language is paired with a systematic destruction of whatever is left of the grievance system. This will pave the way for relentless speedup, management abuse and the skirting of basic safety procedures that will inevitably lead to more injuries and death. The USW International is not protecting your

rights—they are eliminating them.

Healthcare: Premiums Up, Deductibles Tripled

In its self-serving “highlights,” the USW only lists weekly premiums, conveniently omitting the full costs. As one worker explained, “The premiums listed for healthcare are weekly contributions only. Deductibles are set to triple in most instances.”

This is a massive offloading of costs to workers. A raise of a few dollars an hour will evaporate under soaring deductibles, out-of-pocket expenses and specialty drug carve-outs. The International’s claim that healthcare “stays the same except for a few changes” is a blatant lie.

Rank-and-file workers have not walked the picket lines for more than three months to accept this garbage. The USW bureaucracy never wanted this strike in the first place. They wrapped up sellout agreements at the other glassmakers and have kept 2,800 O-I workers on the job since the expiration of their contract in March.

But the local leadership knew that rank-and-file workers would not accept the company proposal after seeing the company profit from the massive concessions USW officials handed Libbey during bankruptcy. The USW officials called the strike not to win it but to isolate this fight and starve workers into submission. But the Libbey workers are not patsies and they are going to have their say.

What Must Be Done

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) urges Libbey workers to:

1. Vote NO on the sellout contract. Reject a deal that imposes poverty wages, soaring healthcare costs, and authoritarian management control.

2. Form a Libbey Rank-and-File Strike Committee. Elected by workers—not the USW bureaucracy. Such a committee must:

- Oversee the vote.
- Demand full disclosure of the entire contract and side letters.
- Organize independent mass meetings.
- Establish communication with workers in auto, steel, healthcare, oil, logistics, and other industries.
- Break the isolation imposed by the USW bureaucracy.

3. Turn this struggle outward. A NO vote will send a powerful message across the country and the world: Workers will not accept union-backed corporate concessions.

By doing so, Libbey workers will be joining tens of millions of workers across the US who want to fight job cuts, skyrocketing cost-of-living expenses, the murder and maiming of workers in America’s industrial slaughterhouse and the historic attack on the democratic and social rights of the working class being carried out by the Trump administration with the aid of the Democrats.

US companies have already announced 1.1 million job cuts so far this year. The number of layoffs in October were the highest of any month since 2008, during the Great Recession. Twenty-two states, plus Washington, DC, are already in recession. The end of the government shutdown is being followed by the permanent slashing of billions for food stamps, public schools and health care.

At the same time, ten billionaires in the US increased their wealth by \$700 billion over the past year. The world’s richest man, Elon Musk, has just been awarded a pay package worth up to \$1 trillion.

The corporate and financial oligarchy that rules this country knows that it cannot impoverish and enslave the working class without mass resistance. That is why it is moving to implement a dictatorship. The Gestapo methods now being employed against immigrant workers will be used against strikes and mass demonstrations of workers fighting to defend their jobs and living standards.

Rank-and-file Libbey workers must defeat the USW bureaucracy’s stab in the back and take the conduct of this struggle into their own hands. Such a rebellion will inspire and win the support of rank-and-file workers at the Jeep and Dana plants, steelworkers at the oil refineries, Cleveland Cliffs and other locations, healthcare workers at ProMedica, Mercy St. Vincent and elsewhere, and thousands of workers and young people looking for a way to fight poverty and threat of dictatorship. The spirit of the 1934 Auto Lite strike and Toledo general strike must be revived by rank-and-file workers taking their future into their own hands.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) and *World Socialist Web Site* will give Libbey workers all the assistance they need for this decisive battle. Fill out the form below to get information on building a rank-and-file committee.



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