

Encore Boston Harbor strike enters fifth week

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The strike by more than 1,300 workers at Wynn Resorts' Encore Boston Harbor in Everett, Massachusetts entered its fifth week on Friday, October 2. Housekeepers, cooks, bartenders, slot attendants, drivers and warehouse workers have been on the picket line around the clock since the morning of September 4, four days after their contract expired. The strike was authorized by 97 percent of the workers.

There is no agreement and no new bargaining session has been announced. Strikers say they have been told nothing. Asked by the *World Socialist Web Site* whether they had had any word from Encore, a bartender replied, "I have not."

Wynn's strategy is to starve the workers back on the job. The casino has operated 24 hours a day throughout the strike, with scab labor provided by managers, nonunion employees and replacement workers.

The company is not short of money. Encore Boston Harbor took in \$846.9 million in revenue in 2025 and made a profit of \$236.7 million. Wynn Resorts made a profit of \$2.22 billion overall, and paid chief executive Craig Billings \$15,090,901.

The strikers, whose wages run from \$15 to \$32 an hour, are demanding a \$10-an-hour increase over three years for non-tipped workers and a \$5 an hour increase for tipped workers, along with the preservation of their healthcare and guaranteed hours. This is about what UNITE HERE Local 26 got at Boston's hotels in December 2024.

WSWS reporters spoke to strikers on the picket line on the 29th day of the walkout.

Harry works in catering and banquets. He said he had lost \$15,000 to \$20,000 so far during the strike. "Catering and banquets makes 60 percent of its money in September, October, November and December," he explained. "We make 60 percent of our annual income in four months. When you take one or two of those out, that hurts you a lot, especially when you have bills and

everything else."

Harry came to Encore after more than 25 years as a full-time special education teacher in the Boston Public Schools, and before that served as a combat medic in the US Army's 82nd Airborne. "I've earned everything I've got," he said. "I've been in service all my life." Of the strike he said, "I'm getting crushed. And they know that."

He said that the company was bringing the strikebreakers in from other venues and that he knew half of them. "They're all cherry-picking from the other places." Harry explained, "This is not about me. This is about the whole team."

A cook said the first concern was whether there would be jobs to go back to. "After this, we don't know if people's jobs are going to be back. There's no guarantee that the existing workers are going to get their jobs back. So, we want it in the contract that if we come back, everyone at least has a job. We're all out here, and we all want to go back together."

The cook listed the demands in order: job security, health insurance, "and number three is, hopefully, we get some type of wage increase." Cooks at Encore make \$32 an hour, he said, while those in the Boston hotels make at least \$34 to \$35. "We're considered a five-star resort, but we're not getting that pay."

Randy, who has worked as a houseperson in the hotel tower for almost eight years, attending to the requests of guests as they check in, said workers' pay was "off by something like \$3" against the five-star hotels downtown. "We deserve fair and better wages and job security, for our families especially," he said, and that healthcare was "the most important. We deserve to have it."

A bartender told reporters, "We just need a fair contract, health insurance, job security. We all like our jobs. We want to be in there, not out here."

The casino is open because the union officials have

made no attempts to enforce the picket line. Of the 1,300 strikers, 211 are members of Teamsters Local 25. When the walkout began, Local 25 President Thomas G. Mari declared, “we shut it down.” Four weeks later nothing has been shut down.

Local 25 organizes truck drivers, warehouse and delivery workers throughout Greater Boston. A resort of this size depends every day on deliveries of food, liquor, linen and supplies. If the Teamsters stopped every truck and brought its membership to the entrances, Encore could not operate.

Strikers know this. When a WSWS reporter said Local 25 could shut the place down, Harry answered, “Oh, I know. That’s why they’ve got to play piecemeal here. It’ll go step by step, I think.” The Teamsters had brought trucks to the picket line the previous Wednesday, he said. “It was a good show.”

The cook described the extent of the support organized so far: Local 25 on the picket line, and a rally “about a week and a half ago” when 500 to 600 workers from the Boston hotels came for one day. Local 26’s own members in those hotels have otherwise been kept on the job.

The cook also described a picket confined to the edge of the property. He said about people going into the casino, “All they’ve got to do is cross this one little picket line and then they’re good. They don’t have to deal with us over there. If we were actually by the entrances, maybe they’d feel more pressure, but there’s none.”

Pickets march across the entrance to the casino, but the unions have an agreement with Everett police to stop the picket every 10 to 15 minutes to allow customers in and out of the casino.

All it would take is for Local 25 to park across the driveway two of the 40-foot trailers that regularly drive by the picket with horns signaling support.

In place of a fight to stop the casino operating, the unions have turned to Democratic Party politicians. On September 16 the Boston City Council unanimously passed a resolution in which members pledged not to dine, meet or stay at the resort during the strike, according to the *Boston Globe*. These gestures cost Wynn nothing.

The mood among strikers toward the union apparatus is far from uncritical. “We’re not happy with the union either,” Harry said, “but we have to do what we’ve got

to do. We’ve got to stay united. We don’t have a choice.”

Wynn will concede nothing to boycott appeals and city council resolutions. It is a global corporation with 28,500 employees, roughly 12,000 of them in Macau, where the bulk of its profit is made. It can absorb an isolated strike at one property for months, and it is calculating that the loss of the autumn banquet season will break the resistance of workers before Wynn has to move towards a settlement.

What the company could not withstand is the mobilization of the working class in a shutdown of the casino and the extension of the strike to the hotels of Boston, a halt to deliveries by Teamsters drivers, and a direct appeal to Wynn workers in Las Vegas and Macau who face the same employer.

None of this will be organized by the officials of Locals 25 and 26. Four weeks have shown that they are conducting the strike as a pressure tactic, to be wound up when a settlement can be sold to the membership.

The determination to fight is there. “This is my will to win,” Randy, the houseperson, said. “Not only mine. Our will to win.”

To carry through this fight requires a break with the union bureaucracy. The *World Socialist Web Site* urges Encore workers to form a rank-and-file committee, elected from every department and across both locals. Such a committee would take the conduct of the strike into workers’ own hands.

It would move the pickets to the entrances, appeal directly to Teamsters drivers and Boston hotel workers to join the fight, demand that every proposal from the company be put before the membership in full, and reject any agreement that does not guarantee every striker’s job.

The committee should link up with workers across the United States and internationally through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.



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