

Vote “NO” on the Boeing sellout contract! Organize the rank and file against the sellouts in the IAM bureaucracy!

International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees
9 September 2024

Build a movement to reject this sellout and impose the will of the membership! Contact the WSWs today for information about building a rank-and-file committee at Boeing.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) urges the 33,000 members of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) at Boeing to reject the new sellout contract that was announced Sunday.

The IAM has long said it intends to “save Boeing from itself.” But “saving” Boeing really means “saving” its wealthy shareholders by imposing the cost of the safety scandal, where executive cost-cutting has caused hundreds of deaths, onto its workers. This is exactly what the contract aims to accomplish.

Some of the lowlights of the proposal include: a 25 percent pay increase over four years, after workers have endured a decade of pay freezes; a worthless promise to build non-existent new aircraft models; the elimination of performance bonuses; and provisions for unlimited overtime in the case of “emergencies.”

The IAM has also demanded a seat on the board of directors, giving it a “seat at the table” in slashing jobs and safety even more. The new agreement, while not appearing to grant a seat, includes added “dialogue” with the Board, where IAM bureaucrats will get their marching orders straight from Wall Street.

Thousands of workers participated in anti-contract rallies Monday, demanding strike action. But this overwhelming opposition must now be organized, independent of the union bureaucrats. Workers must give themselves the power to override decisions that violate their will and prepare for a genuine struggle.

In particular, workers must enforce rank-and-file oversight over the vote this Thursday to prevent irregularities and to ensure that a strike takes place promptly once workers send this deal into the trash where it belongs.

The class struggle is growing, and a stand at Boeing will meet with powerful support. Recent strikes include the

ongoing AT&T strike in the South; the auto parts strike at Dakkota, where workers faced five consecutive sellout deals; and the strike at a Marathon refinery in Detroit. On Tuesday, 50,000 public employees will go on strike throughout the state of Washington, where Boeing’s main facilities are located.

This is also the latest in a series of major sellouts by union bureaucrats all over the world, including at UPS, auto, the railroads, docks and others. A method has been worked out, where officials use “radical” talk to lull workers to sleep before pushing the deal through. Often, hidden concessions are only discovered weeks after the deal has been ratified, as would no doubt take place at Boeing.

This is not a contract but a conspiracy. On Saturday, the IAM bureaucrats claimed they remained “far apart” with Boeing on key issues. But they had already scheduled a vote on a contract that did not yet exist and announced a deal only a day later. In reality, they had a deal all along, and the real issue was how to impose it on workers.

They are also prepared even to override a massive “no” vote using an undemocratic loophole, “ratifying” the contract if less than two-thirds of those who vote do not vote a second time to authorize a strike.

Boeing is a strategically vital corporation whose workforce has a long militant history, including the two-month strike in 2008. But time and again, workers have run up against a major obstacle: the IAM bureaucracy.

After ending the 2008 strike, the IAM pushed through a deal that it has kept in place for an incredible 16 years. For 10 of those years, workers have had their pay frozen after a 2014 extension was “ratified” under dubious circumstances.

In bringing this contract to a vote, the IAM bureaucrats, including District 751 President Jon Holden, have shown once again they are not on the side of workers but management.

They are also acting on behalf of the Biden administration, which does not want a strike at a major defense contractor.

Boeing is also a major component of US exports and key to bitter global economic warfare, including with European rival Airbus. IAM President Brian Bryant sits on Biden's Export Council, alongside billionaires and fellow union bureaucrat Shawn Fain of the UAW.

The Biden White House is using the union bureaucracy to secure critical supply chains against the threat of the rank and file, especially to ensure the continuation of the US-NATO war against Russia and the preparation of new wars. Whatever their differences, both political parties, the Democrats and the Republicans, support the global imperatives of American imperialism and are bitterly opposed to a fight by Boeing workers that would disrupt these plans.

Biden infamously banned a strike on the railroads in 2022 and endorsed a new auto contract which is now being used to slash thousands of jobs. Last week, Acting Labor Secretary Julie Su visited IAM officials. While the meeting was not public, there can be no doubt that they were receiving their orders from the White House to get this deal passed at all costs.

The fight at Boeing requires a rebellion against the IAM apparatus. No amount of anger will bring the officials back into line because their social interests are totally aligned with management against the workers. They control assets of nearly \$300 million (District Lodge 751 alone has nearly \$79 million), financed from workers' dues, from which they pay themselves six-figure salaries.

Workers, the source of all wealth, are more powerful than a handful of bureaucrats, executives and corporate politicians. But this power has to be organized and directed through rank-and-file committees.

This is a new type of structure, excluding union officials, which fights to unite workers independent of the apparatus to give them the power to enforce their democratic will.

Workers at Boeing must draw lessons from the examples set by workers who have already set up committees, including railroaders, autoworkers, postal workers in several countries and others. To this must be added the campaign of Will Lehman, a socialist Mack Trucks worker, for UAW president on a platform of abolishing the bureaucracy. These committees are affiliated in a global movement called the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).

The most immediate issue is the vote itself. **Workers must organize committees to oversee every aspect of the vote to ensure it is conducted fairly.** If the IAM tries to override a "no" vote using the two-thirds excuse or any other method, committees will give workers the ability to override that decision.

The committees will also give Boeing workers the

opportunity to work out their own demands, beyond which they will not accept any deal. The IWA-RFC proposes these include:

- A 50 percent pay increase, *plus* retroactive cost-of-living adjustments to make up for 10 years of frozen wages;
- The mass hiring of safety positions which management recklessly slashed to save money;
- Workers' control over all issues related to safety and quality assurance;
- The reinstatement of AMPP;
- Restored pensions; and
- The elimination of tiers to ensure everyone at Boeing can afford to live decently.

Rank-and-file committees must also fan out into the working class for the broadest possible support. A stand at Boeing will send a signal to workers everywhere that they can fight back.

In particular, Boeing workers must link up with dockworkers on the East Coast, where union officials are spouting IAM-style hot air about striking, and with railroaders, where the unions—including the IAM—are trying to quietly ram through new deals that are even worse than the Boeing contract.

Boeing workers must also reach out to workers all over the world, including workers at Airbus in Europe, which is in the midst of a huge job-cutting campaign.

They must also link the demand for better wages and working conditions with the call for transforming Boeing into a public utility, run by workers themselves. Boeing workers are not responsible for the air disasters caused by ruthless profiteering. Absent the parasitic interests of Wall Street and the corporate oligarchy, this scandal would never have happened.

Above all, the fight at Boeing is a class struggle, pitting workers not just against one greedy corporation but against the capitalist profit system itself.

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