

Monogram Aerospace Fastener workers determined as strike moves into third month

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Over 200 workers at Monogram Aerospace Fasteners (MAF) in the Los Angeles suburb of Commerce, California, have been on strike for over 60 days. The strike was launched as an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) strike on August 24, 2024 by United Auto Workers Local 509.

Workers have already voted down two tentative agreements. According to a member of the strike committee, the second offer was the same as the first, for four years rather than three. This derisory second attempt was treated by workers with the contempt it deserved and was voted down en masse.

Workers at the plant make fasteners, screws and bolts for Boeing, where 33,000 workers have been on strike for nearly three weeks, as well as Airbus and other major manufacturers. Like workers in every industry, they have been facing unbelievable working conditions and pay for decades. They are demanding a decent standard of living, free medical benefits, and a return to the 8-hour day and 5-day work week.

The *World Socialist Web Site* visited the picket line last week and spoke to several workers about their struggle and the conditions they face.

Lazaro has worked at MAF for 18 years. “Basically, we are on strike for pretty much the same things that the Boeing workers are striking for: better pay, better medical care and better working conditions. I say to the Boeing workers, ‘Stand strong. We support you!’”

Belen, a machine specialist operator, pointed to the grueling schedules at the plant. “Every other week, we have to work a 58-hour week! This is too much, too much for us and our families.” For this reason alone, she continued, “We’re working so hard. In fact, we are demanding that our medical benefits be free. The company should be paying for when we and our families get sick and hurt. Our medical care should be

free.”

Marco, a warehouse specialist, has been working for MAF for 35 years. “There are three reasons behind the strike, which today, October 1, marks 61 days. First, we want monetary compensation. We’re negotiating a three-year contract, and we want 8 percent each year. The reason it’s high is because we wanted cost-of-living adjustments (COLA), and the company didn’t want to entertain that.

“Second is healthcare. The company wants to raise our premiums. They want to be able to change it to whatever they want in 2026. We want to pay less. In fact, we want to get free medical and dental care.

“Third, there’s this Article 21 [which allows management complete control over workers’ labor grade] that’s been in our contracts for over 20 years. But for the first time, the company is using it against our members. They’re using that article to demote our members in certain positions. It went to arbitration, and we lost. We want that article to be taken out.

“It was actually used against the inspection group. The company wanted to cross train people. In other words, they wanted to get more work for the same pay. If our members didn’t cross train, they used Article 21 to get rid of them.”

Marco also spoke about the unbearable conditions at the plant. “I’ve worked 20 hours in a day in shipping. They say we work at our own discretion, but if you refuse, the company frowns on that. Those kinds of hours are typical in shipping and receiving. It gets bad at the end of the month because the company is trying to get the orders out.

“There’s only one shift. We don’t all come in at the same time. It’s staggered between 4:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. It can take its toll, and we have been very fortunate and blessed that nobody has been injured at work or

going home.”

Raul, who is also on the strike committee, has worked in the shipping department for 13 years. He said that their resolve was solid and only a small number had crossed the line. “The medical insurance is a big deal. Some, maybe because they have conditions like diabetes, have problems getting the care they need.”

He also spoke about the exhausting schedules, saying, “I’ve been working in the shipping department. Like Marco said, there’s only one shift. But we’re picketing 24/7 because the place is operating 24/7. There really should be more shifts.

“Shipping is at the end of the line here, because we’re the ones getting the products out to the customers. If we were to go home after 10 hours, we’d be dropping the ball, in the company’s eyes.

“Some days I work 14 hours, 16 hours, 18 hours to get all the shipments out. One time I worked 21 hours in one day! You physically can’t do more than 12 hours of work. It’s hard on the body.”

He continued: “Now the longshoremen are striking together with the Boeing workers. The way the economy is going and the way the corporations are treating us, it’s inevitable that people will go on strike. They have to. It’s painful to work. It’s painful to try to live and survive. Going on a vacation is virtually impossible. You can’t afford it.

“Everybody here is working a second job part-time. They’re working weekend jobs just to make a little extra to fill in the gaps. These people that work here are literally putting their lives on the line to make sure that the public is safe in the air. The price that we are paying is too high. Nobody’s life is worthless. A human life is priceless. Nobody would accept a billion dollars if it meant you weren’t going to see tomorrow.

“We take so much care in the production of these products. They’re flawless, and it’s because people’s lives depend on them.

“To the striking workers at Boeing, I say, ‘Stay strong. Stay united. Help one another get a great quality of life.’ We keep getting more and more devalued. We’re on strike because we are fighting for our lives, not only for ourselves but for the future generations.

“Just hearing how the longshoremen and Boeing workers are all on strike like us, we’re all fighting for our rights. It makes us feel that we are all being heard and that we’re not the only ones fighting this battle.

This is our version of war. We’re sacrificing our lives for what’s right.

MAF workers are determined to win their struggle, but determination alone will not bring victory. The strike is entering its third month, and yet, there has not been a single press release from UAW Local 509 in that period about the struggle at MAF and there has been no attempt by bureaucrats at Solidarity House to link this struggle with that of Boeing workers, or with other UAW workers across the country.

This is in keeping with the overall strategy of the union tops to keep workers not only divided but isolated, and thereby enforce the diktats of management. The only solution to this dilemma is the creation of democratically controlled rank-and-file committees which are independent of the union bureaucracies as well as the two parties of big business. Only by taking the leadership into their own hands, and by linking up with workers in other industries will workers be able to assert their independent interests.



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