

Boeing looks to raise additional \$25 billion as company, government and union bureaucrats aim to end strike

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Boeing announced it is seeking to raise as much as \$25 billion, with its main goal to have cash on hand to outlast the 33,000 machinists currently on strike.

Workers have been on strike since September 13, and the move by Boeing indicates just how much an effect the strike has had on its cash flow. It has lost nearly \$5 billion from the strike, according to a new report by CNN, and is currently at risk of having its credit rating downgraded to junk status, which would make any future borrowing much more costly.

In a comment to the Air Current aviation website, the president of the Emirates airline, Tim Clark, warned that in addition to worse credit, the strike might force Boeing into bankruptcy. “Unless the company [Boeing] is able to raise funds through a Rights Issue, I see an imminent investment downgrade with Chapter 11 looming on the horizon.”

The Emirates airline operates hundreds of Boeing aircraft, including 133 Boeing 777 jets currently in service.

The comments by Clark are a further indication of the impact of the strike. Workers are demanding a 40 percent pay increase and the restoration of pensions stolen in 2014. Boeing has dug in its heels, offering only a 30 percent raise and no restoration of the pension before provocatively withdrawing that offer last week.

That Boeing has been authorized to sell up to \$25 billion of assets, in addition to the \$10 billion loan it already secured, however, represents the seriousness

with which Wall Street as a whole takes the strike. It is prepared to back the company with billions to crush the resistance of the working class in this critical sector of the economy and restore production and profitability at Boeing.

To that end, the financial elite has also deployed some of its chief servants to Seattle to carry out its will. Acting Labor Secretary Julie Su flew in Monday to meet with the leadership of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) and Boeing executives to “urge both sides to move forward in the bargaining process,” according to the IAM bureaucracy.

Su’s visit came the week after Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal (Democrat-Washington) penned a letter demanding that the IAM officials and Boeing “bargain in good faith to reach a contract in a timely manner.”

It was only days after Julie Su visited the West Coast docks in 2023 that the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) called off a strike and forced through a pro-company deal onto 22,000 dockworkers.

The challenge, from the view of the Biden administration, Boeing and the IAM bureaucracy, is to wear down the determination of the rank and file to fight. The strike only began after the membership rejected the original contract endorsed by the IAM leadership by 95 percent and voted by 96 percent to strike.

Since then, workers have been intransigent on their wage and pension demands, as well as the need for better healthcare, more paid time off and the reinstatement of quality and safety positions that

Boeing has cut.

One worker told the *World Socialist Web Site* that a central grievance was being required to work two weekends in a row. “You know, no one wants to work for 16, 17 days. So, like, no breaks. ... You get paid for it, but this is about your ability to actually schedule your time and to have other things to do.

“It’s worse when you commute like I do to Renton by car, three hours each day.” And while the worker is able to survive on \$250 per week in strike pay, his coworkers cannot. “I know there’s other people that need a lot more to cover what they’re paying for. So, it is unfortunate that we only get \$250 a week strike. But we’re just trying to make do.”

But if workers are to win their demands, they need a new strategy independent of being starved out on picket lines on \$250 a week strike pay, while the government and Wall Street intervene on behalf of the company. Boeing is of strategic importance both to the American economy and to US imperialism. The company is a major US defense contractor and is seen as indispensable as the Democrats and Republicans conspire to set the stage for a war with Iran.

The task workers confront is the development of the Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee as an alternative leadership prepared to fight both Boeing, the capitalist government and the sellout union bureaucrats.

The need for a new form of struggle was highlighted on Tuesday at a mass rally held by the IAM leadership. It was attended by several hundred members of the union, who consistently interrupted speeches with shouts for the restoration of pensions. The size of the rally also reflects the ongoing militancy of the rank and file for a real fight to secure their demands.

But the perspective presented by the IAM bureaucracy was to “stay the course.” In other words, try and outlast a company that has been deemed “too big to fail” by both Wall Street and the American government. And while speeches were given by other members of the US trade union aristocracy, including from the IAM International, the AFL-CIO and the IBEW, no perspective was raised for a joint struggle of Boeing machinists in District 751 and W24 with other sections of workers, not even the 5,000 IAM machinists on strike at Textron Aviation.

Instead they limited themselves to demagogic chants of “One day longer, one day stronger” and “Our future,

our fight,” while reiterating the assertion that “without the IAM there is no Boeing.”

While workers are hemorrhaging money on the picket lines, all the bureaucrats who spoke at the rally, including District 751 President Jon Holden, are still drawing their full salaries. Holden took home \$225,000 last year in reported income.

The rally was also addressed by Senator Maria Cantwell (Democrat-Washington) and Jayapal, both posing as allies of the workers. Their presence was to disarm workers from the threat of state intervention. Cantwell, in particular, has received \$200,000 in campaign contributions from Boeing’s political action committee and has played a key role in assisting both Boeing, as well as the companies, in avoiding safety regulations.

Both Cantwell and Jayapal voted to outlaw the strike of 120,000 railroaders in 2022.

A real fight against Boeing would involve calling out broader sections of the working class to join in the machinists’ fight, starting with the Seattle docks. Boeing workers can also call on teachers, Washington state employees, other aerospace workers, including non-unionized workers at Boeing. A special appeal would be made to the 45,000 dockworkers on the Gulf Coast and East Coast who just had their strike sold out by the ILA.

And it would also involve a tripling of the current strike pay, retroactive to the first week of the strike, to ensure the rank and file has the resources it needs to survive a fight with one of the biggest corporations in the country.

The only way such a fight will be conducted, however, is through the independent initiative of the workers themselves. This was begun through the initiation of the Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee, and this work must be expanded. Workers cannot leave the struggle in the hands of the union bureaucracy, which has shown time and time again it will betray their interests.



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