

# Eaton Aerospace workers vote down third sellout agreement

Our reporters

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Striking Eaton Aerospace workers in Jackson, Michigan voted down a third tentative agreement Thursday. The deal was virtually identical to two previous agreements that were previously rejected. The 525 workers have been on strike now for more than four weeks.

The United Auto Workers (UAW) reported that workers rejected the agreement by a wider margin than in the previous vote.

The contract rejection comes as 33,000 striking Boeing workers rejected a second pro-company contract by 64 percent, presented by the International Association of Machinists bureaucracy and Labor Secretary Julie Su earlier this week. The opposition by Eaton workers reinforces the stand by both sections of workers. Eaton produces critical hoses and components for Boeing's commercial and military industry. The governments of both US and Britain are fearful of the strikes connecting and jeopardizing the war production for the planned US-Israel war against Iran.

Eaton workers denounced the contract for not addressing any of their demands, including full pensions for all workers, ending of the tier system and a reduction of out-of-pocket healthcare costs. As of this writing, the UAW Local 475 bargaining committee and UAW international representatives who counted the votes have not released the totals to the rank and file.

According to some workers the union absurdly claimed it had withheld the numbers so the company would not target certain groups of workers. It is more likely the UAW bureaucracy feared revealing the margin of defeat might give further encouragement to workers by showing the power of the opposition to the sellout.

Eaton workers spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* to denounce the third attempt by the UAW to force through a sellout. One worker shared posts of fellow workers voting down the contract saying, "Turned down." When asked about the Boeing workers' contract rejection and two other Eaton strikes in England and Illinois he said, "I believe there should be communication between us all."

A worker who spoke against the contract said, "I think it's

kind of selfish on the company's part, we're in there sometimes 7-days a week, 10-hours a day, we make them mad profits and they don't share the pie." He continued, "Like I tell my brothers and sisters, we're an investment, and the company needs to treat us like an investment, you invest in us and you're going to make more money."

In response to an earlier incident in which a motorist crashed into the picket line, killing one striker and seriously injuring two others the worker said, "They were both newer hires so I didn't know either of them that well, I've spoken to them a few times in passing, but it sucks, I have kids that age, I have friends with kids that age—it's horrible.

"We need to keep up with inflation, everybody has different opinions on what we need, I just want what's fair. They always want to get to a 40-hour work week, well, hey, you know, I think me and my brothers and sisters should be compensated for that. As we all know, times are not like they were in the early fifties, sixties and seventies, where, you know, you had one income and one parent to stay home and educate kids. Maybe that's the problem with the world having a parent who can be there to explain the way life is and the way we should be in the world."

Another worker said, "I think the contract, especially this revision was bullshit. Someone has lost their life. Unfortunately, though, if you voted "yes" for this contract, then that person lost their life for nothing because we could have voted "yes" a month ago and stayed in the factory, and there would not have been a death, there would not have been families traumatized and we would not have to be going through all this struggle. Eaton is a billion-dollar corporation. We are making them billions of dollars...

"They are saying they can't give us, what 10 bucks, 5 bucks, and a pension. It is ridiculous, especially with inflation going up. People don't know these numbers: inflation in this country since 2019 has risen by 59 percent, Eaton has had 66 percent [increase] in profits since 2019, so they are not even affected by inflation. They are just greedy, that is all it is. If someone is going alongside the big billionaires and big capitalists, they are just impatient. That

is why we are on strike, because corporate is greedy and we need the funds.

“When it comes to immigrants, I think that even using that word is a little crazy because at the end of the day these borders are man-made. Two hundred years ago that border wasn’t there.

“At the end of the day, everybody just wants to feed their families, and live life. That is the thing. People can’t even live properly; people are going hungry, homeless; they can’t afford medicine. I know that for a fact. The immigrants have nothing to do with this.”

“To the Boeing workers, keep fighting, we stand with you guys. United we stand. I support you in everything you do, from one factory to another.”

Speaking to her co-workers in Britain who are on strike, a worker said, “I am telling the England workers who are on strike, keep it going, stay strong, we are going to get something out of this, because they can’t keep taking and taking and taking and not giving something. Stay stronger, UAW strong all day long. I am not giving up.”

A seniority worker who said they voted “no” responded, “If this goes through, there’s nothing left to give back. Everything else is gone. They can hike this insurance that we have to pay for any time they want. And that’s what we need to be fighting for. There’s 525 people and they make almost \$12,000 [per day from each worker]. I don’t know how much of that’s profit. I’ve got a feeling a whole bunch of it. But that’s a lot of money. And for them to argue over a quarter, which is ten dollars a week, when they’ve made \$12,000? Yeah. The numbers don’t add up.”

He spoke on Eaton’s negligence on components produced at the plant. “The way this company is run is a travesty! Just because, say, a coupling, passes through the first test, doesn’t mean it’s going to hold up for the entire life of its use on an airplane. If that part is expected to last, say, five hundred hours before it’s replaced, the testing should be much more rigorous, but it’s not. It’s tested once and sent out the door. And there’s no recalls—just a lot of funerals if it causes a crash.”

He described the conditions in the plant, “I handle carcinogens my whole day. They don’t want you to go to the sink. You can’t do that until the bell rings. Yeah, until the bell rings. It’s crazy, you know. You can’t eat on the floor, so you got to go wash your hands and then walk down to the break room and back because you got to be back there in 10 minutes before the bell rings. It’s basically that environment.”

Speaking out against UAW President Shawn Fain he said, “I don’t think that guy impresses me much. The news tries to pump them up. They’re pumping them up and I still don’t agree. Not much to pump up.”

Another seniority worker who rejected the contract said, “You know the main thing, it’s not just about me and my family. It’s about all of our families. This is a group thing. This is for everyone. This is not just for one or a couple of individuals that walk out the door. This is for everybody...” ?

While the UAW bureaucracy has denounced WSWS campaigners for allegedly dividing Eaton workers, they have no answer for the contract rejection other than to work with Eaton to bring back another sellout agreement.

One worker spoke on the need to unite workers in Eaton with workers at Boeing and broader sections of the working class. “We need to stick together. From the few things I’ve read, the company says they’re giving competitive wages and all that. Well, I want to call ‘bullshit!’ because a loaf of bread is two-and-a-half times more than it was, milk’s two-and-a-half times more than what it was. And I know [Eaton] has up-marked their product upwards of thirty percent—they’re making billions, and we just want to afford to take our family out to dinner or be able to throw a graduation party for one of our kids without going into major debt.”

As the WSWS has explained throughout the Boeing and Eaton strikes, workers are not only fighting against their respective companies, but the union bureaucracy and the Biden administration. The UAW has demonstrated that it is on the side of management. They will continue to try to isolate and wear down the strike while preparing to repackage the same deal for a fourth vote. Worker can only successfully oppose this conspiracy if they organize on the shop floor independently of the union bureaucracy by forming a rank-and-file committee, following the example of the Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee.

This committee should fight for:

- Rank-and-file control over all contract talks, with all sessions livestreamed and overseen by rank-and-file workers.
- A contract with full pensions and medical benefits for all workers and retirees, an end to management-dictated tiers, and,
- Increase the strike pay to at least \$750 a week for all workers. The \$820 million strike fund, financed by the dues of the rank and file, must be used to sustain workers for this critical battle, not to fund the lavish lifestyles of the UAW bureaucrats.



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