

After rejection of sellout deal, working class must mobilize behind the Boeing strike

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The 64 percent rejection Wednesday of a sellout contract by Boeing workers is a major milestone in the class struggle. More than 33,000 workers refused to be intimidated into accepting the deal, brokered by the government, to shut down their powerful six-week strike.

The contract proposal amounted to an endorsement of a corporate dictatorship. In addition to substandard pay increases that do not make up for inflation and a decade of pay freezes, it also did not restore pensions stolen from workers in a 2014 contract extension. Worst of all, it would have given the company the go-ahead for 17,000 announced layoffs, as well as even more attacks planned by the company as it tries to impose the cost of the massive safety crisis on its 737 airlines on the backs of workers.

The vote is a staggering blow to Boeing management, as well as the bureaucracy of the International Association of Machinists (IAM). The IAM officials did not want a strike in the first place. Since then, they have tried to sap workers' strength with poverty strike pay, while refusing to adequately staff the picket lines and shutting down a parallel strike at Textron Aviation.

The vote is also a blow to the Biden administration, which was relying upon the union officials to end the strike against a major defense contractor. The ruling class has made no secret of the fact that it sees the strike as a "national security" issue. With US imperialism on the verge of launching a new, unpopular and catastrophic war with Iran, and even more war plans for after the election, it needs "labor peace" at home to free up supply chains and deal with domestic dissent.

Now, it is the obligation of workers across the world to join in defense of the Boeing strike. Workers must organize a broad campaign involving mass actions,

pickets and protests. The enormous social power of the working class, in the US and internationally, must be activated in order to deliver a massive defeat to the corporate oligarchy.

This can only be organized through a conscious rebellion against the pro-corporate union bureaucracy. "If anything has been proven over the past month, it is that the chief obstacle to our unity is the dictatorship of the bureaucracy in the unions," the Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee declared in its statement urging workers to reject the contract. "We have to connect a broad appeal with a rank-and-file rebellion to transfer power from the apparatus to workers ourselves."

The independent power of the working class must be mobilized through building the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) as a global rebellion of the rank-and-file to break the stranglehold of an unaccountable corporate-state trade union apparatus and unleash the tremendous social power of the working class. Workers all over the world are battling sellouts, from the autoworkers facing mass job cuts, to railroaders, to postal and logistics workers fighting sellout contracts of their own.

In particular, an appeal must be made to workers in the global aerospace industry, including Embraer workers in Brazil who have also just rejected a sellout contract, Airbus workers fighting mass layoffs, and aerospace workers at Eaton, a major Boeing supplier, engaged in strikes in the US and Britain.

The potential for a united movement of broader sections of workers was demonstrated Thursday night. More than 500 Eaton workers in Michigan, who have been on strike for more than five weeks, rejected a sellout contract brought back by the UAW, by an even larger margin than they rejected the first contract.

Another 400 Eaton workers, members of the IAM, walked out in Illinois earlier this week.

The growth of the class struggle in the US, with the Boeing strike only the most recent sign, has global implications. The growing mood of intransigence, determination and optimism in the American working class can alter the balance of forces in favor of workers in every country, as well as all those fighting oppression.

In particular, the shut-down of a defense contractor shows how the working class can be mobilized against war. The vote came only days after dockworkers in Greece refused to move equipment bound for the Israeli military to carry out the escalating genocide in Gaza and war throughout the Middle East.

The vote at Boeing takes place less than two weeks before a US presidential election characterized by an unprecedented crisis of class rule. Trump and the Republicans are inciting fascist violence while plotting to reject any result that is not in their favor. The Democrats, meanwhile, are focused above all on the escalation of global war, including military strikes against Iran that could happen before Election Day.

The vote at Boeing shows that the mobilization of the working class, on the basis of its own independent interests, is the only solution to capitalist reaction.

It is highly significant that the restoration of pensions has become a central demand of the Boeing workers. They are fighting for the principle that workers everywhere have the right to a secure retirement and decent standard of living.

The movement behind Boeing must take the form of a conscious fight for the principle that workers have inalienable social rights, including the right to a secure retirement, the right to a job and livable income, decent and affordable housing, adequate leisure time, high quality healthcare, and others.

Boeing management, on the other hand, is fighting on behalf of the entire capitalist ruling class for the “right” of management to exploit workers without limit. “There is no scenario where the company reactivates a defined-benefit pension for this or any other population,” the company declared Thursday.

Boeing is digging in its heels because it is being backed by Wall Street and the government. If the Biden administration cannot shut down the strike through a union-backed sellout, then it will move to use

repressive methods. The ban against a national rail strike in 2022 is both a lesson and a warning for Boeing workers.

The threat of government intervention can only be answered through a mass mobilization behind the strike, completely independent of both corporate parties and their lackeys in the union bureaucracy.

The strike has brought to the forefront the irreconcilable class divisions in society. On the one hand, the ruling class wants to marshal all of society’s resources for war. On the other, workers can only fulfill their aspirations if they take political power in their own hands and marshal society’s resources to greatly improve the living standards of the world’s population and end social inequality, war and the threat of dictatorship.

The struggle at Boeing, therefore, must be connected to the development of a political movement in the working class, based on its own independent and revolutionary interests. Boeing and other major corporations must be placed under public ownership, run democratically by workers themselves for the benefit of all, as part of the socialist reorganization of the world economy to meet human needs, not corporate profit.



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