

**Boeing should be making the concessions—**

# **No to the blackmail!**

Previous concessions forced on machinists and engineers have fattened Boeing's profits, and only whetted the company's appetite for *more* concessions. Thus, with 16 straight quarters of record profits, soaring stocks, and a record backlog of orders, Boeing is now fighting to blackmail Puget Sound machinists into accepting unprecedented concessions which they'll be locked into until 2024, i.e., for half a generation.

Both the Democrats and Republicans in Olympia have shown they're allied with Boeing by jumping to give it \$8.7 billion in tax incentives, plus state-funded training help. Boeing workers and all Washington residents will pay for this either through tax increases or by having needed social services further cut under the plea "there's no money" for them.

And the IAM leadership has aided and abetted the company's brutal blackmail: First, while the present contract doesn't expire until 2016, they conducted secret negotiations with Boeing, and then recommended the concessions-riddled proposal they sprang on the workers in November. Then, after the membership rejected that proposal by a 2-1 margin, the IAM leaders went back into secret negotiations to try to get Boeing to "sweeten" its bitter pill. But Boeing's new offer was so rotten that the local leadership this time decided to defy the international and call for voting no. (Wroblewski, who has a position to protect, also remembered the booing, heckling and denunciations he justly received from District 751 members on November 13.)

We also call for voting **NO!** No elimination of defined benefit pensions! No raising of healthcare contributions! No measly one percent wage increase every other year! No concessions to Boeing whatsoever! With its huge profits and \$10 billion designated for stock buybacks, it's Boeing that should be making the concessions!

It should also be noted that even if the

contract extension is ratified Boeing plans to continue its long-term program of moving production to low-wage states and countries. For example, in October it said it is placing significant amounts of engineering design work for the 777X outside Washington state, and in December it said it will eliminate up to 1,200 SPEEA jobs in Washington and fill them at five locations around the country, mainly in the South. Moreover, the December "Letter of Understanding" between Boeing and the IAM says "*The parties agree that the Company may subcontract or outsource certain 777X wing fabrication and assembly work packages, in whole or in part...*"

The other side of this is that not only is constructing an entire 777X plant elsewhere a billion-dollar project, but nowhere else has the trained workforce, training support network, and physical infrastructure in place that Puget Sound has.

## **Oppose joining the race to the bottom**

What Boeing wants is to have workers of different states and countries competing with each other over who is going to accept the worst wages and conditions in order to have a job, i.e., the old race to the bottom. The only way to fight this is through national and international working-class solidarity, which means workers in Puget Sound and everywhere must not only stand up in resistance to the concessions demands of "their" employers, but fight for improvements of wages, benefits and conditions, as well as for good benefits or jobs for the unemployed. And the fact that so many workers in all industries applauded the machinists November 13 rejection of Boeing's demands shows that the working class is increasingly realizing that this is the only path forward.

The trade-union bureaucracy which the IAM leaders are part of doesn't believe in this, however. It's supposedly too idealistic, whereas they're "realistic" people. So where has their "realism" led?

Since 1979 at Chrysler, the trade union leaders in all industries have over and over fought to foist concessions contracts on the workers by saying this would “save jobs.” But jobs have not been saved, with hundreds of thousands being eliminated in the auto industry alone. What's been saved are the profits of the capitalists. Moreover, American wages and benefits have been driven so low that German and Japanese auto companies years ago began to set up plants in the southern U.S. to take advantage of the cheap labor there.

The labor officials' treachery is premised on the theory is that workers and capitalists have “common interests,” which inevitably leads to company unionism: what's good for the company is good for the worker! Adding to this is that they're *well-paid* business unionists, e.g., IAM's Buffenbarger reports a yearly income of over \$300 thousand--and like a corporate CEO, he and staff fly around the country in a union owned Learjet. Last year, District 751 members paid \$25.5 million in dues to the international to support this kind of class-traitor unionism.

### What next?

Whether Boeing's blackmail is rejected or accepted, machinists and workers in every industry will remain exploited wage slaves who the capitalists will continually try to blackmail into joining the “race to the bottom.” Moreover, this is in conditions where--since the official end of the Great Recession--capitalists across the economy are now raking in record profits. The capitalists have accomplished this through speed-up and job-combinations in the workplaces, outsourcing, moving production to low-wage locations, cutting wages and benefits, huge subsidies and tax breaks from the government, plus speculation that has once again created huge bubbles in the economy.

But for many tens of millions of people there has been no recovery at all! In fact, they've become poorer than before, and neither Democrats or Republicans really give a damn about them, e.g.,

Bush and then Obama funneled \$trillions to bail out Wall Street, but Obama has never had a serious jobs program, and while more people are using food stamps than ever, Obama fought for “only” a \$4 billion cut in food stamps as opposed to the larger cuts favored by the Republicans.

It's going to take a profound revival of the class-struggle to break up this ever-worsening status quo, and this is possible. After all, the U.S. working class made its greatest gains as by-products of the sharp class battles during the Great Depression of the 1930s, and as by-products of the deep mass upsurges and rebellions that shook the country in the 1960s. Moreover, the huge struggles and victories of those generations didn't come simply because the masses spontaneously became politically active. No, lots of organizing work was done by everyday people rising up—you and I--that helped prepare conditions for eruption of mass movements, and helped keep them going. \*

Today, the increasing disorganization of the working class, accompanied by falling wages, cuts to benefits, and a widening gap between the rich and the poor has been forced on the workers by the logic of the “free market” - a market where the price of labor power is lowered through competition among the workers accompanied by higher “acceptable” unemployment. The working class can fight this trend only by solidarity, and the first step for this is that workers should stand up for what they have. The Boeing Machinists set a great example by rejecting the November contract offer. They should follow this by rejecting Boeing's “last and best” attempt to frighten them into “getting it right.” And in preparation for coming battles they should persist in efforts to build independent organization.

\*For a picture of what this work was like, see <http://communistvoice.org/WAS8703CPUSA-UAW.html>.

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