

Unifor announces deal to end CAMI strike

Reject Unifor-GM blackmail! No vote until CAMI workers have full contract and time to study it!

Statement of the WSWS Autoworker Newsletter
14 October 2017

A day after General Motors threatened to ramp up production of the Equinox SUV at two of its Mexican plants unless Unifor shut down the month-long strike at GM's CAMI factory in Ingersoll, Ontario and ordered its members back to work, the Canadian auto union dutifully followed its orders, announcing Friday evening it had reached an undisclosed agreement with GM to end the strike.

So much for the bluster from Unifor President Jerry Dias about declarations of war and that the union would not take GM's threats "sitting down." Unifor didn't sit down, it rolled over.

Displaying the same contempt for rank-and-file workers that Unifor officials have heaped on CAMI workers since the beginning of contract negotiations and throughout the strike, Unifor announced it would not release any details of the deal until Monday's ratification meeting where it expected workers to approve it.

Why aren't the full details of the agreement being released now? GM already knows the content of the deal, and so do the Unifor executives. The only ones who don't are the CAMI workers whose livelihoods are at stake. The only explanation for keeping workers in the dark is that the deal is so rotten Unifor does not want to give rank-and-file workers sufficient time to study it and mount a campaign to overturn it.

Unifor President Jerry Dias and the Local 88 officials have called a snap meeting for Monday morning to ram the sellout through with as little discussion as possible. Workers have seen this movie before: union officials will pass out a bogus "highlights" brochure that

conceals the real content of the deal and national and local officials will say this is the best they could get. Union bureaucrats and their toadies among the "team leaders" will try to silence any one opposing the sellout by echoing GM's threats to shift production to Mexico and "wind down" production in Ingersoll.

Union officials hope workers have been sufficiently softened up by forcing them to fight this battle alone—while 20,000 GM, Ford and Fiat Chrysler workers remain on the job—and sustain themselves on a starvation ration of \$250 a week in strike pay.

But CAMI workers have not stood on the picket lines for nearly a month and endured sacrifices to accept yet another concessionary contract from the auto giant, which made more than \$11 billion in profits last year and is showering billions in stock buybacks and dividends on its Wall Street and Bay Street investors.

The fact that GM has threatened to move production shows the strike has already impacted its bottom line. This is not the time to capitulate. Instead it is time for a new strategy to mobilize autoworkers throughout Canada, the US and in Mexico against GM. Only an international strategy to unite North American workers can defeat the relentless whipsawing by the global auto giants and the corporate-controlled governments in Ottawa, Washington and Mexico City.

Rank-and-file workers must insist they get the full contract, including all the appendices and secret letters of agreement, and a full week to study the deal. This means blocking the efforts by Unifor to railroad workers into a rushed vote on Monday.

By bringing back this sellout, the national Unifor

leaders and the Master Bargaining Committee have proven they are nothing but GM's agents. Rank-and-file workers should take control of Monday's meeting and vote for the formation of a rank-and-file factory committee, made up of the most self-sacrificing and militant workers, to advance their own contract demands and oversee the conduct of the strike.

A full week is needed to study the deal so CAMI workers can exchange information with GM, Ford and Fiat Chrysler workers throughout Canada and the US. The workers in Oshawa, Oakville, Brampton, Windsor and other factories voted in record numbers against the "pattern" deal Unifor rammed through last year in similar circumstances, and even to this day most have not seen the full contract.

That sellout enshrined the hated two-tier system, increased the use of third-tier temporary workers, cut benefits, abolished a defined benefits pension for new hires and included a meager pay increase that does not keep up with the rate of inflation. There is little doubt that GM wants to deliver a humiliating defeat to CAMI workers to pave the way for savage concessions throughout North America.

Instead of bowing before this Unifor-GM conspiracy, rank-and-file CAMI workers should rally all autoworkers to reverse the decades of union-backed concessions. This should include abolishing two-tier wages and benefits and the bogus 10-year "grow-in," the transformation of all part-time employees into full-time workers with full pay, an immediate 30 percent increase in pay to make up for the loss of COLA and more than a decade-long decline in real wages, and the rehiring of all workers.

Any threats by GM to shift production, lay off workers or close the plant should be met with a plant occupation and the demand for the transformation of the auto industry into a public enterprise under the collective ownership of the working class.

Every worker knows it is impossible to fight GM without a strategy to unite with US workers, and the super-exploited workers in Mexico. GM and the other transnationals scour the globe for cheap labour and no worker's job is safe. Earlier this year, Ford cancelled plans to build a new factory in Mexico opting instead to produce the Ford Fusion in China. In 2012, Caterpillar shut down its London, Ontario locomotive factory to move production to Muncie, Indiana where desperate

workers are being paid half the wage.

Dias and the Unifor officials will no doubt tell CAMI workers that job security can only be won through renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). But Unifor's political strategy of aligning itself with Trudeau's Liberals and the fascistic billionaire US president, Donald Trump, is in shambles. Trudeau represents Canadian capitalism, including Magna International, which depends on cheap labour in Mexico, while the Trump administration is intensifying its trade war measures not just against Mexico but Canada too!

It is a political fraud to claim that Trudeau and Trump are going to negotiate a "progressive trade deal for workers, not corporations", as Dias claims. There is nothing progressive or fair about capitalism, which is based on the exploitation of the international working class for the profits of the wealthy few.

A new political strategy is needed but it must be based on the independent interests of the working class, not pleading with the big business representatives in Ottawa and Washington. An industrial counter-offensive by the working class—mobilizing millions of autoworkers throughout North America—must be combined with a political counter-offensive, which includes breaking with the capitalist Liberals, Tories and New Democrats, and building a mass political movement of the working class, based on an international socialist strategy.

The capitalist system is not just plunging mankind into new trade wars, like those that precipitated the Great Depression of the 1930s, it threatens mankind with new world wars, which would destroy civilization.

Everything now depends on the independent initiative of the working class. CAMI workers must take a stand. Stop the Unifor-GM blackmail. Organize rank-and-file committees to take the conduct of the struggle out of the hands of the Unifor company stooges, and mobilize the working class in Canada, the US and Mexico in an industrial and political counter-offensive to defend the right of all workers to a good-paying and secure job.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact