

Less than three months to Big Three auto contract expiration

UAW sabotages strike by Faurecia auto parts workers in Michigan

Marcus Day, Tim Rivers
21 June 2019

The United Auto Workers abruptly shutdown a strike late Friday morning by nearly 2,000 workers at the Faurecia auto parts plant in Saline, Michigan, who walked out shortly after midnight early Friday morning. The walkout followed the expiration of the bargaining deadline between the French-based global parts maker and the United Auto Workers union.

The action by the UAW again demonstrated the complete contempt of this organization for workers and the fact that it no way represents their interests. No details of the supposed settlement were made public and no date set for a contract ratification vote. While the strike reveals the intense pent-up anger among autoworkers, and their determination to reverse decades of falling real wages and increasingly intolerable working conditions the UAW expresses none of this.

The brief walkout was the largest strike among US autoworkers since Nexteer workers in Saginaw, Michigan, walked out in 2015.

The UAW felt it had to intervene to end the strike because the action could have quickly disrupted operations throughout the auto industry, as was case in the massive strike wave by 70,000 maquiladora and auto parts workers in Matamoros, Mexico, earlier this year. Workers at the Faurecia plant make instrument panels, center consoles and other parts for Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, Ford Motor Company, and Tesla.

The walkout came less than three months before the contract expiration for 155,000 autoworkers at Ford, General Motors and Fiat Chrysler on September 14, presenting the potential for a powerful united struggle.

While there is an enormous desire to fight among autoworkers, the UAW has done everything in its power to keep a lid on the opposition while it worked

broker a new concessions agreement with management. UAW Local 892 agreed to a three-week extension of the previous contract, which was set to expire May 31, keeping workers in the dark on its negotiations with the company.

Workers who spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* as the UAW was shutting down the picket line were outraged. They said that all they had been told was the company agreed to a miserable \$2,500 bonus to be paid in two installments.

“They are telling us to go to work. Anyone who is on afternoon has to go back to work. We don’t have an option, whether you are for it or not,” said one worker.

“No one agreed with what they said. If it was up to everybody else, they never would have called it off. With what they told us, everyone should still be out here.”

“They should have gone on strike three weeks ago,” a Faurecia worker told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* earlier this week. “They should have never given them an extension. They gave them an extension so they can screw us.”

At auto parts makers Nexteer in 2015 and Lear in 2014, the UAW called off strikes after less than 24 hours, imposing agreements containing poverty wages in both cases.

Everything depends on workers taking matters into their own hands! The *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* calls on workers at Faurecia to elect a rank-and-file committee, independent of the UAW, in order to take control of the negotiations.

The strike committee must raise demands, which correspond to workers’ needs and make an urgent appeal to autoworkers throughout Michigan and the US

to expand the strike.

Four years ago, the UAW forced through a sellout contract with a dollar an hour pay cut, followed by the gutting of medical insurance coverage. Just last week, the union forced striking nurses at Mercy Hospital in Toledo, Ohio, to return to work under contract terms they had rejected when they walked out six weeks before.

Once employed at full pay within Ford Motor Company, the Faurecia workers have suffered decades of spin-offs, bankruptcies, pay cuts, and the destruction of safety and working conditions.

The situation in the plant is horrific. A recent video sent by a worker to the Saline Post showed rain coming through the roof and forming huge puddles on the floor, alongside rows of portable toilets set up in response to broken plumbing.

Three workers died on the shop floor within the space of one year.

The strike at Faurecia is another indication of the continuing resurgence of the class struggle around the world. Since the beginning of 2018, teachers have walked out in California, Colorado, West Virginia, Kentucky, and other states, and educators have struck in the Netherlands, Poland, India, Iran, Mexico, New Zealand, Tunisia, Zimbabwe and other countries. “Yellow vest” protests against inequality have persisted for months in France, while mass uprisings of workers have taken place in Sudan and Algeria.

The auto giants, under the whip of Wall Street investors and facing a looming recession, have sought to blackmail workers at the Big Three in the upcoming contract negotiations, carrying out mass layoffs, plant closings, and far-reaching restructuring efforts.

The companies have carried out an international assault on autoworkers. GM announced the planned destruction of 14,000 jobs in December, including the shutdown of plants in Canada and the US. Ford is in the midst of slashing 7,000 salaried positions globally and recently announced the planned closing of its Bridgend engine plant in the UK.

The automakers are fearful that the UAW, deeply discredited by the corruption revelations and its record of decades of betrayals, may prove unable to keep workers’ opposition in check. But the companies are determined to offload the cost of the next economic downturn onto workers. In a shot across the bow,

Automotive News reported Thursday that GM is aiming to vastly expand the use of low-paid contract workers and impose substantially higher health care costs on workers.

There is, however, a vast and widespread desire among workers to call a halt to the endless destruction of wages, benefits, and job protections, and to launch a fight back.

In order to carry out a genuine struggle, workers need new organizations, rank-and-file factory and workplace committees, independent of the pro-company unions and democratically elected and controlled, which should demand an end to all plant closings and concessions, the abolition of all tiers, the conversion of all part-time workers to full-time status, a 40 percent wage increase to compensate for the increased cost of living, and workers’ control of line speed and production. Preparations must be made for a nationwide strike of the entire auto industry.

The *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* will provide every assistance possible in this effort and urges autoworkers who wish to join this fight to contact us today.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact