

Faurecia and Ford workers denounce UAW sabotage of auto parts strike

A WSWWS reporting team
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Workers at the auto components factory in Saline, Michigan, owned by the giant French conglomerate Faurecia, were sent back to work by the United Auto Workers union last Friday morning after the UAW sabotaged their strike, which could have quickly led to a shortage of critical parts for Ford and other automakers.

The UAW ended the walkout after only nine hours, claiming that it had suddenly reached an agreement with management after months and months of stalled contract talks. Workers were given no information about the terms of the deal—if one even exists—and have been told that they will learn about the contract and vote on it sometime this week.

Approximately 1,900 workers labor at the factory, which used to be owned by Ford before it spun off its parts production to a new corporate entity, Visteon, which quickly declared bankruptcy in order to rob workers of their hard-earned pensions and wages. Faurecia took over management of the plant in 2012 although the property is still owned by Ford.

In May, 97 percent of Faurecia workers voted in favor of strike action to recoup decades of lost wages and the destruction of safety conditions and medical benefits, which the UAW gave up at each stage of the corporate shell game of changing management.

For the last four decades, the UAW has blocked any serious strikes—the last national auto strike was at Ford in 1976—and the last auto parts strikes at Nexteer (2015) and Lear (2014) were shut down after a day. This is not because—as the UAW has sought to convince workers—that they are weak. In fact, with “Just-in-Time” production, which relies on the constant delivery of parts, rather than using up large parts of assembly plants for stockpiling components—a strike at a critical factory like Faurecia would quickly have led to the shortage of parts for highly profitable vehicles, including Ford’s F-150 pickup trucks.

The last thing the UAW wants, however, is a successful strike, which demonstrates the immense social power of workers. This would encourage similar action by the far larger number of autoworkers at Ford, GM and Fiat Chrysler whose contracts are expiring in mid-September. The auto companies, with the collusion of the UAW, are using the threat of more plant closings and layoffs to extract a new round of devastating concessions, including expanding the number of low-paid contract workers and imposing crushing out-of-pocket costs for health care coverage.

The WSWWS *Autoworker Newsletter* has reported a number of times on the horrific conditions faced by workers in the Saline plant, and workers consistently say those conditions are getting worse. “In one part of the warehouse, if it rains, they are working in the rain,” said a young worker who was recently hired in. “If you see liquid on the floor, you don’t know if it’s water or gas or some other chemical. It could be anything.”

Another added, “The roof leaks. If I get water on my head while I’m working, I don’t know where that water’s been or what’s in it.

“A lot of people don’t know it, but there was a fire in [the plant] last week,” he continued, “...so big they had to call the Saline Fire Department to put it out.”

It is these conditions, combined with subsistence wages and grueling hours, that have enraged Faurecia workers and provoked the strike.

“In my head we were striking for better wages and better healthcare. But maybe that was just me,” this worker continued. He stressed that any issues that the workers were striking for were only “rumors and hearsay” on the picket line. “There was no leadership,” he said.

“I believe that we have more power than they do if we stick together. Yesterday, we stopped the F-150 Ford production. We have to stick together and fight for what

we need,” he continued. “We don’t know what is in the contract. That is the crazy part about it. Everybody is talking about it, and we do not have any knowledge of what is in it.”

His colleague went on to comment on the wretched character of the union. “We had a strike for one day. We came back the next day. We did not have a meeting or anything. The supervisor said that the UAW might come around but don’t stop production. That’s all he said. As far as him saying something about the contract, he didn’t say anything about it.”

“I just don’t like the fact that we are in the dark about everything.”

Another young Faurecia worker said, “I believe there is power in numbers. If we stick together worldwide nothing can stop us.”

Workers coming out of Ford’s Dearborn Assembly on Saturday also responded to the UAW’s shutting down of the Faurecia strike with support to fellow workers and disgust towards the union.

"That's not right, that's messed up what they're doing to them. They should have kept striking. Have you seen their working conditions? They have no toilets, etc. They better go back striking. We had our shift stopped for an hour when this happened because of a shortage of parts."

“I’ve been here since 2014 and saw how the last contract went. Everyone in here is saying that they will try to take the rest of our benefits. We’re talking about this on the floor.”

The UAW is not a workers’ organization. It is a tool of corporate management and a strikebreaking outfit. Left in the hands of this organization, autoworkers will suffer a huge rollback in their conditions and wages in the upcoming contract for 155,000 GM, Ford and Fiat Chrysler workers. That is why workers must take the conduct of this fight out of the hands of the UAW, through building rank-and-file factory committees to prepare a nationwide strike.

We urge workers to read the WSWS call to action and join the June 27 call-in meeting to discuss a strategy for the upcoming contract fight.



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