

UAW keeps GM contract proposal secret from workers at company's request

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On Thursday, October 10 at 7:00 p.m. Eastern Time, the WSWS Autoworker Newsletter is hosting an online meeting to discuss the strategy and perspective needed to win the strike. To participate, visit wsws.org/autocall.

As the strike by nearly 50,000 GM workers slows production across the international auto industry, the UAW is withholding critical information from autoworkers in order to sabotage the strike.

The *Detroit Free Press* reported yesterday that “General Motors submitted a new contract proposal on Monday morning,” citing anonymous sources. GM asked the UAW to keep the details “confidential,” the *Free Press* wrote, and the UAW obliged, keeping workers in the dark about the offer.

The revelation proves that the UAW is engaged in a conspiracy with the corporation to betray the strike and impose GM's deeply unpopular demands. From the beginning the UAW has operated in secret because they are well aware they would face a revolt if workers knew what concessions the UAW had already agreed to.

The news that the UAW was concealing GM's latest proposal came as industry analysts note the strike's growing impact. Auto industry analyst Anderson Economic Group (AEG) published a report yesterday noting that the strike “has jumped from impacting the initial 49,000 UAW workers to nearly 150,000 workers throughout the auto industry.”

Brian Peterson, AEG's director of public policy and economic analysis, said, “What started as a concentrated event affecting a select group of workers has now ballooned in scope.”

Among those directly impacted are 25,000 white-collar GM workers who before the strike faced thousands of layoffs. In addition, AEG estimates that

75,000 auto parts workers have also faced furloughs, layoffs or wage cuts.

Thousands of GM workers at the Oshawa and St. Catharines, Ontario, plants in Canada and at the Silao and Ramos Arizpe plants in Mexico have also been temporarily laid off.

Reports in the Mexican press indicate the strike is also slowing or stopping production for tens of thousands of workers at dozens of sweatshop parts facilities in Matamoros, Mexico, across from Brownsville, Texas. Earlier this year, 70,000 Matamoros workers formed independent committees and launched a wildcat strike that slowed production in the US and Canada.

According to *En Linea Directa*, Rogelio García Treviño, president of the National Chamber of the Matamoros Processing Industry, said 20 percent of auto parts plants in the city have been impacted by the GM strike.

García Treviño said “the situation is worrying business owners who have already had to reduce hours of work due to low demand of the parts they produce, causing wage cuts in many maquilas,” *En Linea Directa* reported.

The growing global impact of the strike shows just how much is at stake: GM, backed by its Wall Street investors, is waging a battle to restructure class relations, lower wages, increase healthcare costs and facilitate the hyper-exploitation of workers across all industries.

Former GM executive Bob Lutz told CNBC yesterday that the strike will determine the profitability of corporate America for years to come. “The stakes really are American competitiveness,” he said, denouncing workers for disrespecting the fact that “General Motors pays well, cares for its people, has

great health care.”

University of California, Berkeley, Labor Relations Professor Harley Shaiken also told CNBC that the profitability of corporate America is the product of union collaboration with management. “It’s the competitiveness of the entire economy because the union and the corporation working together,” he said.

The fact that the strike is impacting more and more parts suppliers does not mean GM will buckle. On the contrary, the greater the strike’s impact, the harder the company and union will work to shut the strike down.

For example, according to the *New York Times*, the UAW is preparing a dirty trick to split American and Mexican workers by offering to eviscerate production at Mexican auto companies.

The *Times* reported on October 6 that “the union, which has been on strike since Sept. 16, has pressed GM to shift production of some sport utility vehicles and pickup trucks from Mexican factories in order to create and secure jobs in domestic plants.”

Any deal to “repatriate” jobs to the US would mean slashing wages and benefits in the US to unlivable levels while leaving thousands of Mexican GM workers jobless. US autoworkers do not want a deal that forces their Mexican brothers out on the streets and drags wages down for everyone. The ruling class’s strategy to pit workers against each other based on nationality has resulted in decades of concessions and wage cuts, putting workers in a permanent race to the bottom.

At the GM plant in Silao, Mexico—which produces the highly profitable Silverado and Sierra pickup trucks—the corporation has fired nine courageous workers who organized independently of their pro-company union against speed-ups in order to support striking workers in the US.

The company and union have worked together to victimize **Carlos Marquez**, with eight-and-a-half years at the plant; **Fernando Moreno Moya**, 23 years; **Arturo Martínez Fernández**, 23 years; **Juan Carlos Mendoza**, 25 years; **Ramón Rodríguez**, 23 years; **Javier Martínez Mosqueda**, 24 years; **Israel Cervantes**, 13 years; **Pedro Masías**, 15 years; and **Mauricio Negrete Pérez**, 21 years.

The UAW is a corrupt, criminal organization working to betray the strike. Workers must form rank-and-file committees to share information, reach decisions and carry out united action.

Rank-and-file committees must demand:

- Expand the strike immediately to FCA and Ford.
- Triple strike pay to \$750 a week and freeze pay for all UAW officials.
- A 40 percent pay raise, the restoration of COLA for current and retired workers, the abolition of the two-tier wage and benefit system and the immediate conversion of all temps into full-time workers with full wages and benefits.

• The reopening of all closed plants and the re-hiring of laid-off workers. No plant closures anywhere.

• The reinstatement of all the fired and victimized workers at GM’s Silao, Mexico, plant and the payment of all back wages.

By establishing rank-and-file committees and taking control of the strike, autoworkers can unleash the immense potential power of the working class in this critical class battle against the financial aristocracy.

But a warning must be made: If workers allow the UAW to maintain control, the strike will be bitterly defeated and working conditions for millions will be disastrously impacted for decades to come.



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