

UAW ramps up anti-Mexican campaign as Ford reneges on investment deal for Ohio Assembly

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The apparent decision by Ford to cancel a planned investment at its Ohio Assembly Plant (OHAP) in the Cleveland suburb of Avon Lake slated for 2023 has provoked an outburst of demagoguery from UAW officials, ramping up their anti-Mexican chauvinism.

The \$900 million investment to build an unspecified new vehicle at Ohio Assembly was announced in November 2019 amid much fanfare and used by the UAW to help push through the sellout national Ford-UAW contract. At the time it was claimed the investment would lead to 1,500 additional jobs at the facility, which currently employs 1,750 workers building Ford E-series vans and Super Duty pickup trucks.

The deal was the latest in a long succession of worthless job guarantees by the auto companies, always tied to concessions from workers and always revocable by management due to “market conditions.” Meanwhile, the UAW has imposed one anti-worker contract after another, surrendering hard-won gains such as pensions and cost-of-living raises, while instituting multi-tier wages and sanctioning the spread of part-time and contract work.

In a letter issued March 12, UAW Vice President Gerald Kariem issued a statement announcing Ford’s cancellation of the Ohio Assembly expansion, while noting pointedly that investment would be made in Mexico, although this has not been confirmed by Ford. Having thus presented the issue as a battle between US workers and their Mexican brothers over jobs, the letter goes on to ask Ford for an “explanation” of its decision. This can have no other meaning than that the UAW plans to “fight” Ford’s cancellation of the Ohio Assembly expansion by offering further concessions.

It should be pointed out that head the Ford department in January 2020 to replace Roy Gamble, who was elevated to UAW president after the resignation of disgraced former President Gary Jones. He is part of the corrupt UAW inner circle that presided over a massive corruption scandal that sent top UAW officials, including Jones and former UAW President Dennis Williams, to prison.

Following the letter by Kariem, Ohio Democratic Senator Sherrod Brown also denounced the cancellation of the Avon Lake expansion, declaring, “Clevelanders turned on the local news and saw headlines about yet another American corporation deciding to build things in Mexico instead of Ohio.”

Industry analyst AutoForecast Solutions separately reported that in 2023 Ford plans to build two electric sport-utility vehicles at its factory in Cuautitlán, Mexico, originally slated for Ohio Assembly. Ford has refused to confirm this.

An Ohio Assembly worker told the WSWS, “There is a written agreement in the 2019 contract. And that investment was the only item in that contract that made OHAP vote yes for that contract.”

Asked if he agreed with the attempts by the UAW to present the defense of jobs as pitting American workers against Mexican workers, he added, “I don’t think that. I haven’t heard anyone say that it was. [Workers] are squarely placing the blame on Ford management, [they think] they can change the agreement after ratification. Ford believes that only the workers have to abide by the rules of the contract and there is nothing we can do about it.

“Can the workers take what they don’t like out of the agreement? Hell no they can’t, without being

disciplined.”

The row over the presumed sending of “American” jobs to Mexico comes as the Biden administration is ramping up its nationalist “Buy American” campaign aimed at the overseas rivals of US capitalism. The White House and Biden’s cabinet have been directing evermore overt and provocative threats against China in particular.

The aim of the incessant anti-Mexican and anti-Chinese demagoguery of the UAW is aimed in the first place in splitting the working class by promoting animosity among American workers toward workers in other countries. The UAW is particularly sensitive to the growing feelings of solidarity between US and Mexican workers, expressed in the sympathy shown by American autoworkers toward the courageous struggle of Matamoros workers in 2019 and the solidarity shown by GM workers in Silao, Mexico, toward striking American GM workers.

As a victimized Flint GM worker, Juan Gonzalez, told the *World Socialist Web Site* during the 2019 strike, “They want to force those workers into poverty, just like us, in order to shut us up. We are all building the same cars for the same companies. These cars have parts from all over the world. We need to get together and unite no matter what country we are from.”

The attempt by the UAW to deflect anger over the destruction of jobs against Mexican workers takes place as AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka issued a broadside against China this week over unsubstantiated allegations of the use of forced labor to build solar panels. In the letter, addressed to National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, Trumka singled out solar energy products from China’s Xinjiang region, home to China’s Uyghur minority.

The statement by Trumka dovetailed with stepped-up agitation against China by the Biden administration. The Biden administration has used exaggerated claims of Chinese oppression of the Uyghurs as propaganda in an attempt to whip up a “human rights” justification for economic and military aggression against its rival.

Biden, in contrast to former President Trump, has sought to enlist the support of the unions in an attempt to divert the anger of workers over deteriorating social conditions outward against workers in other countries. Biden’s stridently nationalist “Buy American” campaign, mandating that government agencies use

American-sourced products, is aimed at enlisting the support of the unions in the US war drive. This campaign runs hand-in-hand with the corporatist integration of the unions with management and the government in a drive to attack workers’ living standards.

At the same time, the Biden administration has been relying upon the unions to suppress opposition among teachers and other sections of workers to the homicidal campaign to reopen schools and workplaces in the midst of the pandemic.

Workers must reject the nationalist anti-foreigner and anti-immigrant demagoguery of the unions and reach out their hand to their brother and sister workers overseas, appealing for a common fight against the multinational corporations.

Autoworkers in particular have had a long experience with the results of the racist attempts by the UAW to scapegoat foreign workers over the loss of jobs. In 1982, a Chinese American draftsman, Vincent Chin, was brutally murdered in Highland Park, Michigan, by Chrysler foreman Ronald Ebens and his unemployed son, who had been whipped up by anti-Japanese demagoguery promoted by the UAW. Ebens had wrongly assumed Chin was Japanese.

The defense of jobs requires a globally coordinated fight by the working class against the irrational and outmoded capitalist profit system. Under capitalism, new labor-saving technologies are turned against workers and used to slash jobs, pile more work on the remaining workforce and shift production in search of cheaper labor.

The alternative is for workers to mobilize independently of the pro-corporate trade unions, through the formation of rank-and-file factory and workplace committees. In opposition to the nationalist program of the unions, these committees will coordinate workers struggles across industries and borders in a common fight to defend jobs and decent working conditions for all.



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