

Widespread contract violations at Mack Trucks in Pennsylvania

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Mack Trucks workers can contact the Mack Workers Rank-and-File Committee by texting 717-739-9517 or emailing MackWRFC@gmail.com.

According to workers at the Mack Trucks facility in Macungie, Pennsylvania, the company is currently using nonunion scab labor in violation of their contract.

A worker at Mack Trucks reached out to the *World Socialist Web Site* to express his exasperation at the company. According to the worker, the “float,” a section of the Macungie complex housing the trucks that still require the department to make corrections necessary for a final product, had reached a point of near-overflow in November. There were 2,000 unfinished vehicles in float at that time, he explained.

According to the worker, the company has been employing “scabs,” nonunion workers, to “relieve” the backlog. “On the repair sheets, where a bargaining unit member would write their badge number, they have been seeing names,” another worker explained. The worker added that instead of badge numbers, names are written, indicating “they are employed from other sources.”

According to the worker, the backlog had reached around 200 after the holidays, and Lehigh Valley Operations (LVO), where the float is located, had promised that the workers would be leaving within weeks.

Workers at Macungie have faced rolling temporary layoffs associated with part shortages. “We worked on Christmas, when the float was down to 360. We were told that the scabs wouldn’t be leaving until Martin Luther King, Jr. Day,” the worker added.

This policy of hiring contract labor to ease backlogs is an open violation of the Mack Trucks-United Auto Workers 2019 contract. A worker provided excerpts of the clause that the company was violating.

According to Article 27, Section 70: “Outsourcing will be limited only to the extent of production online work and off-line sub-assembly work.”

The contract, which the UAW declared “achieved significant gains toward fair pay, benefits and job security protections” at the time it was adopted in 2019, explicitly states: “The company will not make sourcing decisions that have the potential to impact headcount without first describing the reasons for the contemplated decisions with the Union.”

“The UAW [Local 677] was totally unaware” of the scabbing, the worker stated. According to him, the local had filed grievances on the grounds that it violated the contract, but the UAW International office was preventing them from being addressed.

When reached by phone, neither Mack Trucks, Local 677 nor the UAW national office would confirm if they knew about this ongoing violation of the contract. An official at the local UAW office told this reporter that the WSWs was “anti-union” and therefore refused to answer any questions.

The filing of grievances is a fundamental aspect of traditional trade union activity. By refusing to do so the UAW is helping to scab on its own members.

A look at other clauses in the current contract will demonstrate this fact:

The holidays scheduled in the Master Agreement between Mack Trucks and the UAW clearly lists 15 holidays to be paid in the 2020-2021 schedule and 15 holidays to be paid in the 2021-2022 schedule.

Three of the paid holidays during 2021 were conceded by the UAW when Mack decided to cancel payment for holidays scheduled for July 5, November 12 and December 24. The company scheduled a series of down weeks due to “parts shortages” on three separate holidays. This allowed it to make the claim

that workers had not complied with Point 2 of Section 46, which requires them to “work their full shift on the scheduled working day immediately before and after each holiday to receive holiday pay.”

The UAW allowed management to get away with this, despite the obvious fact that workers had no possibility of working during the shutdowns. The union could have at least demanded a rescheduling of the paid holidays but neglected to do so because of its complete subservience to management.

Another article, Article 20, “Strikes and Lockouts,” declares “the Union agrees that there shall be no authorized strikes during the term of this Agreement.” The UAW “agrees not to ratify any unauthorized strike” and commits to “take appropriate action to end the strike, including, but not limited to, public renunciation of the strike and instructions to employees to return to work.”

While the UAW fails to address Mack Trucks’ violations, one can rest assured that this is a clause which it will not fail to uphold faithfully.

Under Article 21, “Health and Safety,” Mack Trucks goes so far as to “recognize” that it has an “obligation to provide a safe and healthy environment for its employees.” However, no sooner does it allow this than it snatches it back, declaring: “However, the Company retains the final decision-making authority...”

Cynically, the document then adds that “[t]his does not eliminate the Union from following the grievance procedure as outlined in Article 5 of the Master Agreement.”

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, autoworkers have seen their right to a safe environment disappear as corporations, with the crucial support of their so-called “bargaining representatives,” have enforced ruthless work schedules as workers fell sick and died. At Mack Trucks in Macungie, this has already led to significant numbers of infections and even deaths .

The Mack Workers Rank-and-File Committee, which was formed shortly after the UAW’s criminal sellout of the 3,000-strong Volvo Trucks strike in Virginia’s New River Valley last year, has released a number of statements demanding protections from COVID-19, as well as calling for the mobilization of workers in support of rank-and-file struggles of workers in the United States and internationally.

The committee’s mission statement declares: “The

UAW we have now is not the UAW everyone fondly remembers from the days of old. Mack Trucks used to be a desirable place to work. All of the factors that made it desirable were conceded contract after contract by the UAW through concessions and erosions of workers’ rights. This was done quietly without a fight.”

The committee calls on workers to “[de]velop lines of communication” through independent worker-controlled rank-and-file committees and prepare to “fight back against the Mack-Volvo and the UAW’s joint attacks on us.”

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