

# Striking Clarios workers overwhelmingly reject second UAW-backed deal

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*Are you a Clarios worker? Fill out the form at the end of the article or text 248-602-0936 to get more information about forming a rank-and-file strike committee to expand the fight.*

In a resounding defeat for the United Auto Workers bureaucracy, striking workers at the Clarios auto battery manufacturing plant in Holland, Ohio, overwhelmingly rejected a second UAW-backed concessions contract at a union meeting Monday morning.

Although local union officials have not released the official results, several workers have reported to the *World Socialist Web Site* that they have received reports that the deal was defeated by 75-80 percent of the membership.

In comments to the *Toledo Blade*, UAW Region 2B Director David Green acknowledged that the contract had been defeated.

The new leadership of the UAW apparatus, headed by President Shawn Fain, resorted to the same undemocratic methods as its predecessors to try to ram through a pro-company contract. It organized a vote Monday right after releasing self-serving “highlights” of the deal. But workers were neither fooled nor intimidated by pressure from Green and Local 12 officials.

Workers told WSWS reporters that the “new” contract was virtually the same as the previously UAW-backed deal, which workers rejected by 98 percent on April 27.

The proposal for a three-year contract contained the same 3 percent annual wage increase as the first one. Workers were livid over this insulting offer, given the impact of soaring inflation over the last two years and changes in piece rates by Clarios which have resulted in as much as a \$10 an hour pay cut for many workers. UAW officials tried to sell the increased signing bonus—a taxable \$3,500 payment, up from \$1,500 in the first agreement—as a pay increase, but workers did not buy it.

The most important issue for workers is the company’s

attempt to introduce a new “2-2-3” schedule (two days on, two days off, three days on; two off, etc.), which includes 12-hour shifts with no overtime pay after eight hours. UAW officials claimed they had put a “box” on the scheme by limiting its implementation in the second agreement. However, they opened the door for its introduction for all workers by sanctioning the new schedule in the expanding TBS department, where workers operate new battery manufacturing machinery built by UK-based TBS Engineering, for “Next Generation Production Lines” and for all “new employees hired after ratification.”

“Basically, nothing changed, except the signing bonus,” one worker told the WSWS. “If we signed this, they would basically rip out all the old machinery and build new lines, and all of us would be on the TBS schedule. It would take about six months, and the schedule would be introduced for the whole company. They also want all the new guys on the 12-hour schedule. But we’re fighting for the new guys. A lot of us have kids we want to come here to get jobs, and we are not going to screw them.”

The worker said that rank-and-file workers were very aware that if they accepted the company’s demands, this would be used against the workers at the Big Three automakers, whose own contracts expire in less than four months. “That’s the whole thing. They are supporting us, and we can’t turn our backs on them. If we bend, that will open the gates for GM, Ford and Stellantis. We’re not going to let that happen. We’re standing tall.”

Another worker with eight years at the plant said, “The union officials backed this contract, especially the big wig from UAW Region 2-B who tried to make this seem like a good deal. They need to get out of the way and let the rank and file decide.

“The 2-2-3 will affect the new hires and all the workers on the lines the company is expanding. By 2025, the whole plant could be under the TBS department. They

must really think we are stupid to bring back this contract. The union tops are working against the workers. But we can see what's coming."

He added, "We're already getting word that our strike is causing slowdowns at the Jeep factory here in Toledo because they are running out of batteries. When we first began, we didn't know how essential our plant was to the entire Big Three.

"I would say to our brothers and sisters at GM, Ford and Stellantis: Our fight is your fight. We all have to stand together. They are nothing without us. The whole industry rests on our shoulders, not theirs. If we stand together and say enough is enough to these guys, we can win what we need.

"It is obvious now how essential we are, not just workers inside the US borders but around the world. All of us, from France to Mexico, we are the working class. All over the world, people are waking up to the reality that everything is in our hands, and we have the power to take it."

Another worker told the WSWS, "A lot of people in the Big Three don't want to handle scab batteries. Would you want to buy a new car made with scab parts?"

Despite their phony rhetoric about "solidarity" and the new "membership-driven UAW," Fain and the rest of the UAW leadership have done nothing to inform UAW members, let alone mobilize them to support the striking Clarios workers. The UAW bureaucracy is allowing the Big Three automakers to use batteries from the strikebound factory.

Among workers, however, there is widespread support for the striking workers and for a ban on the handling of any scab batteries. A young temporary worker at the Toledo Jeep complex told the WSWS, "The Clarios workers gave up too much to accept a little bit. Give them everything back, plus some. Times are hard right now, and we can't support our families with 3 percent raises after we've taken pay cuts of 8 percent and more.

"I say, 'Hands off all scab batteries.' We shouldn't have to touch them. We're union strong. If we don't handle those batteries, it will force Clarios to get our workers back on the line and get them everything they want and then some. The Big Three workers have the power, and if we lend a little support, we can get everything that we want, us included. The auto bosses might be thinking they can defeat the Clarios workers and then do it to us, but we're paying attention to this strike, just as much as they are. And we are hopefully going to take every step that we have to, to get what we want for

our families. Everybody needs to stand together for this one, because this is going to be the year for the Big Three.

"We're the union, but we elect members to represent us. If they are not going to do it, then we are going to do it. That's what we did when COVID first hit. The UAW and the company can try to take credit for that, but our workers walked off the line and demanded a response. We would have worked straight through if the company had the option and, instead of losing 10 people to COVID, we would have lost hundreds. We saved the lives of our brothers and sisters for the long run. We need to take a stance, that's what we did then, and that's what we are going to do now."

Following the rebuke by Clarios workers, David Green told the *Toledo Blade*, "The members have spoken. I work for them and will do everything possible to get them an agreement they can be proud of. The UAW is a membership-driven organization, and the leadership works for them. We expect the company to come back to the table."

Nothing could be further from the truth. The UAW apparatus is a tool of corporate management. Fain, Green & Co. will not respond to this defeat by bending to the will of the workers but by doubling down on their efforts to isolate the strike, wear down workers and push through another version of the same contract. This has been the experience of Volvo Trucks, Deere, Dana, CNH and countless other UAW members.

That is why workers need to build a rank-and-file committee to transfer power from the UAW apparatus to the workers on the shopfloor. The UAW Local 12 bargaining committee has lost all credibility and should be replaced by a committee of trusted workers elected by the rank and file. At the same time, GM, Ford and Stellantis workers should form rank-and-file strike solidarity committees to mobilize the full UAW membership to oppose the strikebreaking by Clarios and the courts and enforce a ban on scab batteries.

*For more information about forming such committees, fill out the form below or text: 248-602-0936.*



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