

“It’s time we stand up together and fight for what we need”: Statements of support pour in for striking Clarios workers

Our reporters
23 May 2023

For more than two weeks, 525 workers at the Clarios plant in the Toledo suburb of Holland, Ohio have waged a determined strike against the world’s largest auto battery manufacturer. They have not backed down despite court injunctions, the hiring of strikebreakers and the sabotage of the United Auto Workers bureaucracy.

On Monday, workers voted by 76 percent to defeat a second pro-company deal pushed by UAW International and local officials. As with the first agreement, rejected by 98 percent, the second included a cut in real wages and new 12-hour shifts without the payment of overtime after eight hours.

In a response to the vote, Clarios management declared in a statement, “We are disappointed that our represented employees did not ratify the agreement despite the endorsement of the UAW bargaining committee.” It continued threateningly, “We are committed to continuing to operate our facility to support our customers and we are evaluating our next move.”

The outcome of the Clarios strike will have enormous consequences for the more than 170,000 GM, Ford and Stellantis workers in the US and Canada whose contracts expire in mid-September. It is the first battle in the broader war against the global automakers’ demands that workers bear the full cost of the transition to electric vehicles by accepting the destruction of their jobs, wages and working conditions.

Fearing that the Clarios workers will spark a broader rebellion by rank-and-file workers, UAW President Shawn Fain and the rest of the union apparatus are doing everything they can to black out news of this fight, isolate the strike and starve the workers into submission. Among workers, however, there is widespread support for the courageous Clarios strikers and growing demands by Big Three autoworkers for a ban on handling any scab batteries until the strike is won.

The courageous stand by the Clarios workers has inspired every worker who has learned about their fight. The following is a selection of statements of support from autoworkers and other workers. We urge workers in the US and internationally to send your statements to comments@wsws.org.

To all Clarios battery workers, thank you for standing up to the big guys in the UAW office that don’t know what we go through for these companies. These companies are making billions of dollars and paying UAW members like we’re dirt. It’s hard work, I know. I have been a UAW Ford worker for 37 years, and they keep taking more and more all the time. I support you and I thank you, for what you are doing for everyone.

Your friend at Ford Chicago

We should all be pulling for these workers. We have to let the corporations know that they cannot keep putting the little guy down. I fully support their strike and hope that it encourages other workers to also strike and shut down even more production.

We’re behind the Clarios workers 100 percent. This isn’t just about Clarios, it’s about the Big Three too. We are going to be next. We are the ones whose blood, sweat and tears makes them all this money, and it’s time we stand up together and fight for what we need and to make it better for the next generation.

Clarios already cut your pay, and they thought a three percent raise was something. But you said, “Hell no. We want everything you took and more. Enough is enough. We’re not going to let these corporations bully us anymore.”

It blows my mind how the UAW officials brought back the same contract with a little bigger signing bonus. They must think we’re stupid. Fain is like the rest of the UAW officials. They don’t care about anything but lining their own pockets. We know they’re using Clarios batteries in the Ram 1500 trucks, but UAW Local 140 is lying about it.

If all the Big Three workers stood together and said, “I’m not making another car with these scab batteries,” that would be powerful. We would be putting their backs against the wall instead of ours. Everybody, Jeep people, Warren Truck and other workers are speaking out. We care, it’s not just about us, it’s about all of us. It’s not just in the US, but worldwide.

The situation at Clarios is a mirror image of what the union’s done to us. The union’s not standing up for us; we’ve got to stand up for ourselves. The companies and the UAW want us to be subservient to their needs.

You can’t believe how good it was to read the article about Clarios workers fighting the international UAW trying to shove a contract down their throat. Years ago they did this so many times to us [legacy members of Local 699]. Our storyline goes back years. We have been fighting the international UAW since before 2010. The Steering Gear plant was spun off as Delphi; that was the beginning of the end. After the Delphi bankruptcy, we were promised health care through the VEBA trust, and GM actually paid approximately \$47 million to the UAW to cover us. We were all used as a head count to come up with the payout. Now they [the UAW apparatus] won’t honor that agreement. We have been fighting for justice from the same union that was supposed to protect us. There’s much more to our story, but that’s for another day.

In 2015, the UAW finally called us out on strike after we overwhelmingly rejected their sellout contracts. However, it was only a 20-hour strike! We walked out and the UAW called us back. They said they’d made an agreement, and it turned out we were making less money than when we walked out.

As workers, we should not be fighting against other workers anywhere in the world. We must unite together. Nexteer sets up competition among its various locations: the Saginaw plant against Nexteer in Morocco, against Nexteer in Brazil and so on. We’re internally battering each other.

I don't think anybody should be running a machine in Mexico and in Michigan and making a different wage. We need to be equal. This is why we need to build these rank-and-file committees.

Workers are mad with Fain over what is happening in Ohio. We heard that the UAW negotiated a crappy contract. It was the same exact contract they voted down previously. If Clarios gets a bad contract, it will affect us.

The UAW has it set up to divide and conquer. Now they are talking about a third tier in the EV plants. My niece at KFC makes more than an autoworker. Pensions are almost gone. They want to force people to work until they die. People can't afford food or medicine.

All the Big Three workers should stand behind the Clarios workers. We need to shut down with them. It is going to take everybody. Not one here, and one there. All North America. It should be teachers, autoworkers, bus drivers, mechanics, all together. We all need pensions, cost of living and time-and-one-half after 8 hours.

I wholeheartedly support the Clarion workers in their fight for a better contract. Stay strong brothers and sisters. The contract the UAW brought back was almost identical to the first one. We are headed into a contract, and it's going to be unfair and ridiculous too. The UAW is not helping the Clarios workers, but we workers want to. If we could all just stop putting these Clarios batteries in the Jeeps that would really help the Clarios workers.

We want our coworkers to know they are handling batteries produced and handled by scab workers hired by Clarios and approved by the corrupted UAW bureaucracy. If we were in the situation of the Clarios workers and the contract, which we may very well be in the months coming up, we would need other workers to support us. We all must stand firm with our demands together.

Nothing has changed since Shawn Fain has become president of the UAW. Fain is carrying out the same traditions as Ray Curry—like “highlights” instead of the actual contract. The fact that the UAW agreed to introduce into the contract 12-hour days—with the 2-2-3 scheme so they don't pay overtime after eight hours—is terrible!

The more information we have, the more aware the rank-and-file workers can be. The UAW bureaucracy is not involved in giving information; they're involved in concealing information. The UAW is for the corporations and the rank-and-file committees are for the workers. We say to all workers, build rank-and-file committees!

I'm glad the Clarios workers did not roll over and stood up! The UAW and the auto industry is trying to set a precedent. The sellout contract presented to the Clarios strikers could be for us next.

I'm disgusted with getting “highlights” which aren't worth the paper they're printed on. The rank and file need to know what is going on. There are two opposing forces—the corporations and the workers. The union claims to be for us, but they are with the company. That's what the joint ventures are all about. What the union is doing is a conflict of interest. I am disgusted with the UAW not standing with the Clarios workers.

As a member of the GM Flint Assembly Rank-and-File Committee, I support the striking Clarios workers. Their struggle against Clarios and the UAW apparatus is just the beginning of a fight autoworkers will have against the big three, with the contracts ending in September.

The UAW has done nothing to expand the strike to other Clarios plants in the US or in other countries, even though workers in all those plants make the same batteries and share the same interests against the company. All autoworkers as well, not just at Clarios, need to realize that our interests are also the same.

Clarios supplies the Big Three, including where I work, with these batteries. We need to inform all our coworkers about what's going on and that these batteries being made are coming from scab work which undermines the efforts of the striking Clarios workers.

The UAW apparatus won't do anything to make the strike known, and they won't call on workers to not handle the batteries. This is why workers themselves must do so through rank-and-file committees. This needs to happen to stop a defeat of the strike and make sure the UAW apparatus doesn't impose another sellout contract on workers at Clarios. If that happens it will set a precedent for later this year when the Big Three contracts end and where the UAW apparatus will do the same thing to workers in plants like mine.

Clarios workers should not suspend their strike. Nor should they be persuaded to accept the rotten terms offered to them recently. Instead, they should work to expand their movement to the majority of their own workers and then the wider working class.

We stand with Clarios workers! From experience, big unions will do little to assist a strike, financially or otherwise, and workers may suffer financial hardship. That said, the benefits of a real contract that measurably improves their life will be worth it. On the other hand, taking a rotten deal, which my union certainly did, may leave workers feeling dissatisfied and split. The costs of striking, if a terrible deal is accepted, will take months to recover from.

Clarios workers deserve better than that! We all deserve better! The working class, the world over, should spread their message, donate to any strike fund they may have, and push their leadership for transparency and proper advocacy.

Corporate greed at its finest, 2 on, 2 off, 3 on work week, 12 hours a day no overtime. Then hide the fact that the money they are taking from workers will fund the war in Ukraine. Using scabs and other tactics to force favorable votes is *outrageous*.

Fain apparently has time in his schedule to grovel before capitalist politicians in Washington, but he won't show up to support these workers on the picket line. This is a bankruptcy of leadership. Workers have the ability to take these fights into their own hands, it is evident the unions will not fight.

I would say it's vitally important for solidarity between brothers and sisters from all unions at this time. Any one union's membership is sadly not enough to beat both the corporations and the politicians in Washington. Union members across the country need to be active and engaged in solidarity for all contracts in all industries.

Are you a Clarios or other auto or auto parts worker? Fill out the form below for more information about forming rank-and-file committees.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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