

UAW announces another sellout deal in bid to end five-week Clarios strike

Jerry White
13 June 2023

To discuss joining the Clarios Workers Rank-and-File Committee or forming a rank-and-file strike support committee, fill out the form below.

Clarios workers, who have been on strike in Holland, Ohio, for five weeks, were informed Tuesday evening by United Auto Workers Local 12 officials that the union bargaining team had reached a new tentative agreement with the auto battery manufacturer. The announcement in the union's internal Facebook group said workers would be given "packets" with details of the agreement Wednesday, that informational meetings would be held Thursday and a vote held on Friday.

The manner in which the announcement was made is highly suspicious, with all signs indicating that the deal reached by UAW Region 2B Director David Green and the rest of the UAW bureaucracy will be nothing but a rehash of the two previous UAW-backed proposals that workers rejected, first by 98 percent and then by 76 percent.

Throughout Tuesday workers were told the UAW was holding its first negotiating sessions with the company in more than three weeks. As one striker told the *World Socialist Web Site*, "They're resuming negotiations today, but they are not telling us anything. It's like a secret thing."

As late as 6:41 p.m. on Tuesday evening, the *Toledo Blade*, citing the comments of Region 2B Director Green, wrote that the "two sides hadn't sat down for bargaining—other than an occasional Zoom meeting or phone call—since striking workers on May 22 rejected a tentative agreement struck by the company and the union." The newspaper continued, "Mr. Green, who was not at the bargaining table himself, said the two sides appeared to be making good progress on Tuesday, but he said it was unclear how quickly a new deal could be reached."

Within a few hours, however, UAW Local 12 Clarios Chairman Aaron Shinaul posted a statement on Facebook, saying, "We have come to a tentative agreement. We will be passing out Packet's [sic] Wednesday 6/14/23 from 9 am to 5 pm at the Local 12. On Thursday 6/15/23 we will be having two meetings going by your last name at Local 12. The first meeting will be....A-L and that meeting will start at 8 am..second meeting will be M-Z and will start at 1 pm...please show up by your last name. And we will be voting on Friday

6/16/23 polls will open at 10am and will close at 6pm at the Local 12. In Solidarity, The Bargaining Committee."

There is no reason to believe that management, which is engaged in an all-out strikebreaking campaign backed by the Big Three automakers, has suddenly dropped its demands for cuts in real wages, brutal work schedules and the elimination of overtime payments after eight hours.

It is highly significant that the UAW bureaucrats are dividing workers according to last names for the two informational meetings. Previous meetings included all members, but Green & Co. are terrified that they will confront an angry and hostile crowd when they announce their latest deal with management.

To prevent a sellout from being rammed through, rank-and-file workers should demand the right for all members to be present when discussing the UAW's agreement and the release of the full contract, not phony "highlights" that conceal the secret agreements like the ones in the last contract, which allowed management to increase piece-rate quotas. Workers should also demand a full week to study and discuss the deal before any ratification vote is held, and a committee of trusted rank-and-file workers should oversee the casting and counting of ballots to protect against any efforts by the UAW bureaucrats to falsify the results.

For more than five weeks, the Clarios workers have courageously defied the world's largest auto battery manufacturer, which has cut off their medical insurance, obtained strikebreaking court injunctions and threatened to replace them with scabs. The company has been backed by the Big Three automakers, which want the rebellious workers defeated so they can impose similar or even worse concessions on GM, Ford and Stellantis workers, whose contracts expire in three months.

The Clarios strike, along with the fight by the Constellium workers in Van Buren, Michigan, is the first battle in the major struggles autoworkers face this year. The auto bosses, with the support of the UAW bureaucracy and the Biden administration, want to put the full burden of the transition to electric vehicle production onto the backs of workers, through the destruction of tens of thousands of jobs and a drastic reduction in wages in battery and other auto parts plants. These immense attacks on autoworkers are part of the overall efforts of the ruling class to

shift to a wartime economy in preparation for military conflict with Russia and China.

Far from mobilizing all UAW members to ensure the Clarios strike succeeds, the UAW apparatus, headed by President Shawn Fain, has done everything it can to isolate and defeat the strikers.

Fain has never bothered to show up on the picket lines and the UAW has done virtually nothing to inform workers about the strike. Most significantly, the UAW bureaucracy has ordered the continued use of batteries built by scab labor at GM, Ford and Stellantis plants. In factory after factory, rank-and-file workers have challenged UAW officials about the scab batteries and have been told that the orders to use them have come from the UAW International.

The UAW leadership is isolating the strike because it fears that the revolt by the Clarios workers will spark a broader rebellion by GM, Ford, Stellantis and auto parts workers who have suffered decades of eroding wages and conditions imposed by the union bureaucracy. But such a rebellion is exactly what is needed.

In every factory, rank-and-file workers should build support committees for the Clarios and Constellium strikers. They should demand the doubling of strike pay from the UAW's \$825 million strike fund and a ban on the handling of all scab parts.

“None of us should be handling any scab batteries. We should all be on strike”

On Tuesday, supporters of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees distributed statements to Stellantis workers at the Warren Truck Assembly Plant in suburban Detroit to win support for the Clarios workers. In their responses, workers readily connected the fight of the auto battery workers with the struggle they will face in September.

“It’s good that they rejected contracts with terrible raises and 12 hour days with no overtime,” said one worker. “The UAW has been working with the companies a long time.” She said that workers at parts supplier Dakkota, where new workers make \$15-16 in starting pay, were also in a contract fight.

“I’d be striking too,” another worker said, pointing to the contract demands that Clarios and the UAW were pushing. “None of us should be handling any scab batteries. We should all be on strike. The UAW is supposed to be for us not management. But they let management get away with everything and don’t say or do a thing. The Clarios workers should stay out until they get what they want. We should join them to restore COLA [cost-of-living adjustments], the rolling over of the TPTs [temporary part-time workers], the elimination of all these tiers and pensions for all workers. These

companies are making billions and giving us crumbs.”

One worker, referring to the elimination of the third shift last year, said, “I’m being pushed to work more and longer, its hard for me to even see my kids. I also want COLA back and to see more money for these TPTs. In fact, there shouldn’t be this tier system at all. We should all be paid the same.”

“We should never have accepted the two-tier system,” a worker nearing retirement said. “In three or four years, there won’t be any higher-paid workers left. Then the company and the union are going to go to second-tier workers and tell them to cut our pensions to get a pay raise. At this plant, they’re already using non-union workers, getting paid peanuts, to do repair worker that used to be done by UAW members.”

A young TPT added, “We all feel screwed. If we don’t get rolled over to full-time in this next contract, a lot of us are going to quit. There is supposed to be a 30 percent cap on the number of TPTs. At this plant, two-thirds of the workers are temps. Union and management are in bed. We have to bring back COLA, get pensions, stop this eight-year wait to get top pay, and give workers more days off.

“I say to the Clarios workers, stay strong, we have to bring back the morals of unity, and fighting together. We make them so much money. They don’t even have air conditioners in the plants for the hot summer days. Two weeks ago, workers in the body shop were so angry because it was so hot and the company wouldn’t fix the broken fans. The workers took the initiative and threatened to walk off the line, and suddenly they got all the motors fixed on the fan.”

Pointing to the broader issues confronting workers, she said, “I have a young child and she should have a life without fear of war and other risks. Workers everywhere have to come together to fight for a better life for ourselves.”



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