

Biden reveals conspiracy with UAW bureaucracy to block auto strike

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For weeks, the United Auto Workers (UAW) union has been telling its 150,000 members at GM, Ford and Stellantis to prepare for a strike when their contracts expire at 11:59 pm on September 14. At a Labor Day parade in Detroit, UAW President Shawn Fain declared that the contract expiration “was a deadline, not a reference point.” He added that “if we don’t get our share of social and economic justice, I can guarantee you one thing, come September 14, we’re going to take action to get it by any means necessary.”

The same day, however, President Biden told reporters at a Labor Day event in Philadelphia that he was “not worried about a strike,” adding, “I don’t think it’s going to happen.”

With his remarks, Biden let the cat out of the bag. He revealed what Fain and the UAW bureaucracy have already assured the administration—despite their public statements to the contrary—during countless discussions over the last two months.

In an act of damage control, Fain told Detroit reporters he was “shocked” by the president’s comments, saying, “He must know something we don’t know, maybe the auto companies are planning on walking in and giving us our demands.”

The fact is, Fain has repeatedly and slavishly praised Biden for his supposed “support.” Fain said he was shocked at Biden’s remarks the same day that he and other UAW officials paraded at the Detroit Labor Day rally with the very Democratic Party politicians who banned the rail strike last year and worked to impose mass job cuts and concessions on autoworkers during the Obama-Biden administration’s 2009 restructuring of GM

and Chrysler. The UAW’s promotion of the Democratic Party, one of the two corporate-controlled parties, is the surest sign that Fain & Co. are preparing a sellout.

Autoworkers voted by 97 percent to strike and reverse years of UAW-backed concessions and win substantial improvements in wages and working conditions. Fed up with inflation eating their paychecks, intolerable schedules and working conditions, and the abuse of second-tier and temporary workers, autoworkers are determined to join the growing wave of strikes in the US and internationally, including by screenwriters, actors, healthcare workers and educators. That growing mood of rebellion and how to overcome it is the subject matter of the daily talks between the Biden administration and the UAW apparatus.

In an effort to maintain control, Fain has adopted a series of proposals that are popular among workers, including a 40 percent pay raise, the restoration of cost-of-living allowances (COLA), and the ending of tiers. But Fain and the bureaucracy he leads have no intention, let alone strategy, to fight for workers’ demands.

Not only is Fain preparing to ditch his insincere proposals, he has already agreed to the destruction of tens, if not hundreds of thousands, of jobs and massive wage cuts the automakers are demanding as part of their transition to electric vehicle production. In exchange, the UAW bureaucracy is relying on the Biden administration to induce the auto companies to include the UAW in their plans. Last week, Fain praised the \$15.5 billion government handout to the automakers for making it “clear to employers that the EV transition must include strong union partnerships.”

If there is not a rank-and-file rebellion against this conspiracy, hundreds of thousands of workers will be fired in the coming years, their children and grandchildren will be working for the minimum wage, and entire towns and cities will follow the models of Flint and Detroit in

becoming industrial wastelands. In other words, the outcome of this struggle will determine the future of all autoworkers and their children, not just in the US, but in Canada, Mexico and around the world.

Everything now depends on the initiative of rank-and-file workers to defeat this conspiracy and prepare an all-out strike, controlled and directed by workers themselves, to defeat the job- and wage-cutting demands of the automakers.

In this fight, workers should take forward the demands fought for by rank-and-file Mack Trucks worker and socialist candidate for UAW president Will Lehman, who called for the abolition of the union bureaucracy and the transfer of power from the UAW apparatus to the workers on the shop floor.

Lehman won nearly 5,000 votes in the election and would have won even more if the UAW apparatus had not done everything in its power to suppress the vote and limit the final electoral round to two longtime bureaucrats, including Fain. This underscores the fact that in every factory there is powerful support for the establishment of new centers of rank-and-file power and decision-making. Lehman is currently suing Biden's Department of Labor for sanctioning the bogus election, which disenfranchised 90 percent of the UAW membership.

Fain and his supporters in the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and other pseudo-left organizations hope to follow the model of their counterparts in the Teamsters bureaucracy, who announced a deal before the contract deadline for 340,000 UPS workers and then rammed through a contract based on lies, intimidation and dubious voting methods. The "historic" contract signed by the Teamsters has left the majority of UPS workers making poverty wages and package delivery workers facing deadly conditions.

If the UAW proves unable to do this and is faced with the prospect of walkouts when the contracts expire, Fain may be forced to call a limited "Hollywood strike" at a few plants, which will do as little damage as possible to the automakers' profits and the UAW's \$825 million strike fund. Such a PR stunt would be aimed at allowing workers to blow off steam and soften them up for a massive sellout.

For its part, the Biden administration is integrating the trade union bureaucracy more closely into the capitalist government in order to impose the costs of the US economic crisis and escalating military confrontations with Russia and China on the backs of the working class. This would entail the type of austerity and "labor

discipline" associated with dictatorships.

These are their plans, but workers must counter them with their own. The decisive factor is developing the independent initiative and action of the rank and file in opposition to the UAW bureaucracy and both corporate-controlled parties.

The first step is expanding the network of rank-and-file committees at GM Flint Assembly, Stellantis Warren Truck, GM Delta/Lansing and other locations to every factory and warehouse. This will enable workers to cut through the lies and exchange information with each other, overcome the divisions imposed on them, and unite across tiers, shifts, factories, companies, states and countries.

Workers should demand the immediate raising of strike pay to \$750 a week, as well as detailed reports and rank-and-file oversight of all negotiations, the release of all planned factory closures, and the launching of an all-out strike by auto and auto parts workers on September 15.

This must be coordinated with workers around the world, including Canadian autoworkers whose contracts expire on September 18, and workers in Mexico, Germany, Turkey, China and throughout the world, who are also facing a massive attack on jobs and living standards.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), which issued a statement, "Stop the EV jobs bloodbath," is coordinating this struggle across national borders.

With little more than a week before the contract expiration, there is not a moment to waste. We urge workers to expand the Autoworkers Rank-and-File Committees Network, inform your fellow workers about the issues at stake in this struggle, and build a new leadership to mobilize the immense power of the working class to defend jobs, living standards, working conditions and the social rights of the working class.



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