

A call to action to all autoworkers: Only the rank and file can win this fight!

Will Lehman
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Will Lehman is a rank-and-file worker at Mack Trucks who ran as a socialist candidate for president of the United Auto Workers in the UAW's national elections last year.

Join an online meeting Sunday at 3 p.m. Eastern to discuss the rank-and-file strategy for workers to win their demands in the Big Three contract fight. Register here to attend.

Sign up for text message updates on the Detroit Three contract fight by texting AUTO to (866) 847-1086.

To all my auto coworkers, I would like to speak directly to you about the expiration of the auto contracts in one week.

Workers are determined to win this fight. Whether you work at Ford, GM, Stellantis, Mack Trucks, Lear or Dana, we all confront the same problems: High inflation. Wages that aren't enough. Tiers that divide us. Long hours and dangerous workplaces. The threat of layoffs. A retirement in poverty.

UAW President Shawn Fain and his administration have said they're "back in the fight" and are different from the corrupt bureaucrats who came before them. They claim that they are asking the companies for the "members demands" to restore COLA and pensions, get a 40 percent wage increase, and shorten the workday.

But Fain and the UAW leadership have said nothing about their strategy to win these demands. This is because they have no intention of fighting for anything we need. Instead, Fain is promoting the Democratic Party because they're conspiring with them to force the company's demands onto workers.

Biden said Monday he doesn't think there'll be a strike, effectively admitting that Fain and the UAW leadership are plotting with the government to prevent or isolate a strike and help the companies carry out

massive job cuts. On Wednesday, Fain began backtracking on the possibility of a strike and trying to lower workers' expectations their demands would be met, all but admitting the UAW is preparing a sellout.

The companies are determined to carry out an attack on jobs and wages that will be even worse than what took place in 2009—attacks which Fain voted to support as a member of the UAW-Chrysler bargaining team.

As they transition to electric vehicles, management wants to increase their profits and put the costs of the shift to EVs on the backs of workers. The corporations plan to use the transition to destroy tens or hundreds of thousands in the US alone. Experts and industry analysts estimate half or more auto jobs could be eliminated worldwide.

The UAW apparatus is concealing these plans from workers. Behind all of Fain's tough talk, the main concern of the UAW is to get their foot in the door at the EV battery plants and get more dues money.

When I launched my campaign for UAW president last year, I explained that corruption in the UAW was not a case of "a few bad apples." Workers confront a giant pro-corporate bureaucracy which is totally unaccountable to them. That bureaucracy continues under Fain just as much as it did under Ray Curry and the earlier UAW presidents.

Fellow workers, we face a serious fight. The companies aren't going to give an inch to workers willingly.

Fain and the UAW bureaucrats aren't putting forward a strategy, but the rank and file must, in order to take control of our struggle. That's why I urge you to form rank-and-file committees at your workplace and take up the demands for these measures:

Raise strike pay to \$750 a week. The strike fund has more than \$800 million from our dues. Raising strike

pay will send a message to the companies that we are serious about a real battle. Workers cannot be strung out on poverty pay until they are compelled to accept a contract on management's terms.

- **Make sure there is rank-and-file oversight of all the contract talks.** The rank-and-file must have real control of all negotiations. Fain claims the UAW is being transparent, but all their talks with management and the White House are happening behind closed doors. That has to end. The full list of plants the companies are planning to close must be released, as well as all documents exchanged between the UAW, management, and Biden in the contract talks.

- **Prepare for an all-out nationwide strike on September 14.** To be effective, any strike must hit all locations at all three companies, and not isolated to only a few plants. We must forge connections with our brothers and sisters at the parts plants, who are also seeking to reverse concessions previously imposed by the UAW.

- **Launch an internationally coordinated fight back!** The attacks on workers' jobs related to EVs are happening globally. Ford workers in Germany, Spain, and India have already been targeted for either plant closures or mass job cuts.

The contracts for US and Canadian autoworkers are expiring within days of each other. Autoworkers in Mexico, Germany, Turkey, and elsewhere are also in a fight against job cuts and concessions.

A strike by US autoworkers will immediately attract the attention and support of workers all over the world. We must fight consciously to unify all autoworkers and other sections of the working class internationally, based on the understanding that we are fighting the same companies and the same ruling class strategy.

I ran in the UAW's national elections last year in order to put forward a program of abolishing the UAW bureaucracy and transferring all power and decision-making to workers on the shop floor.

The UAW bureaucracy tried to prevent a discussion of these issues by suppressing voter turnout and disenfranchising hundreds of thousands of UAW members in the elections, with the support of the UAW monitor and the Biden administration. I am continuing the fight to expose this trampling on workers'

democratic rights, and have sued the Department of Labor to demand a re-run of the elections.

Some of the workers I have spoken to about the contract fight have expressed the hope that Fain will really do what he says he's going to do. Or at least, they want to wait and see if he will.

But every action taken by Fain's administration already demonstrates that it would be a mistake to wait and see if there will be another sellout. They have already sold out workers at Clarios, are trying to sell out the Lear workers in Indiana, and they will sell out workers at the Big Three if they have a chance.

The only reason Fain's administration has postured as fighting for members' demands is because they are aware of the enormous desire among workers for a fight. The UAW bureaucracy wants to make workers into passive bystanders. But what we really need is to seize the offensive.

Whatever you may think about Fain, if you agree that there needs to be a fight, then take the initiative now to organize that fight and ensure that this time it is not defeated. We can establish unity by building rank-and-file committees on every floor and in every sector, as part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

Join this rank-and-file movement: Text AUTO to (866) 847-1086 to get text updates and discuss getting involved with a rank-and-file committee.



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