

# Mobilize the rank and file against the UAW's "keep working" order! For an all-out strike against the Big Three!

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*Join the next online meeting of the Autoworkers Rank-and-File Committee Network to discuss uniting workers for an all-out strike across the auto industry. Register [here](#) to attend.*

At midnight on Friday morning, United Auto Workers President Shawn Fain ordered almost 95 percent of autoworkers to keep working and called a strike at only three facilities: GM Wentzville Assembly in Missouri, Stellantis Toledo North Assembly in Ohio, and Ford Michigan Assembly, where only the final assembly and paint departments are on strike.

It would be the greatest danger for workers to accept Fain's claim that the UAW's "stand-up strike" is a "new innovation" that "keeps the companies guessing." This so-called "strategy" was devised in the closest coordination with the Biden administration and the auto companies, and its purpose is to crush autoworkers and carry out the Big Three's war on the working class. It violates the will of 97 percent of the rank and file who voted to strike to win workers' demands.

The Big Three and the network of Wall Street banks that back them are openly gloating as the UAW forces workers to keep production going. Share values for two of the Big Three jumped on Friday: GM's stock rose 0.83 percent and Stellantis' rose 2.18 percent, while Ford's climbed to a month high before closing down 0.12 percent.

A banner headline on CNN read, "Auto stocks head higher as investors shrug off strike." The article noted that "investors didn't seem too bothered" by the selective strike. The credit rating agency Fitch Ratings issued a statement Friday celebrating the fact that the strike "would have a limited financial impact on the three major automakers."

The *Wall Street Journal* wrote that the selection of

Wentzville Assembly, Toledo North Assembly and part of Michigan Assembly Plant was deliberately aimed at minimizing the impact on corporate profits, noting "the action could have been more disruptive, and some analysts were surprised the union didn't target more."

There is no doubt these plants were selected well in advance by the UAW in collaboration with the companies. Investment banker Louis Navellier told CNN that a limited strike is actually *good* for the Big Three, especially because the UAW did not select engine plants with the ability to shutter additional facilities. "There is currently an excess inventory of these vehicles on dealer lots, so the UAW strike will help the Big Three get their inventories under control," Navellier said Friday. "A short strike for two weeks or so could help the Big Three tighten their inventories and stop excessive discounting."

The *Free Press* cited labor Attorney L. Steven Platt at the pro-management law firm Howard and Howard and explained that Fain's plan will divide workers to weaken their resolve and "create tension between those who are striking and those who are not."

Platt, the management-side attorney, also said the UAW's decision to force workers to work under an expired contract was giving a major advantage to the Big Three. "Here, the union did not agree to extend the agreement on existing terms during contract talks," Platt told the *Free Press*. "Usually, it is management that doesn't agree to extend. I did not understand why the union did this given the leverage it gives management by doing this."

CNBC acknowledged that the UAW's strategy to keep workers working without a contract "gives the companies much more ability" to lock workers out and "more easily opens the door for companies to hire permanent replacement workers."

On Friday, President Joe Biden intervened immediately in the strike, announcing that he was deploying Acting Labor Secretary Julie Su and White House advisor Gene Sperling to Detroit to “offer their full support for the parties in reaching their contract” and prevent the strike from growing. “Let’s be clear,” Biden said, “No one wants a strike. I’ll say it again, no one wants a strike.”

During a brief press conference announcing the intervention, Biden acknowledged, “I’ve been in touch with both parties about this in the last few weeks,” an admission that the White House and the companies helped concoct the “selective strike” as a mechanism for breaking workers’ will. This is also why Biden declared last week that he knew there would be no strike. This was the plan from the start.

The rapidity of the intervention of the Biden administration shows that strategic geopolitical issues are at stake for Wall Street and US imperialism. The transition to electric vehicles is a top geopolitical priority, necessary to counter the ruling class’s rivals in China. But beyond this, Biden’s intervention is also aimed at securing a low-paid and subservient workforce for wartime production as it escalates the war against Russia into a more and more direct conflict.

The political establishment and corporate media are aware that Fain’s move has provoked immense anger among rank-and-file workers.

*Politico* noted that the UAW bureaucracy has “tempers to tame” among the rank-and-file, and the *Wall Street Journal* warned that “members are also riled up.” Merrick Masters, a Wayne State University professor in labor-management relations, told the *Free Press*, “You can’t assume that these other workers who are silent are going to be highly supportive of this.” Citing another labor lawyer, the *Free Press* added that Fain’s move may “breed contempt among workers.”

These nervous statements are a recognition that autoworkers possess immense potential power. That power is restrained by the UAW bureaucracy, which is collaborating with the White House and the companies to sell workers out.

There is a powerful movement emerging among rank-and-file autoworkers in the US and around the world. There are 1,100 UAW members on strike against Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and over 100 on strike against auto parts maker Dometic in Pottstown, Pennsylvania. In the coming weeks, contracts for tens of thousands of UAW workers are expiring, including at Las Vegas Casinos, Yangfeng, General Dynamics, Allison

Transmission, Flex-N-Gate, Mayco, Mack Trucks and more.

American autoworkers are part of an international movement of the working class. The contract expires on September 18 for 20,000 Canadian autoworkers, and contracts for 150,000 autoworkers and metalworkers in Turkey and 30,000 autoworkers in South Korea are expiring this month. Autoworkers at GM plants in Mexico are calling on their coworkers to slow production to support the strike in the US. Autoworkers in Germany are also fighting plant closures caused by the transition to electric vehicles.

Autoworkers have powerful allies across all industries. A strike involving well over 100,000 actors and writers is currently ongoing, and 85,000 healthcare workers at Kaiser Permanente just voted to strike by 98 percent. Autoworkers at Lear in Hammond, Indiana, and meatpackers at Hormel in Austin, Minnesota, have recently rejected sellout contracts.

For decades the trade union bureaucrats in each country have kept these struggles separate in order to sap the working class strength, but today it is urgently necessary to bring these struggles together into one powerful movement for social equality.

This requires new methods of struggle. In every plant and every shift, autoworkers must begin speaking to each other and organizing themselves in committees whose aim is to countermand Fain’s “keep working” order and launch an all-out strike against each of the Big Three. The bureaucracy has no plans to call out all 150,000 Big Three workers, so the rank and file must fight to do it themselves. This requires establishing alternate power structures to take control away from the bureaucrats and put decision making in the hands of workers on the shop floor.

An all-out strike is necessary, but it must be fought for. Such a strike is critical not only from the standpoint of winning the struggle by Big Three autoworkers, but to spur a movement that will reverse decades of attacks on the rights and living standards of workers all over the world.



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