

Workers denounce Unifor's extension of Ford strike deadline, call for joint struggle with American workers against Detroit Three

Our Reporter
19 September 2023

Are you an autoworker? Fill out the form at the end to tell us what you think of Unifor's contract extension, and to discuss joining a rank-and-file committee, so as to take the struggle out of the hands of the Unifor and UAW bureaucracies and mount a united, continent-wide struggle against the Big Three.

Worker anger continues to mount over Unifor's decision to arbitrarily extend the strike deadline for 5,600 Ford Canada production, skilled trades and office workers for 24 hours—to Tuesday at 11:59 pm.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has explained, “The aim of this shabby maneuver was to block a strike at the Ford Oakville Assembly Plant, two smaller engine plants in Windsor and several parts distribution centres in Ontario and Alberta, which would have seen Canadian and US autoworkers on strike together for the first time in decades.”

In a tersely-worded statement released almost 2 hours after what was supposed to be the strike deadline, Unifor President Lana Payne claimed the reason for the extension was that Ford had tabled a “substantive offer” just before the 11:59 pm deadline. As angry workers noted, after months of purported negotiations, Ford had only to snap its fingers and the Unifor bureaucrats fell into line.

Workers must beware. There is every reason to believe Unifor will declare an “historic victory” before the day is out and try to ram through a sellout agreement by week's end. If they don't, it will only be because they fear that such a blatant “sweetheart deal” with Ford at the expense of autoworkers in both Canada and the US will fuel a rank-and-file rebellion and a movement for a North America-wide strike.

“Not only did you undermine every workers basic

union right to legally strike, you compromised our single most valuable bargaining tool, all while spitting in the face of standing in solidarity with the UAW. Great job,” wrote one worker on Twitter (X).

“WOW,” remarked a worker from Detroit. “After zero word coming from the union to support our struggle with this strike and having the nerve to extend negotiations LAST SECOND. Way to go @UniforTheUnion!! Shameful leadership.”

Commenting on Unifor's announcement on Facebook, a worker wrote, “Ridiculous!! You had a chance to show them that you meant business!! Laughable.”

Another comment liked by dozens of workers read, “That's why we old timers would wildcat before the midnight deadline so that the company would know they we dealing with the membership not the negotiating team!!!”

Other workers accused Unifor of deleting and censoring critical comments, with one writing, “Wow, the censorship is real. Maybe concentrate on real negotiations instead of deleting and hiding comments. I think you misjudged your membership.”

Many workers denounced the Unifor bureaucracy's blatant violation of autoworkers' massive vote in favour of strike action last month. “You should listen to the members! They authorized a strike vote. Take action, stand up to corporate greed!” wrote a worker on Facebook.

“You are supposed to strike at the deadline you promised. Until there is a tentative agreement!! Even if it's only for a few hours ... WE GAVE YOU AUTHORIZATION that we would strike,” added another. A further comment read, “97% in favor to

strike!!! What are we doing?!!”

Many remarked on the bureaucracy’s refusal to treat 11:59 p.m. on September 18 as the strike deadline. “It was a dead line not a reference point, when is the leadership of Unifor gonna stop letting us get pushed around and stepped on, do you not care about our future?” stated a worker. Another comment stated, “No surprise there, Unifor will keep extending the deadline and seem to be always willing to work without a contract.” A further comment read, “Unifor is a company union without a doubt. Sept 18 is a deadline, not a reference point.”

Workers also attacked Unifor’s deliberate effort to separate the contract struggle of Canadian autoworkers from their US colleagues. “The union had a chance to get us all behind them and create solidarity with the UAW. That’s gone now,” a worker said. Another stated, “For 24 hrs our engines go to the US. Ford dealers are supplied with parts. Edge production is cushioned. Ford profits while we have no contract. A deadline has a purpose.”

Other comments took aim at Payne and the bureaucracy as a whole, urging rank-and-file workers to take action. A worker wrote, “Huge lack of confidence and trust now going forward with our Leader of Unifor that said one thing and has now done another.” Another remarked, “Show some integrity Unifor. Ford should have walked out at midnight. Already breaking your word to the membership isn’t giving us a lot of faith in the union.”

With more than a hint of sarcasm, one worker took note of the bureaucracy’s decades-long record of imposing the bosses’ demands on autoworkers. “Hey, give them a break, man! It’s not easy negotiating the best set of concessions to the bosses,” they wrote. “Coming up with two or three ‘tiers’ on the job, and creative new ways to screw new hires is exhausting. This is what makes unions so popular in this country.”

“Our union has let us down again,” said an angry worker. “Time for a change. By backing down from what you said you have lost credibility with members and shown the Big 3 that you are willing to fold like a cheap suit.”

The urgent task facing autoworkers is to transform this entirely justified outrage into a conscious strategy to secure victory. Such a strategy must be based on the recognitions that the Unifor and UAW bureaucracies

are appendages of the corporations and government, acting deliberately to impose concessions and ensure that the EV transition takes place at the expense of autoworkers.

To prevent the betrayal of their contract fight, autoworkers in Canada should establish rank-and-file committees in every plant to seize control from the Unifor apparatus. Through the Autoworkers Rank-and-File Committee Network created by rank-and-file committees at various US plants, Canadian autoworkers can unify their struggle with that of their American brothers and sisters. Only through the development of such an international counter-offensive against the profit-driven agenda of the corporate bosses and their allies in government and the union bureaucracy can workers secure their demands for wage increases that beat inflation, the abolition of multi-tier wages, job protections during the EV transition, and pension rights.

Read the full article on Unifor’s arbitrary and undemocratic contract extension here.



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