

Expand the Big Three autoworkers strike! For an industry-wide walkout, not phony “stand up strikes”!

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Nearly a week since the contract for 150,000 Big Three workers expired last Thursday, it is increasingly clear that the “stand up strike” called by the UAW bureaucracy is much less a “strike” than a tactic aimed at weakening, dividing and isolating the rank-and-file to force through massive concessions.

By voting 97 percent to strike, rank-and-file autoworkers voted to withhold their labor, halt production and stop the corporations from making profits. After decades of concessions imposed by corporate divide-and-conquer methods, workers voted to strike the Big Three together, reflecting a growing awareness that the strength of the working class derives from its unity.

However, the “strategy” designed by Fain and the UAW apparatus is, essentially, a “back to work” order disguised as a “strike.” It was called at only three assembly plants that were selected to have a minimal impact on the corporations’ supply lines and profits. While a few thousand workers at the struck plants will struggle to survive on \$500 a week in strike pay, the companies continue to send inventoried vehicles to dealerships, with essentially no impact on profits.

Everything is being done by the bureaucratic apparatus of the unions in both the US and Canada to block united action and undermine class solidarity.

In Canada, contracts covering nearly 20,000 workers set to expire Monday night were unilaterally extended by the Unifor union leadership, provoking an outpouring of anger from workers. Unifor then announced late Tuesday that a tentative agreement had been reached with Ford. In a clear indication of the sellout character of the deal, Unifor has stated that details will be withheld until its ratification meetings, giving workers no time to seriously study the contents of the contract it is trying to ram through.

Unifor is working in coordination with the UAW as well as the Biden and Trudeau governments. There is concern that even a limited action in Canada will encourage demands among US workers for an all-out strike.

Automotive News wrote Tuesday that a strike in Canada “would have serious repercussions for the automaker’s wider North American supply chain, particularly for output of Ford’s best-selling pickups.” Despite the fact that Canadian and American workers would obviously be strengthened by striking together, Unifor and the UAW are acting as though the struggles are separate to isolate and divide workers.

Right now, some 134,000 workers in the US are working without a contract. Every minute this continues, workers are essentially being ordered to scab on themselves by stockpiling goods, often by working forced overtime, that the companies will use as a cushion should they strike too. Working without a contract, workers are also vulnerable to victimization, as evidenced by reports that Stellantis walked 10 workers off the job at Warren Truck on trumped-up pretenses last week.

The limited strike is already beginning to force layoffs at the Big Three and beyond, and this is another critical element of the UAW bureaucracy’s strategy to weaken the strike. Ford laid off 600 assembly workers at Michigan Assembly Plant after workers in the paint and final assembly departments were called on strike, and GM reports that layoffs are likely at Fairfax Assembly Plant in Kansas City, Kansas.

The UAW announced that laid-off workers at plants that are not on strike will receive strike pay, but has not announced any plans to picket these facilities.

The UAW’s strategy is also aimed at isolating Big Three workers from parts workers, who are critical allies.

It does not appear that strike pay will be offered to autoworkers at parts suppliers, even those who also belong to the UAW.

Yesterday, Dana Inc. laid off its workforce at the Toledo Driveline plant, which supplies axels for vehicles produced at Stellantis Toledo Assembly, creating confusion among workers, who have heard nothing from the UAW about how they are to survive during the phony “strike.”

The strategy of the UAW apparatus is motivated by several interrelated factors. The financial interests of the apparatus itself are a major consideration.

The UAW has a strike fund of \$825 million, and union officials have attempted to justify the limited nature of the strike by citing the need to “protect the strike fund.” What this really means is the bureaucracy wants to spend workers’ dues money on its own salaries, perks and privileges while expending as little as possible on strike pay.

\$825 million would be enough to sustain an all-out strike for three months. But this is only a tiny sliver of the assets the UAW bureaucracy could put at the disposal of the strike. The UAW has \$750 million in stock investments and \$218 million in US Treasury Securities, according to the UAW International’s 2022 federal disclosure form.

The bureaucracy pays out \$75 million in salary to its officials each year, which would add \$1.5 million to the strike fund each week and cover strike pay for 3,000 workers alone. The UAW could use its \$112 million in fixed assets (including UAW buildings and the Black Lake resort) to leverage a massive loan to extend the strike for months longer. It could do so even while substantially raising strike pay, to 70 or 100 percent of wages.

Beyond this, the trade union bureaucracies across the US have tremendous resources to put at the disposal of the auto strike. In 2020, workers in the US paid \$15.5 billion in dues, but trade unions paid out less strike pay as a percentage of assets than in any prior year recorded.

The financial interests of the apparatus are connected to its role as an instrument of corporate management and the state. The Biden administration has been in discussion with Fain and the UAW bureaucracy on a daily basis. It is deeply worried that if the fight of the rank and file breaks free from the control of the apparatus, it will upend the war strategy of the American ruling class and encourage a much broader movement of the entire working class.

Fain’s phony strike strategy must be repudiated and a

real strike begun!

Even if one were to accept the false claim by Fain that a pinprick strike could compel the companies to give in to workers’ demands, how much more could be won by an industry-wide walkout? It would be all the more reason to mobilize workers in all-out strike now and exert their maximum strength as quickly as possible.

Such an initiative, however, must come from the rank and file, organized in independent committees in every workplace.

Workers should call emergency meetings at their locals, discuss a common plan of action and pass resolutions demanding a walkout throughout the Big Three and beyond. Networks of communication should be established to coordinate across companies in the US. In Canada, workers should campaign to reject the sellout agreement announced by Unifor and prepare united action with workers south of the border.

A determined fight will win enormous support in the working class as a whole. There is deep solidarity among autoworkers across the auto industry, across industries and across national boundaries for a common struggle against the corporations.

Eighty-five thousand healthcare workers voted 98 percent to strike against Kaiser Permanente this month. Tens of thousands of hospitality workers are voting to strike against the casinos in Las Vegas and Atlantic City. Strikes of UAW workers continue at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Dometic in Pennsylvania. A strike of tens of thousands of actors and writers continues against the giant entertainment conglomerates. Contracts are expiring for tens of thousands of autoworkers and UAW members in the coming weeks.

The rank and file has tremendous potential power. To unlock it, workers must organize in every workplace for an all-out strike.



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