

Autoworkers angered over being kept in the dark as UAW moves towards sellout deal

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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.

Anger is growing among autoworkers over being kept in the dark by the United Auto Workers bureaucracy about the content of its supposed “negotiations” with the corporations. From week to week, the UAW is keeping workers uninformed until the last minute as to whether their factory will be called on strike, or whether they will again be ordered to continue working without a contract.

Three weeks since the expiration of the September 15 contracts for 146,000 GM, Ford and Stellantis workers, only 25,000 UAW members—or 17 percent of the membership—have been called on strike. Those still on the job are working under expired contracts and being subjected to speed up, harassment by management, and unpredictable schedules and weekly income.

Whatever UAW President Fain announces at his Friday afternoon Facebook event, it will be aimed at continuing to isolate workers and wear down their resistance to a sellout that the UAW bureaucracy worked out with the corporations and the Biden administration long ago.

On Thursday, the *Wall Street Journal* published a report again revealing the negligible impact of the UAW’s “stand up strike” policy. The *Journal* wrote, “Three weeks in, the United Auto Workers strike against Detroit’s carmakers has nearly all the hallmarks of a dug-in labor battle: euphoric worker walkouts, rushed contingency plans, wall-to-wall media coverage and fiery rhetoric. The one thing missing—at least so far—is much financial pain, on either side.”

Unlike the 2019 strike by 45,000 GM workers that shut down the company’s operations and cost it \$1

billion in the first two weeks, GM has only lost \$200 million in the third quarter due to the current “strike,” or less than half a percent of its revenues.

The five GM, Ford and Stellantis factories targeted by the UAW only account for about 16 percent of the vehicles produced in North America, the *Journal* notes, adding, “the plants where the companies’ full-size pickup trucks and large SUVs are made—their most-profitable vehicles—remain humming.”

“It’s creating a lot of headlines,” Colin Langan, a Wells Fargo analyst, told the newspaper. “Financially, it’s not very impactful at all.”

It is true that the strike has not hurt the companies, or the UAW bureaucracy for that matter, which is protecting its \$825 million strike fund, which has long financed the bloated salaries and affluent lifestyles of the UAW apparatus.

But Fain’s “stand up” strategy has certainly hurt the workers. Ford announced this week 400 layoffs at the Livonia Transmission and Sterling Axle plants near Detroit, bringing its total layoffs over the last two weeks to 1,330. GM has laid off 2,175 workers at component factories that supply plants that are on strike or use parts from those plants.

In addition, about 30 percent of independent parts suppliers have laid off some workers because of the strike, and that figure is expected to rise significantly by mid-October, according to a survey by *Automotive News*. This includes more than 1,110 workers at Dana axle plants in Toledo, Ohio and Ft. Wayne, Indiana and 300 workers at US Steel in Granite City, Illinois.

Also among the laid-off parts workers are nearly 1,000 UAW members at Lear Seating in Hammond, Indiana. The UAW refused to call a strike for weeks at the plant, despite workers there rejecting three union-backed contracts and voting by 94 percent for a strike.

The plant was finally idled once the UAW called a strike at the nearby Ford Assembly plant, where the company has stockpiled inventory. To add insult to injury, the UAW is denying strike pay to Lear workers, forcing them onto Indiana state unemployment.

“There’s more to this than what we’re being told”

In the Big Three plants that are still working, temporary workers are having their days reduced to two or three times a week, threatening these workers with evictions and utility shutoffs. This is a transparent effort both by the corporations and the UAW to use economic desperation to get these workers to vote for a rotten deal because of a several thousand dollar “signing bonus.”

“I am outraged that the company would intentionally treat their employees this way,” a Stellantis temporary part-time worker at the Warren Truck Assembly Plant told the WSWS. “No matter what their status is, supplemental or full time, we are all employees. This shows the world the character of this corporation. As for the UAW, I believe they are being paid off by the company and they aren’t in solidarity with us, the way they would like us to believe.”

“There’s more to this than what we’re being told,” a worker at the Stellantis Detroit Assembly Complex told the WSWS. “You’re not striking the factories that are bringing the real money in. You’re striking the ones that are just costing them a few million and letting the companies get by.

“We all have bills to pay. They aren’t paying us anything while their pockets are getting fatter and fatter. We need to target the factories that are building these trucks and the ones building all these components. I guarantee you they will be changing their tune and sign on the dotted line instantly. But everybody has to stick together and do it the right way. That’s what a union is supposed to do but they aren’t doing it.

“The way it’s sounding, every week he [Fain] gets on there and wants to talk, but he’s steadily targeting the less profitable plants, and the big ones that are really going to put a big dent in them and make them get up

and move their feet, he won’t do it.

“My thing is, either you’re with them or you’re with us, because you can’t be for both. You can’t straddle the fence. If we know you’re not with us, that way we’ll know what our next step is. I’m for an all-out strike.”

The efforts by the Fain administration to force 3,500 Mack Trucks workers to accept a sellout deal must be taken as a warning to all workers. The UAW announced a deal 10 minutes before workers in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Florida were ready to walk out on October 2 without releasing any details. According to the “highlights” of the deal it includes an average annual raise of 4 percent, maintains the two-tier system, and will add an extra half hour of work, at straight time, to workers at the Macungie, Pennsylvania, plant to increase production by 1,600 trucks a year.

This has provoked widespread opposition, which is being led by the Mack Workers Rank-and-File Committee, and workers are preparing to reject the sellout deal at ratification meetings on Sunday.

There is a growing movement of the working class, with the strike by 75,000 Kaiser Permanente healthcare workers, 1,100 Michigan Blue Cross workers, the 99 percent strike vote by Detroit casino workers and other struggles.

Autoworkers are expanding the network of rank-and-file committees to fight for the transfer of power and decision-making from the UAW apparatus to workers on the shop floor. These committees are opposing the information blackout by the UAW bureaucracy and fighting for workers to demand the convening of emergency mass membership meeting at every union local to vote for an all-out strike to win workers’ demands.



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