

As UAW reveals efforts to lengthen workday at Mack Trucks, workers voice opposition to sellout contract

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For updates and to discuss joining the Mack Workers Rank-and-File Committee, text MACK to (877) 861-4428, or fill out the form below.

The tentative agreement announced by the United Auto Workers with Mack Trucks at midnight last Sunday—in order to block a strike that was set to begin Monday—faces massive opposition among workers, teams of *World Socialist Web Site* reporters found in visits to major plants at Macungie, Pennsylvania, and Hagerstown, Maryland.

According to carefully selected “highlights” distributed Monday to workers, the contract includes a 19 percent wage increase over five years without a cost of living adjustment. The raise does not even recoup the 22 percent of real wages lost to inflation over the past three years. All of the other “highlights” are virtually meaningless, including a \$3,500 signing bonus meant as a sweetener to help workers choke down the rotten contract.

On Wednesday, a “lowlight” of the contract, thus far concealed from workers, was revealed. The UAW has agreed to the extension of the workday from eight hours to 8.5 hours at straight time (i.e., without overtime payments) at Local 677 in Macungie, its flagship facility. The UAW openly boasts, on a 15-page document posted to Local 677’s web site, that the lengthening of the working day is an aspect of its “joint partnership approach” with Mack Volvo. The deal, the UAW reports, will “allow” Mack workers in Macungie to produce 1,600 more trucks per year.

Shamelessly voicing management’s interests, the UAW wrote that extending the workday would be “an innovative approach to be able to help increase market share.”

That this so-called “union” is pushing to undermine the eight-hour day is of historic significance. The eight-hour day emerged as the rallying cry of the American working class soon after the Civil War: “eight hours for work, eight hours for rest, eight hours for what we will.”

The eight-hour day has already become all but a thing of the past throughout much of the auto and auto parts industries, with the support of the UAW bureaucracy. Workers are regularly forced to work 10- or 12-hour shifts, six or seven days a week, just to make ends meet.

There is one reason and one reason only that the UAW has agreed to extending the workday at Mack: to line the pockets of the shareholders and executives who control Mack Volvo.

A letter to Mack workers written and signed by UAW President Shawn Fain, who the capitalist media presents as a firebrand militant, praises the deal and in fact presents it as an accomplished fact, as if workers do not even have the right to vote on it. Like an actor accepting an Oscar, Fain concludes his letter with the following line: “The bargaining team didn’t do this alone. Thanks to the support and Solidarity of the membership, we were able to negotiate a record contract for the Heavy Truck industry.”

But rank-and-file workers, not Shawn Fain, will have the final say-so on this rotten deal—if they are able to ensure that the UAW does not corrupt yet another vote.

On Thursday, the Mack Workers Rank-and-File Committee issued a statement calling for a massive “no” vote, writing that the “contract is a sellout that belongs in the garbage.”

It continued, “We say to the UAW leadership: We

will not consider as legitimate any ratification declaration if the vote process and counting is not overseen by the rank and file.”

“You’ve got to vote this thing down”

At visits to the Hagerstown plant on Wednesday and the Macungie plant on Thursday, WSWs reporters found unanimous opposition to the tentative agreement. Correspondents spoke to scores of workers, and not a single one spoke in favor of what the UAW boasts is a “record” deal.

Reporters found that the WSWs is well-known among workers, as is the leadership of Will Lehman, a rank-and-file worker at Macungie who challenged career union officials in last year’s UAW presidential election, winning thousands of votes on a socialist platform calling for the abolition of the bureaucracy.

One worker, Hal, who has been at Macungie for three decades, said he had been following the WSWs since the New River Valley Volvo Trucks strike in 2021. He spoke of the erosion of workers’ wages over his years at the plant.

“Anyone who has been here for as long as I have,” he said, “will tell you that the standard of living for workers here has gone way down. You just can’t buy what you used to be able to buy on the wages. And this contract will give us more of the same.”

“These jobs at Mack, they used to be the best jobs in the [Lehigh] Valley,” he said. “There was a time that everyone wanted to work here. Now the jobs are in the toilet.

“I want to tell all the young workers out there, listen to me from experience, you’ve got to vote this thing down.”

Speaking of the extension of the workday, Hal added, “How does the UAW think workers can make it 8.5 hours? They’re already run ragged at eight.”

Two younger workers, Mark and Brian, also spoke with the WSWs at Macungie. They said that they were already following the WSWs and Will Lehman, and said that they would vote “no” on the contract. Both said that they were angered about the midnight extension, and that they are ready to strike. One, Mark,

expressed hopes in UAW Shawn Fain, saying, “At least Fain talks tough. And even though Biden makes mistakes, at least he got to the picket line,” he said. “When did a president ever go the picket line before?”

WSWS reporters explained that Biden’s main concern was to keep his war policy against Russia on track, and that while Fain “talks left,” the manner he is conducting the strike of the Big Three confirms that he is no militant. Workers are being strung out in isolated walkouts designed to get media attention, but which have no impact on Big Three profits or production. After some discussion, the workers agreed, and expressed support for the founding of a rank-and-file committee. Both said that they know and admire Will Lehman.

Another veteran worker complained that this contract was a repeat of the last one negotiated. “It’s the same thing,” he said. “We’re taking the pay cut in real terms again.” The worker went on to blame the UAW’s collusion with Biden, and what he called “Biden’s socialist policies.” A WSWs reporter responded that ensuring massive profits to the corporations has nothing to do with socialism, saying “socialism is of, by, and for the workers,” the reporter said. The worker responded, “I agree with socialism for the working class.”

At both facilities hostility to the contract was universal. One worker, when asked about the contract highlights, responded, “Oh, you mean the blank sheet of paper?” A worker at Hagerstown said simply, “Nothing better than toilet paper is what it is.”



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