

Anger mounts after UAW President Shawn Fain says no new plants to be struck, citing supposed “progress”

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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.

Autoworkers are reacting with disgust and anger following the announcement by UAW President Shawn Fain in a Facebook livestream broadcast Friday that no new plants will be called out on strike. The union’s “stand up” strike policy has left 83 percent of UAW members on the job producing profits for the auto companies.

To justify the continuation of the UAW’s non-strike, Fain claimed, “We are winning, we are making progress and we are headed in the right direction.” Fain described what he said was a last-minute offer by GM to include battery plants under the national Big Three agreement as “historic.”

In fact, the proposal by GM will do nothing to ensure workers receive decent wages at EV plants. This was demonstrated by the “interim agreement” recently signed by the UAW at the Ultium Cells battery plant in Lordstown, Ohio setting wages at the near-poverty level of just over \$20 an hour. Further, by claiming the proposal represents a “just transition” to EV production, the UAW implicitly agrees that the “just transition” to EVs will include the massive elimination of jobs.

CBS News quoted Marick Masters, a business professor at Wayne State University, who called the agreement on battery plants highly significant and pointed to a likely quid pro quo on the part of the UAW apparatus. “GM is thinking they may get something in return for this on the economic items,” he said. In plain language, the UAW likely agreed to concessions on wages for all autoworkers in exchange for ensuring that the apparatus continues to collect dues from EV workers.

Fain is working closely with the Biden administration to suppress the strivings of autoworkers to regain decades of lost concessions and to impose a sellout that places the cost of the transition to EV production on the backs of workers. The “stand up” strike is not just a mistaken policy. It is aimed deliberately at dividing and disorienting workers in preparation for the imposition of a sellout contract.

While the strike has not impacted the bottom line of the auto companies, workers are feeling increasing pressure as layoffs spread and hours for temp workers are cut back. This is not accidental, but is part of a plan by the UAW apparatus and management to force workers to accept whatever rotten deal is presented.

Highlighting the disregard of the UAW apparatus for the interests of workers, even as Fain announced “progress” on the part of GM, workers reported that all temporary workers at the GM Lake Orion Assembly Plant have been terminated effective immediately.

Significantly, Fain said nothing about the sellout contract that the UAW is attempting to force through at Mack Trucks that includes a 19 percent wage increase over 5 years without a cost-of-living adjustment and with a longer work day.

Workers reacted with fury to Fain’s announcement during and after the livestream. One viewer wrote, “So if you would’ve struck everyone this would’ve happened 3 weeks ago and we would have a deal!” Another said, “Meanwhile we continue to make cars for those filthy rich folks. And another, “Way to sell out the workers at Mack Trucks!”

“He’s playing a game just put the plants down and get on with it faster,” read another comment.

A member of the Warren Truck Rank and File Committee said, “I feel it is prolonging things. How long

is he going to give them? Something has got to give.”

A worker at the Stellantis Toledo Jeep complex, reacting to the livestream, told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “This victory with GM placing their EV manufacturing facilities under the banner of the UAW is a victory for those collecting union dues.” Referring to the t-shirt Fain wore during the livestream he said, “It’s ironic for a man who makes \$300,000 a year, while representing workers who can barely afford to survive, to be wearing a shirt that says ‘Eat The Rich’”

A Ford Michigan Assembly (MAP) worker from the complex’s body shop told the WSWS, “Shawn Fain is saying, ‘Play Nice.’ He’s playing soft ball like we’re dealing with little boys. I say, let’s play hard ball.

“The stand-up strike is not doing anything to hurt the Big Three; it’s only hurting the workers. Here’s what I have to say to Fain: ‘You lied to us. We voted by 97% for an all-out strike. You mislead the membership.’

“We’re going into our fourth week of the strike, and we are nowhere. No major plants have even been shut down. Honestly, today I was hoping to be proven wrong about what I’ve been thinking about Fain and the phony strike. But I’m right about Fain.”

Fain spent most of the livestream trying through means of bombastic rhetoric and vague generalities to answer the demands, most clearly articulated by the Autoworkers Rank-and-File Committees Network, for an all-out strike.

In response to the demands raised for an all-out strike Fain offered such one liners as, “Our goal is not to get mad and shut it all down; our goal is to out organize” and “Not everything is about pulling out the bazooka.”

Trying to justify the continuation of the non-strike, Fain touted dubious claims of “progress” on issues such as winning the right to strike over plant closures. However, this leaves the initiative completely in the hands of the company. Without contract language protecting jobs, such as the 30-hour workweek at no loss in pay, the right to strike has no substance, particularly if that right is left in the hands of the UAW apparatus, which has demonstrated it will not use it.

As for popular demands that Fain raised at the start of contract negotiations, such as ending of temp work and tiers, restoration of pensions, a shorter workweek and a 40 percent pay raise—these have all been essentially abandoned. This was all hot air and empty posturing.

Instead, Fain touted a supposed offer by Ford of a 23 percent wage hike, over a four-year contract, as though it were great progress, when it in fact is below the rate of inflation. He also hailed a vague proposal to hire temp

workers full time and a shorter wage progression, not the elimination of temps and tiers. Instead of restoration of pensions, he spoke only of “retirement security.”

While large sections of the corporate media have played along with Fain’s faux militancy, promoting him as a “rebel” and born-again champion of workers, the financial press is celebrating the lack of effectiveness of the stand-up strike.

For example, the *Wall Street Journal* posted an article earlier this week headlined “UAW Strikes Spare Automakers From Financial Pain—for Now.” It notes that by keeping the vast majority of workers on the job the UAW is protecting its own treasury as well as the profits of management. It cites a Wells Fargo analyst who notes, “It’s creating a lot of headlines. Financially, it’s not very impactful at all.”

The contract fight by autoworkers is taking place alongside a growing strike movement in the US and internationally. This week has already seen a walkout by 75,000 Kaiser Permanente workers, the largest strike by healthcare workers in in US history. Over 1,000 Blue Cross Blue Shield workers are continuing a strike alongside autoworkers in Michigan.

To win their fight autoworkers must take the struggle into their own hands by building and expanding the network of rank-and-file committees in every plant and workplace.

The aim of these committees is to place power in the hands of workers on the shop floor, providing information and open lines of communications between plants. In opposition to the information blackout by the UAW, these committees are 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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