

4,000 Mack Trucks workers walk out after rejecting sellout contract backed by UAW President Fain

Nick Barrickman
9 October 2023

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

Four thousand Mack Trucks workers in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Florida launched a strike Monday at 7 a.m. after overwhelmingly voting to reject a tentative agreement backed by the United Auto Workers and UAW President Shawn Fain over the weekend.

The UAW announced Sunday evening that its agreement with Mack had been rejected by a margin of 73 percent “no” to 27 percent “yes.” Workers immediately expressed skepticism, saying that opposition to the sellout contract was much higher.

The rejection is a rebuke to both Mack Trucks and the UAW apparatus, which conspired behind workers’ backs and sought to push the agreement through to avoid a strike in the critical trucking industry.

The agreement at Mack Trucks had been announced mere minutes before the October 1 expiration of the previous 2019-2023 contract as a way of averting a walkout, which would coincide with the strike by 25,000 Big Three autoworkers, now in its fourth week. The UAW had blocked a strike at Mack and announced a last-minute deal despite workers having voted by 98 percent to strike in the event of a contract expiration.

“We did it. We spread the word and won,” said a Mack Trucks worker in Macungie, Pennsylvania in response to the rejection vote.

The worker noted the company’s effort to dangle a \$3,500 signing bonus to coerce financially desperate new hires to accept the agreement had backfired: “We are so happy [the contract] didn’t pass. We finally got around to the new hires to tell them what we were really losing. We did our jobs as UAW 677 members

that have been here and know what we deserve!”

Expressing the determination to strike, another worker simply stated that the “plan is to shut down the plant.”

Seeking to save face, UAW President Shawn Fain hypocritically declared that he was “inspired to see UAW members at Mack holding out for a better deal, and ready to stand up and walk off the job to win it.” The public statement made no reference to the fact that a few days earlier Fain had declared the offer to be “a record contract for the Heavy Truck industry.”

Will Lehman, UAW presidential candidate and a rank-and-file socialist worker from Mack Trucks, denounced Fain as a fraud for “acting like he stands with us” after having “tried to ram through a pay cut, sellout tentative agreement on the workers at Mack Trucks.”

Lehman added that “the workers who rejected this agreement are on the floor living with the decades of concessionary UAW agreements, and we want to fight. We are throwing Fain’s agreement in the trash with our vote.”

At UAW Local 677 in Macungie, Pennsylvania, site of Mack’s flagship assembly plant, workers overwhelmingly opposed the contract at a mass membership meeting Saturday. At that meeting, Lehman said, “This is the kind of contract that gets negotiated behind closed doors. There needs to be full transparency to all the workers, and as far as the vote count goes that needs to be made transparent to the workers as well.”

The 4,000 workers at Mack Trucks are determined to reverse previous UAW-backed concessions. Mack Trucks workers received only a 6 percent raise from 2019 to 2023, as they were forced to work during the

COVID-19 pandemic. In that time, inflation skyrocketed by 22 percent, while the new offer increased pay only by 19 percent over five years, by 2028.

Prior to the vote, many workers denounced the sub-inflation pay raises, the lack of Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA), attacks on seniority and job security, extensions to the length of the work day, as well as the proposal to extend the life of the contract to five years from the current four.

“The contract is awful,” a worker in Macungie told the WSWS. “I feel like the union made deals way ahead of time. They’re shoving this down our throat at the last minute.”

“That might be decent if the company paid that much in the first year,” said a worker at Mack Trucks in Hagerstown of the 19 percent raise. Other workers stated they voted “no” simply on principle because of how the offer was being presented, without any details and in a rushed fashion.

The amount of profit that the company pumps out of its workforce is enormous. In 2022, Mack Trucks recorded a profit of \$11.07 billion, near its 2019 profit levels of \$11.11 billion.

The massive “no” vote deals a staggering blow to the phony “stand-up” strike of Fain and the UAW apparatus. After more than three weeks since the expiration of contracts covering autoworkers in the Big Three, 83 percent of workers remain on the job, and the profits of the auto companies have hardly been impacted.

The walkout at Mack, which the UAW apparatus could not prevent, will encourage the growing demands among workers at Ford, GM and Stellantis for an all-out strike.

Mack Trucks workers have taken an important first step in developing their fight for their interests against the company. However, their struggle still faces danger, as the UAW bureaucracy will attempt to starve and isolate their strike if it is left in the hands of the apparatus. It is necessary that Mack workers join their fellow co-workers who have initiated the Mack Trucks Rank-and-File Committee.

A statement released by the committee last week declared that a “no” vote “will send a powerful signal that workers will not accept further concessions under any circumstances and that we are willing to fight for

our interests.

“But if there’s going to be a real struggle, it will have to be organized from below... Begin forming groups of workers who want to fight and establish rank-and-file committees on each shift, in each department, and in each plant.”



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact