

“It’s worker abuse”: Mack Trucks strikers speak out

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

Nearly 4,000 workers at Mack Trucks walked out on strike Monday morning after rejecting a United Auto Workers-backed contract by an almost three-to-one margin. Workers are picketing the heavy truck manufacturer’s assembly plant in Macungie, Pennsylvania, an engine plant in Hagerstown, Maryland, and two parts distribution centers in Jacksonville, Florida and Baltimore, Maryland.

UAW President Shawn Fain personally endorsed the tentative agreement, saying it was “a record contract for the heavy truck industry.” In fact, the five-year deal included below-inflation rate raises—averaging 4 percent annually—and no cost-of-living adjustments. The deal also maintained the two-tier wage and benefit system and gave the company additional powers to shift workers to different positions, regardless of seniority, and to increase the workday at the Macungie plant to eight-and-a-half hours with no overtime.

Will Lehman, a worker at the Macungie plant and a candidate for UAW president last year, and the Mack Trucks Rank-and-File Committee led the fight to defeat the sellout agreement. The decisive role of the committee was acknowledged by the industry website FreightWaves, which published an article Monday titled, “How Socialist agitating helped tank Mack-UAW deal” by Alan Adler, a former Associated Press and *Detroit Free Press* reporter who worked in GM’s communications department for two decades.

Adler cited Lehman’s comments at the informational meeting Saturday denouncing Fain 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.” Adler said, “I didn’t see that coming myself ... but it does appear you’ve got a pretty good socialist fervor in the negotiations now.”

The WSWS spoke with striking workers on the first day of the walkout. “I came here to Mack Trucks thinking it was the right decision,” a worker from Hagerstown Powertrain told the WSWS. “The company has evolved to the point where it’s worker abuse,” he said.

“They outsource all the benefits, like [occupational health service] Concentra instead of actually having the service in the plant. That’s baloney. That’s so Mack doesn’t have to take responsibility. You have Human Resources sitting in the office, they hand you cards and tell you to call a number. They keep getting all their benefits and a sit-down job and good pay over and above us because they call themselves ‘educated’?”

“They’ve lost the human aspect. These are people’s lives they’re talking about,” he said.

The big issue in the contract fight, he said, “is COLA. Never give that up, because that is the only thing that is going to guarantee that you stay at a particular standard of living.”

A Hagerstown Mack part-time temporary, or “transitional,” worker said, “I voted ‘no’ to both [the local and master agreement]. ... There’s a lot of favoritism.”

The worker stated that many at that location were being kept in a transitional role despite working for several years, adding that nearly 120 workers at that location were transitional.

“I was told after seven months that ‘everything is going good’ and that at the next hiring I’d be hired in at full-time. That time came and went, but I didn’t get hired. When I asked why, I was told that evaluations are sent to the head of the department, and they get to

pick and choose who they hire.”

The WSWS also spoke to workers at the Hagerstown plant at the informational meetings before their vote.

One worker pointed to the “right of assignment” clause that was in the tentative deal. “That means it’s up to supervisors where someone works. If a supervisor has an issue with an employee, they can take them off a position. That’s a hard-line ‘no’ from me. Right of assignment was in the highlights; who knows what’s in the lowlights?”

A young Hagerstown worker added, “They extended the contract to five years, and also, they aren’t accounting for cost of living. In five years, we don’t know if gas is going to be \$10, which isn’t right to us. They’re also going to be able to change our shifts whenever they want to.”

The Mack Workers Rank-and-File Committee is fighting to unite striking workers with Big Three autoworkers who are fighting for the same issues. In opposition to Fain’s “stand up” strike policy, which has kept 123,000 out of the 146,000 Big Three workers on the job, the committee is urging autoworkers to join Mack workers in an all-out strike to win their common demands.



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