

Mack Trucks strike shows autoworkers way forward in fight against UAW, Unifor betrayals

Jerry White
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The strike by 3,900 Mack Trucks workers in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Florida has dealt a powerful blow to the efforts of the United Auto Workers bureaucracy to contain the growing resistance of workers against the pro-corporate contracts the UAW is seeking to impose in the auto and truck manufacturing industries.

The strike started Monday morning after Mack workers voted down a UAW-endorsed tentative agreement by a three-to-one margin. UAW President Shawn Fain had claimed it was a “record contract for the heavy truck industry” in a letter before the vote. The five-year deal included sub-inflation raises, no Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA), the continuation of second-tier wages and benefits, attacks on seniority and job security and extensions to the length of the workday.

“If you can call a \$3,500 bonus ‘historical,’ that makes absolutely no sense when people are struggling with the cost of living that keeps going up,” a striking worker told the WSWS. “Gas prices are up, and people barely have any savings. I hear people’s concerns of barely having food to support their family or pay their bills on time. The starting wages are horrible. Some have two jobs and go from Mack to their second job right after leaving here.

“The UAW settled for some poor agreement. A lot of the senior workers with more experience were very concerned about the new generations of workers, although the contract may have been favorable for those getting ready to retire. Even with all the shenanigans the UAW used to convince workers the contract was worth it, we saw they were full of it and selling out the people they claim to look out for.

“Fain tried to blow smoke up everyone’s behind, but we didn’t go for it.”

Mack workers issue open letter: “Restore power where it belongs, with workers on the shop floor”

On Tuesday, the Mack Workers Rank-and-File Committee,

which played a leading role in mobilizing opposition to the sellout deal, issued an open letter to the UAW president, which declared: “Our massive no vote should make clear that your pro-company deal with Mack was the polar opposite of what the membership needs, and the time of forcing concessions on us has come to an end.”

The committee denounced Fain’s hypocritical reversal after the defeat of his contract, in which he claimed to be “inspired” by the workers “holding out for a better deal, and ready to stand up and walk off the job to win it.” The “members have the final say,” Fain said, “and it’s their solidarity and organization that will win a fair contract at Mack.”

The committee responded, “You say that it is our ‘solidarity and organization that will win a fair contract at Mack.’ That begs the question: Why are you doing everything you can to block the solidarity of all autoworkers in our fight against the companies with your ‘stand up’ strike?

“Like us, workers at GM, Ford and Stellantis voted overwhelmingly to strike. Yet, more than three weeks after the expiration of contracts for these 146,000 UAW members, more than 83 percent of them remain on the job. We are hearing disturbing reports of UAW workers being laid off, with no assistance from the UAW, and being unable to collect unemployment. Others have been victimized by management, which has a free hand now that the contracts are expired.”

Stating that the Mack Trucks workers’ fight “would be enormously strengthened by a united fight with all our brothers and sisters in the Big Three” and vice versa, the committee outlined a series of demands. These included:

- All workers at the Big Three be called out immediately
- All negotiations be conducted on the basis of demands that meet workers’ needs
- \$750 a week strike pay for all workers
- Rank-and-file control over negotiations, including daily reporting on all negotiations and an end to closed-door contract talks.

If Fain is unwilling to meet these demands, the committee said, “then you should step aside and turn over control of the union to the rank and file. It is, after all, we who have the ‘final

say.”

The statement concluded with a call to workers at GM, Ford and Stellantis “to take up this fight yourselves and not allow your strike to be sabotaged by the UAW leadership. We have launched our strike in defiance of the apparatus, and we call on you to do the same.

“Establish rank-and-file committees at every factory and workplace. Demand that meetings be held to vote on an all-out strike. Formulate your own list of demands for your struggle. Restore power to where it belongs, with workers on the shop floor.”

The leading role of the rank-and-file committee—and Mack Trucks worker Will Lehman, who ran as a socialist candidate for UAW president last year on program of transferring power from the UAW apparatus to the workers on the shop floor—has been widely acknowledged, including by corporate spokesmen.

The trucking industry website FreightWaves 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. Noting that union officials “urging passage of tentative agreements carry less weight among workers than they have historically,” Adler pointed to the “Lehman factor” in the current struggle, i.e., a conscious program to organize a rank-and-file rebellion. Adler noted the support among workers for Lehman’s denunciation of Fain’s contract at the informational meeting last Saturday and warned, “it does appear you’ve got a pretty good socialist fervor in the negotiations now.”

“We don’t need sweet nothings from Fain. Talk is cheap”

Mack Trucks workers are demonstrating to autoworkers how to fight the betrayal of the UAW bureaucracy, as well as the treachery of the Unifor auto union in Canada, which shut down a strike by 4,500 Canadian GM workers Tuesday less than 14 hours after calling it.

“I agree with everything in the statement by the Mack workers,” said Hannah, a temporary part-time worker (TPT) and member of the Warren Truck Rank-and-File Committee in Detroit. “I’m really proud of the stand Will and the committee have taken. I looked up how much the trucks they build sell for—it’s the cost of a house. A 19 percent wage increase over five years is so disrespectful. Fain must be out of his mind to think workers would go for this.

“We should call a strike by all of us and do what the Mack workers have done. The companies are making billions off us. Workers at our plant were devastated when Fain didn’t call out our plant. Why are we working when there are workers on the picket line? We don’t need sweet nothings from Fain. Talk is

cheap. We want to be out like our brothers and sisters at Mack.”

Referring to the conditions of TPTs, Hannah added, “Many of us haven’t been scheduled to work for two weeks. My last check was for \$198. People are getting evicted and seeing their utilities shut off. The UAW has hundreds of millions in the strike fund, and it’s not going to run out. We have to pay union dues, and we need to be protected.”

Michelle, another Warren Truck committee member, said, “Good for them making a stand. We are all encouraged by Will’s leadership role. This strike is sending a strong statement to the company and the UAW, letting them know we are tired of the BS, and that we are willing to stand up and do whatever we must to win our demands.

“At our plant, workers are getting fed up with Fain’s words. He must think we are stupid. First, he says the Mack deal is a ‘record contract,’ and then he says he’s inspired to see workers voting it down and fighting for a better deal. Who does he think he’s kidding? Workers are seeing through this.

“People are tired. The working class wants to get back what we are owed, what the auto companies and the UAW took from us. They’re making billions and billions off our backs, and that’s not ok.”

Commenting on the conditions of TPTs, she continued, “How can you survive on one to two days a week? The company and the UAW don’t care about our livelihoods and our families. TPTs and full-timers struggle each day to make ends meet.

“The UAW should be paying temporary workers, who are not getting enough hours due to Fain’s strike policy, which is hurting the workers, not the companies. This should come out of the strike fund.

“We all need to be on strike together. Our strength is in numbers. We’re facing an uphill battle, but if we stand our ground our demands will be met. What we need is non-negotiable: COLA, an end to the tiers, better pay and conditions, getting our pensions back, TPTs getting hired after 90 days.”

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.

Sign up for text message updates on the Detroit Three contract fight by texting AUTO to (866) 847-1086. To discuss joining a rank-and-file committee or share your thoughts, fill out the form below.



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