Ford exec says “take it or leave it” as autoworkers press for all-out strike

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Ford Motor Company executives told reporters Thursday that the company will not increase its total monetary offer to the United Auto Workers, making it clear the corporation has no intention of meeting the demands of 57,000 Ford workers for major improvements in pay and the return of years of UAW givebacks.

“We have reached our limit,” Kumar Galhotra, Ford Blue president, said during a call with reporters Wednesday, according to a report in *Automotive News*. “We’ve actually stretched ourselves to get to this point… Going further will hurt our ability to invest in the business like we need to invest,” the Ford exec said.”

Ford’s latest proposal, the industry publication reported, includes an insulting 23 percent raise over four years, cost-of-living adjustments and a $21 starting poverty wage for temporary workers. New hires would reach top wages in three years instead of eight.

“We’re open to moving some money around within the deal that might fit the union’s needs better,” Galhotra said. “But broadly speaking, from an overall cost of the deal perspective, yes, we’re there.”

Galhotra, who made an $8 million salary last year, essentially reiterated the position of CEO Jim Farley ($21 million), who rejected out of hand workers’ demands, claiming this would bankrupt the company.

The UAW bureaucracy, led by Shawn Fain, has already abandoned workers’ core demands: for a 40 percent pay raise, the restoration of real cost-of-living protections (COLA) adjusted to inflation, the reduction of the workweek, the abolition of tiers, the reinstatement of company paid pensions and the rollover of temporary workers.

The UAW apparatus is focused on extending its franchise into the new EV battery plants so it can collect dues money from workers who will be paid sub-standard wages and benefits. The UAW claimed GM had agreed to include its battery plants in the UAW national agreement, in what Fain claimed was a “transformative” deal. While ensuring the financial interests of the bureaucracy, Fain has already promised the automakers that the UAW will agree to the destruction of tens of thousands of jobs in internal combustion plants.

It is not clear whether Ford is willing to go the same route as GM. The company is currently building EV plants in largely non-union Tennessee and Kentucky and has halted production of a plant in Michigan, the center of the UAW.

According to the *Washington Post*, Galhotra and other Ford executives on the call “stressed that the company is still trying to reach a deal and is continuing to look for ‘creative solutions’ to meet the union’s needs on retirement security and the future of the company’s battery plants for electric vehicles.”

Ford Motor made $1.9 billion in second quarter profits and expects to report a profit of $11 billion to $12 billion in 2023, up from an earlier forecast of $9 billion to $11 billion. The company will release its Q3 results on October 26. According to Wall Street analyst Trevis, “We expect Ford’s revenues for the quarter to come in at about $40.28 billion, marking an 11% increase versus last year and marginally ahead of consensus estimates…While the United Auto Workers union is currently on strike against the big Detroit automakers, including Ford, this is unlikely to impact the company’s Q3 earnings in a material manner.”

Facing growing opposition to his ineffective “stand up

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strike" policy, UAW President Shawn Fain called a strike at the Kentucky Truck Plant in Louisville Wednesday night. Even with 8,700 workers at KTP, only 34,000 out of 146,000—or less than one quarter—of Big Three workers are currently on strike. Factories that produce the automakers' most profitable pickup trucks—and virtually every factory in the Detroit area, the center of auto production and the UAW headquarters—continue to operate.

Fain called the strike in an effort to get ahead of the growing demands by rank-and-file workers for an all-out strike by GM, Ford and Stellantis workers. Fain is scheduled to give a Facebook Live event Friday morning. Whether he announces any more strikes or not, his aim is to prepare the groundwork to announce a sellout agreement, which will be presented as a "historic victory" by the bureaucracy and its supporters, including the Biden White House.

Referring to the snap strike at Kentucky Truck, Colin Langan, an analyst at Wells Fargo, told *Automotive News*, "UAW leadership likely needs to strike Ford's most profitable plant to show the rank-and-file that they are extracting the most from the automaker. Consequently, we think this escalation is a sign that the UAW could be close to a contract proposal with Ford in the next 1-2 weeks."

The efforts by Fain to suppress rank-and-file opposition and impose the dictates of the corporations was dealt a powerful blow last weekend, when Mack Trucks workers rejected a deal the UAW president falsely promoted as a "record contract for the heavy truck industry." The deal, which included sub-inflation raises, no COLA, extended work hours and the maintenance of the hated two-tier wage and benefit system was rejected by a three-to-one margin. Nearly 4,000 Mack Trucks workers walked out on strike Monday morning in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Florida.

A leading role in opposing the sellout deal was played by Mack Trucks worker Will Lehman, who ran as a socialist candidate for UAW president on a program of abolishing the UAW bureaucracy and transferring power from the union apparatus to workers on the shop floor. Workers have formed the Mack Trucks Rank-and-File Committee, which issued an open letter to Fain demanding the calling of an all-out strike of Big Three workers to win the demands of all auto and truck manufacturing workers.

"It's wonderful what the Mack Trucks workers are doing," Robert, a striking Kentucky Truck worker told the WSWS. "They put out a statement calling for an all-out strike. They want the same thing that autoworkers want. If you want the company to keep treating you the way they do, then don't do anything. If you want it to stop, we have to use our power."

Robert described the mood in the plant before they walked out Wednesday evening. "A lot of us were frustrated watching the information about profits and CEO pay. We were supposed to all strike on September 15. For a month, we've been saying, 'We're Ford's largest plant, why aren't we on strike?' We're still working, and other workers are on strike, even in Canada.

"Even with us out, that is not enough. Without us all going on strike, there is no pressure, and pressure is the only thing that makes a pipe burst. It's the workers who put these people on the top of the mountain. The CEOs get raise after raise. These people are in power, with their yachts, resorts, mansions, because of the money we make them. If we cut that off, and really dig into their pockets, then maybe we can win. Why would they give in if we didn't do that?"

There is a growing rebellion of workers, fueled by inflation and social inequality. Earlier this week, 1,100 General Dynamics workers in Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania voted by 97 percent to strike when their contract expires with the major defense contractor on October 22. More than 1,100 workers at Blue Cross/Blue Shield have been on strike for more than a month in Michigan, and Detroit casino workers cast a near unanimous vote to strike.

The efforts by the UAW bureaucracy to sabotage these struggles can only be defeated by expanding the Autoworkers Rank-and-File Committees Network.

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