

UAW President Shawn Fain announces no new strikes Friday, heads to Mack Trucks to tamp down rank-and-file rebellion

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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.

Still reeling from the resounding contract rejection last weekend by 4,000 Mack Trucks workers, United Auto Workers President Shawn Fain announced no further strikes at Ford, General Motors or Stellantis plants during a livestream Friday. The UAW's so-called "stand up strikes" at the Big Three have left the auto companies' most profitable plants running, churning out enormous profits for management, while other workers struggle on \$500 weekly strike pay.

Instead, Fain announced that he would travel to Pennsylvania this weekend to assess the situation at Mack Trucks. The trip will be aimed at getting the situation under control and seeking to tamp down a growing rank-and-file rebellion.

With their rejection of the UAW-backed sellout deal last weekend—a contract that Fain had personally endorsed—Mack workers dealt a powerful blow to the UAW attempt to impose a sellout deal on Big Three workers.

Last week, the UAW had appeared on the verge of announcing a settlement, reporting a "transformative" agreement by GM to include electric vehicle plants under the national auto contract. The defeat of the Mack Trucks contract, however, may have convinced the UAW leadership that further time is needed to wear down the resistance of workers. In a bid to shore up its credibility, the UAW called a strike at the Ford Kentucky Truck Plant Wednesday, claiming that Ford had become intransigent.

Even with the strike at Ford Kentucky Truck, more than 75 percent of UAW members at the Big Three have been ordered to remain on the job, working without a contract.

During Friday's livestream, the UAW president resorted once again to militant-sounding bluster. However, comments in the wake of the event reveal workers' patience has worn thin with Fain's empty rhetoric.

A Stellantis MOPAR worker in Michigan told the *World Socialist Web Site*:

At this point, the companies are still making money while saving on wages and healthcare expenses off the strikers' backs, meanwhile helping the companies to transition to

EVs. I hope Mack Trucks gives him hell! He shouldn't have even brought that BS contract to them to vote on in the first place! Meanwhile, he hasn't even presented to us what's on the table as of today. Smoke and mirrors!

He keeps saying he's not giving them forever. How can he justify saying our contract expiration date wasn't a reference point to now marking the fourth week and still have only struck zero to one of the Big Three per week?

Bill, a full-time worker at Stellantis Warren Truck in Michigan, said:

His words sound great but his actions aren't backing them up. After what he did at Mack Trucks, how can I believe a word he says? When he endorsed the contract, supposedly a record contract, and they resoundingly voted it down. Why did he endorse it and call it a record contract?

The weekly livestream was again delayed by 30 minutes, which the UAW has repeatedly attributed to "last-minute" offers from management. However, the content of UAW officials' discussions with company executives has been kept secret from workers.

Fain paid lip service to respecting the "will" of the membership at Mack, who decisively voted down the miserable 19 percent wage rise over five years that he recommended. At the same time, he hypocritically defended the pro-company agreement he had backed, claiming, "The contract they were offered had bigger general wage increases than anything at Mack in recent memory."

"Fain has already shown he's not for us, he's for the companies"

The UAW's phony "stand-up strikes" have been designed to minimize the impact on corporate profits while exerting maximum

financial pressure on workers. Particularly affected have been temporary part-time workers, who have seen drastic cuts in hours while being denied the right to apply for unemployment assistance.

Responding to the livestream, a temporary part-time “supplemental” worker and member of the Warren Truck Rank-and-File Committee said:

Right now, they are laying people off and not giving the TPTs any hours. They think if we’re desperate we’ll be more willing to take whatever deal they throw at us. Fain is siding with them. But that’s not how it is going to work. We have to all strike and hit them where it hurts.

Fain has already shown he’s not for us, he’s for the companies. Who makes these decisions to go little by little, and to pick a plant here or there? He’s calling out some plants, but they’re still producing pickup trucks and making a lot of money. This is not really affecting the Big Three’s profits.

I read the open letter to Fain from the Mack Trucks workers. I agree with it, and I am proud of them for standing up for themselves. It shows everyone else that we can do it too.

They initiated their own strike and that is powerful. Fain was going to stick them with a terrible contract, and they said no. That’s inspiring other people who are tired of being kept in the dark and waiting for the companies to give us a better proposal. It’s necessary for us to strike them and put a dent into their bank accounts.

On Friday, Fain also sought to adopt a pose of internationalism, wearing a red hoodie provided by the Italian Federation of Metalworkers (FIOM). He reported that officials from FIOM as well as the British Unite union and the IndustriAll union federation were in Detroit to help lend support to the UAW apparatus. IndustriAll, an “international” union backed by the German government, has been involved in Mexico and other countries, setting up employer-friendly “unions” aimed at suppressing the genuine strivings of workers.

While there is a growing awareness among autoworkers of the need for global workers’ solidarity, the union leaders Fain invited to Detroit are no less pro-corporate operators than the UAW bureaucrats.

A good portion of Fain’s remarks seemed directed more toward toward his superiors in the Biden administration and management than toward autoworkers. Biden wants the strike ended so as not to interfere with the expanding war in Ukraine and the horrific repression of Palestinians in Gaza. Fain warned of anger in the ranks, essentially pleading for more time and assistance in bringing the brewing rebellion under control.

He declared, “Unless employers start coming to their senses, unless we start to see real gains in our contracts that match the gains we’ve seen on Wall Street, then I predict there are going to be a lot more strikes on the horizon. Here in Detroit, workers are preparing to shut down our city’s casinos.”

He added, “1,100 members of General Dynamics in Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania just voted to authorize a strike by 97 percent. And their contract expires next Sunday.”

“We want an all-out strike”

Bill, the Warren Truck worker, remarked:

He keeps saying the membership has the last word. The membership voted in a 97 percent vote that we want an all-out strike. That’s what the membership wanted. Then he says, no, we are doing it my way. He shows the membership terrible disrespect every time he is on camera.

He is not working toward the benefit of the membership. He is working toward the benefit of the international union and the companies. That is the only explanation for such a toothless strike.

While workers have expressed enormous determination to win a major breakthrough, determination alone is not sufficient to bring victory in this fight. What is necessary is a new leadership and the development of shop floor power. This is the program being fought for by the network of autoworkers’ rank-and-file committees, including the Mack Workers Rank-and-File Committee, which played the leading role in organizing opposition to the sellout contract by Mack Trucks workers.

The rebellion among autoworkers is part of a global resurgence of working-class militancy, taking place under conditions of staggering levels of social inequality, the growing danger of world war, a still-raging pandemic and a developing economic crisis.

Workers confront an entire economic and social order, capitalism, that no longer serves even the most elementary needs of the vast majority in society. The current irrational social order must be replaced by a society based on the production for human needs, not private profit, that is, a socialist society.



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