

Reject Ford job threats! We demand an all-out strike now!

Ford Rouge Rank-and-File Committee
17 October 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

We have founded the Ford Rouge Workers Rank-and-File Committee, and urge our brothers and sisters to consider seriously what we have to say and make the decision to join us.

We have watched for four weeks as this “stand up,” stay-on-the-job, pinprick strike scenario unfolded. We should all be on strike. But even if we did agree with this one-by-one BS, the first plant struck should have been ours. For a hundred years, Rouge has been the symbol of the Ford empire—the center to innovate, to produce, to exploit and to **PROFIT!** If we are going to make real gains, restore concessions and right wrongs, we have to hit them where it hurts. The events of the past week confirm this assessment and underscore the timeliness of our decision.

Bill Ford made a speech Monday threatening our jobs if we do not accept his terms. In fact, layoffs have already begun. Ford is laying off 700 Ford REV-C workers.

On October 8, 4,000 UAW members at Mack Trucks in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Florida rejected a rotten sellout which Shawn Fain had publicly endorsed and then tried to ram down their throats. Instead of going back to work Monday morning, they hit the picket line.

That same day, the industry magazine *freightwaves.com* ran an article entitled “Commentary: How Socialist agitating helped tank Mack-UAW deal.” It was sounding the alarm about a new stage in the spreading rank-and-file rebellion against decades of concessions. The article cited two “catalysts” for the three-to-one “No” vote against the sellout: 1. Rank-and-file committees that criticize the union apparatus and are supported by the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS); 2. The ongoing UAW strike at the Detroit Three automakers that just might spread to the “hugely profitable pickup truck plants.”

In a blunt warning to Shawn Fain and the rest of the

union bureaucracy, the article’s author, who worked for two decades as a publicist for GM, concluded, “Labor leaders urging passage of tentative agreements carry less weight among workers than they have historically.” By Wednesday evening, the UAW apparatus was in full damage control mode, with Fain calling out the Kentucky Truck Plant (KTP), the first critical factory to be hit during a month of pretentious bluster and posturing. The fat cats at Solidarity House were scrambling to get in front of the emerging rank-and-file rebellion.

The expanding network of rank-and-file committees sounded its own alarm: the Mack Trucks deal is a test case for the sell-out that’s been prepared for the Big Three. The Mack offer of a 19 percent pay raise over five years would mean a real cut of 20 percent when adjusted for inflation, and it comes after a more than 20 percent loss due to inflation since the last contract. The network must have struck a nerve. Fain was in near panic mode when he refused to call out more plants Friday morning, and instead, announced he was headed to Mack the next day. Evidently his orders were to douse the fire and force through the sellout regardless.

A supporter of our committee who began his shift as picketing got underway at KTP wanted to know: “If the stand up strike has been as successful as Fain says, why does he have to change it so drastically on a Wednesday night?” Another nodded his agreement, “Nobody believes anybody anymore. Everything has been done behind closed doors, and the union tells us nothing.” He emphasized the point, “**We need to know everything that Shawn Fain knows.** If he can livestream his pronouncements on Friday morning, we can bring cameras and microphones and livestream every negotiating session.” Our Committee position is clear: **No more deals behind closed doors!**

This is our union. We pay dues every month. It is high time we take control of it and use the strike fund for what

it was intended: the struggle to defend our livelihoods. The union claims there is \$825 million in the account. But they have an incentive to underestimate the amount because the by-laws stipulate that when it reaches \$850 million they have to reimburse us for dues payments. Reliable fiduciary estimates place the actual amount over \$1 billion. Even at \$825 million the entire membership at the Big Three could stay on strike for 11 weeks with strike pay at \$750 a week for everybody.

When the economy crashed in 2009, Bill Ford Jr. came to the UAW and asked for concessions. The rank-and-file gave up \$600 million a year. It was never intended to be permanent. Now we have to get it back.

We voted for an all-out strike by an overwhelming margin: 98 percent at Rouge and 97 percent nationwide. Nobody voted for this piecemeal BS. If KTP is out, why aren't we? And why isn't every other auto plant, parts depot etc., coast to coast?

In a statement entitled "*Enough is enough! For an all-out strike of all Big Three autoworkers!*" The Autoworkers Rank-and-File Committee Network called on workers in every plant to "demand emergency local meetings to pass resolutions calling for an all-out strike." The statement explained that rank-and-file workers "must take control of the battle ourselves and transform the UAW's phony "stand-up" strike into a genuine strike. Every assembly plant, every stamping plant, every engine plant, every parts plant—every work location—must be on strike if this fight is to succeed." We agree with every word.

Ford Motor company recorded \$77 billion in profits during the past 10 years while closing 65 factories and destroying thousands of jobs over the past 20 years. In the transition to EVs, they plan profits based on ever more massive speed-up and job destruction. We see this at REV-C already. In less than a year, job times have fallen from five minutes to a minute and 17 seconds. Workers, especially new hires, are systematically harassed, set up, written up, suspended and terminated. Ford calls it "churning" the work force. Team leaders and union reps turn their backs and walk away. We need to call a halt and restore the control of safety and speed-up in the hands of the workers on the shop floor.

Everything that autoworkers have or ever did have was won through a determined struggle that was discussed, prepared and executed like an army on the field of battle. As Will Lehman, the rank-and-file leader from Mack Trucks said in his op-ed posted in *Newsweek*, "This is more than a contract struggle. It is class war." Our fathers

and our grandfathers fought to build up our living standards and our union. For four decades the union apparatus has enriched themselves while they gave away what our fathers fought to achieve.

A lot of people are being victimized out here. Temps are taking the brunt of it: harassment, write-ups, suspensions. Jobs are overloaded to the point they are impossible.

An article last Thursday morning in the *Washington Post* made Ford Motor Company's contract offer perfectly clear. "We have reached our limit," Kumar Galhotra, Ford Blue president, is quoted from a call with reporters to discuss the walkout at Kentucky Truck. "We've actually stretched ourselves to get to this point."

Ford is not going to budge. If we are going to win what we need, we have to take control and build an all-out strike.

These are our initial program of demands:

1. Immediate 40 percent pay increase. Restore the 8-hour day! Time and a half after 8 hours.
2. Roll over all temps and progression employees with more than 90 days to full-time with full pay and benefits immediately.
3. Restore full COLA.
4. Restore full pensions for all retirees with cost-of-living raises to restore pensions and full medical benefits eroded by inflation. Restore cuts to retiree medical benefits implemented by the UAW under the VEBA.
5. Restore full vacations and personal days to be scheduled at the sole discretion of each employee.

To join or get more information about the Ford Rouge Rank-and-File Committee, fill out the form below.



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