

Striking Mack Trucks workers need a winning strategy, not more backroom negotiations between management and the UAW!

Mack Trucks Workers Rank-and-File Committee
23 October 2023

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

It is two weeks since we voted “no” by a margin of 73 percent against a sellout tentative agreement pushed by United Auto Workers President Shawn Fain, the UAW International and local UAW officials. By rejecting this TA, our members sent a powerful shockwave through the auto industry, raising the possibility of an industry shutdown.

The contract met none of our demands. Instead, it only sought to remove things we had, such as job security and overtime after eight hours. The 19 percent wage increase would’ve meant a cut to real wages once inflation is taken into account.

Rather than have our backs, the UAW leadership backed this attack, with President Shawn Fain telling us in a memo prior to the vote that the TA was a “record contract for the Heavy Truck industry.”

Fain’s visit to our locals in Maryland and Pennsylvania was an exercise in damage control. He claimed that the endorsement was all just a big misunderstanding due to poor communication from the local leadership, and that now he really would have our backs and send us lawyers and “resources” from the International level.

Our members don’t need more personnel to keep secrets from us in backroom negotiations. We need our money from the strike fund and control over the contract talks!

On Thursday, Mack issued a “bargaining update” rejecting out of hand providing a contract that meets our needs. The UAW released a letter claiming they presented our demands to the company. They vaguely refer to “higher general wage increases,” COLA and a “shorter

progression” (not the complete elimination of tiers, which is what we want), while saying nothing about their attempts to add 30 minutes to our workday and attack our job security.

The UAW and Fain’s endorsement of the first tentative agreement was not a “misunderstanding” arising from a lack of information or poor communication. In reality, Fain’s administration has already demonstrated repeatedly that it serves the companies.

- The ongoing Big Three autoworkers strike has been hamstrung by the feeble “stand up” strike policy Fain has conducted, which has kept the vast majority of autoworkers on the job and producing profits for the companies.

- At Lear Seating in Indiana, 1,000 of our fellow UAW brothers and sisters have voted “no” three times in a row in recent months against virtually identical UAW-endorsed sellout contracts. Ignoring the 94 percent strike vote, the UAW kept them on the job, extending the contract over and over again. After the UAW finally called a strike at Ford Chicago Assembly, which Lear supplies, Lear workers were laid off and denied strike pay by the UAW.

- Clarios battery workers rejected a rotten TA two times earlier this year only to have the UAW threaten them with layoffs if they didn’t accept sub-inflation pay increases and an extension of the work day. These are the same conditions Fain is now trying to make us submit to.

Some of our brothers and sisters at Mack may still be wondering: How could Fain, the International and the local leadership have backed a contract which was so far apart from what workers wanted? The answer lies in the objective role of the UAW bureaucracy and its interests,

which are hostile to the workers it claims to represent.

From the Big Three to the parts plants, from Deere to Mack and Volvo, the UAW bureaucracy functions as an arm of management and has done so for decades. The UAW's "Solidarity House" headquarters has hundreds of staffers making six-figure salaries, who serve no purpose beyond enforcing the companies' demands. These facts have not changed under Fain, who himself spent a career moving up the ladder of the bureaucracy.

While Fain and the UAW leadership have claimed they have to "protect" the strike fund, none of them have missed a single paycheck from their bloated \$200,000-plus salaries during the strikes at the Big Three or Mack. Meanwhile, they have forced laid-off workers to take state unemployment, in a deliberate effort to put them under extreme financial pressure, to try to force them to accept whatever sellout deal the UAW announces.

What is the path to victory?

What we need is a real strategy to hit these corporations where it hurts and win the demands we rightfully deserve.

As long as the struggle remains under the control of the UAW bureaucracy, they will isolate us, starve us on inadequate strike pay and make us vote on one sellout after another, as they did to our brothers and sisters at Volvo's New River Valley plant in 2021.

If the strike is to succeed, rank-and-file workers will have to step up and take matters into their own hands.

Mack workers should send delegations to Ford, GM and Stellantis plants and appeal for common action, and to other Volvo and Mack plants as well, whether they are under the UAW, another union or non-union. Workers must do everything we can, whether in discussions on the picket lines or on social media, to forge links across plants and companies and set up our own communication networks.

We also repeat our demands put forward in our previous open letter to Shawn Fain, published before he visited our locals:

• All workers at the Big Three be called out immediately

• All negotiations be conducted on the basis of demands that meet our needs, including COLA, far higher wage increases, a complete end to the tier system, a four-year contract and more

\$750 a week strike pay for all workers

• Rank-and-file oversight over negotiations, including daily, detailed reports from UAW officials on what's being discussed with management

While last week Fain came to Pennsylvania and Maryland to offer excuses, our brother Will Lehman from the Mack Trucks facility in Macungie, Pennsylvania, traveled to Detroit to speak with striking autoworkers, campaign for a united struggle of Mack and Big Three workers, and build support for an all-out strike across the auto industry.

At Volvo Trucks' New River Valley plant and Mack, management has constantly played us off of each other with the help of the UAW, trying to make us handle scab parts while the other location has been on strike in the past. But there is widespread support for a united fight across Volvo and Mack. Workers at NRV have informed us that they have just two days of engines left as of Monday.

To conduct a real struggle, we need to build our own independent organizations that are answerable only to ourselves: the workers in struggle. This has to extend to the international level. Mack is a multinational company that employs nearly 50,000 factory workers worldwide. Any effort by the company to offset the impact of our strike by attempting to lean on our coworkers in other countries must be met with a cross-border shutdown. Nothing moves unless we say so.

The fight is against a multinational corporation that the United States' government uses to make war. Mack Trucks produces Heavy Dump Trucks and other vehicles that are "used by the Army, reserves and National Guard for jobs ranging from combat support abroad to rebuilding at home after disasters," according to Lehman Valley Live.

This means that our strike isn't just about wages, as important as those and other economic items are. In inviting US President Biden to our picket lines, Fain and the UAW are showing their solidarity with a president of the rich who wants to force us to build tools for wars that kill other working people.

We call on our fellow Mack Trucks workers to join this struggle for a real fight. Text MACK to (877) 861-4428 for updates and to discuss joining the Mack Workers Rank-and-File Committee today.



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