

UAW bureaucracy preparing to announce sellout deal at Big Three

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The United Auto Workers bureaucracy is preparing to announce a deal with one or more of the auto companies that would betray the interests of nearly 150,000 GM, Ford and Stellantis workers.

In a livestream on Friday, UAW President Shawn Fain claimed the automakers had already agreed to “record contracts” but there “was more to be won.” “At GM we are close with some tweaks to make,” he said. The “hardest part of a strike” was “right before a deal,” he continued, “when there is the most aggressive push for that last mile.”

Autoworkers must be warned: The only “aggressive push” the UAW is making is on its finishing touches to a sellout. For 40 days, the UAW has kept the overwhelming majority of Big Three workers on the job without contracts, producing profits for the corporations. At the same time, Fain and the UAW have kept workers completely in the dark on the details of their discussions with management, notwithstanding Fain’s vague weekly “updates.”

Any deal announced on this basis will be a massive sellout.

Facing growing rank-and-file demands for an all-out strike, particularly with GM and Ford reporting their profits this week, Fain called strikes at some of the Big Three’s most profitable plants for the first time since his selective strike policy began nearly six weeks ago. On Monday morning, the UAW called out 6,800 workers at the Stellantis Sterling Heights Assembly Plant in suburban Detroit, and another 5,000 workers at GM’s assembly plant in Arlington, Texas were called out Tuesday morning.

But these strikes, which bring the number of Big Three

workers on strike to 45,000—or less than one-third of the 146,000 UAW members at GM, Ford and Stellantis—are part of an orchestrated performance aimed at reaching the desired result.

Art Wheaton, director of labor studies at Cornell University, told the *New York Times* that the latest strikes indicated the UAW was close to announcing a deal. “This shows the members that, ‘Look, we took out their biggest moneymakers and pushed them hard as we could,’” Wheaton said. “Then, if there is a tentative deal, they can tell the members: ‘You better ratify this. Don’t vote this down.’”

Confirming this appraisal, Fain declared outside the Sterling Heights plant Monday, “We can get a deal done this week. We want to get our members off the picket line and get back to work building the greatest products in America.”

The UAW leadership is clearly concerned that reports of huge profits by Ford and GM will fuel workers’ resistance to anything less than a massive victory.

On Tuesday, GM announced that it made \$3.06 billion in third-quarter net profits, down 7 percent from last year, but beating Wall Street expectations. Underscoring the ineffectiveness of the UAW “stand up strike” policy, the company’s third-quarter sales and revenues increased. According to CFO Paul Jacobson, GM lost \$200 million in revenues due to the strike in the third quarter, less than 0.5 percent of its quarterly revenues of \$44.13 billion. The company reported \$800 million in lost earnings overall, less than a quarter of the impact from the 2019 national GM strike.

Despite Fain’s claims about the companies agreeing to “record contracts,” the auto executives have forcefully opposed workers’ demands for the restoration of the historic concessions the UAW—and Fain himself—agreed to in 2009. The companies have offered wage increases of around 23 percent over four years, barely above the 20

percent cumulative price increases workers have suffered since the last UAW contract in 2019. They have also offered thoroughly inadequate cost-of-living formulas.

The companies have rejected out of hand workers' demands to abolish wage and benefit tiers, restore pensions and retiree health benefits, and immediately convert current and future temp workers into full-time workers.

The companies aim to destroy tens of thousands of jobs in the coming years and establish a largely low-paid workforce as part of the transition to electric vehicle production. The chief concern of the UAW bureaucracy has been to wear down the militancy of the rank and file to such a sellout, and at the same time preserve the financial and institutional interests of the union apparatus itself.

The UAW bureaucracy is working closely with the Biden administration to prevent the escalation of the strike wave movement in the United States, which has already involved nearly 500,000 workers this year. Their aim is not solely defending the bottom lines of the auto corporations, but also preventing any interference in the massive expansion of military operations by the American ruling class.

Late Sunday night, the UAW announced a last-minute deal to prevent a strike by 1,100 workers against General Dynamics, a major defense contractor for the US war machine. Its tanks and weaponry are critical for the US proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, the US-backed genocide of Palestinians by Israeli forces in Gaza, and the preparation for future wars against Iran and China.

The Biden administration is seeking another \$105 billion in spending for these wars on top of the almost \$1 trillion US military budget. Biden intends to squeeze these resources out of the working class through attacks on social programs and a savage increase in exploitation.

In his address last week outlining plans for worldwide war to defend US global domination, Biden referred to the alliance between the Roosevelt administration and American trade unions in the conversion of the auto industry to produce tanks and bombers for World War II, which included a ban on all strikes. Fain, who has also referred to the supposed "arsenal of democracy" during World War II, is offering the UAW bureaucracy's services to suppress the class struggle and impose the brutal labor discipline needed for full-scale war today.

But the efforts of American imperialism to wage war overseas and against the working class at home will encounter massive opposition. After three decades of

endless military conflicts, there is widespread hostility to war among workers in the US. Already there have been mass demonstrations against the genocidal war by Israel against Gaza, which is backed to the hilt by the US political establishment.

Fain, the Biden administration and their Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) publicity agents in the UAW Communications Department have already drafted their press releases and video statements to announce a "historic victory" and bulldoze opposition from rank-and-file workers.

As the reality of this betrayal becomes apparent, the UAW bureaucracy will confront an eruption of opposition. But this opposition must be organized in order to overcome the inevitable attempts by the UAW to betray the struggle, using its long-standing methods of lies, intimidation and vote-rigging.

Autoworkers must take their lead from the Mack Trucks Rank-and-File Committee, which led the campaign to defeat the attempts by Fain and the UAW apparatus to ram through a sellout contract on 4,000 Mack workers in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Florida. The contract Fain endorsed included sub-inflation raises, maintained the two-tier wage and benefit system, and extended the workday with no overtime payments.

Mack workers voted down the UAW's contract by a three-to-one margin and walked out on October 9. Since then, the rank-and-file committee has called on Big Three workers to carry out an all-out strike to strengthen workers both in the auto and truck manufacturing industries.

Workers must prepare now to oppose the impending sellout that the Fain bureaucracy is planning. This requires expanding the network of rank-and-file committees into every factory to enforce the non-negotiable demands of workers for inflation-busting wage increases, the restoration of COLA, company-paid pensions and retiree health care for all workers, the elimination of all tiers, the immediate conversion of all current and future temps into full-timers, and large pension increases for retired workers. The resistance of the employers to these demands can only be broken by mobilizing workers in an industry-wide strike.



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