

Defeat the UAW's sellout contract at Ford!

Jerry White, Marcus Day
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Autoworkers: Join an emergency meeting Friday at 7 p.m. Eastern / 6 p.m. Central to discuss the implications of the UAW-Ford deal and how to organize to defeat the sellout. Register here to attend.

Sign up for text message updates on the Detroit Three contract fight by texting AUTO to (866) 847-1086.

The United Auto Workers bureaucracy is trying to ram through an agreement with Ford Motor Co. that will entail a massive assault on the jobs, living standards and factory conditions of nearly 150,000 Ford, GM and Stellantis workers.

The only thing “historic” about the UAW-Ford deal is the scope and cynicism of the betrayal. The UAW leadership unilaterally shut down strikes at Ford on Wednesday night, before many workers even knew an agreement had been reached, let alone seen and voted on. The “deal” they announced Wednesday was worked out months ago, and the “stand up strike” was just theater to keep most workers on the job without a contract.

In a livestream Wednesday, UAW Vice President for Ford Chuck Browning sought to justify this blatantly anti-democratic action with the absurd argument that it was a “strategic move” to “keep the pressure on Stellantis and GM.”

What a cynical lie! The real aim of the UAW’s shutdown of the strike is to make ratification of its deal seem like a foregone conclusion, divide Ford workers from their brothers and sisters at GM and Stellantis, and weaken the position of workers throughout the Big Three.

Workers at GM and Stellantis should take the UAW’s shutdown of the Ford strike as a warning that their own strikes are in imminent danger. Media reports Friday morning indicated that the UAW is close to announcing an agreement with GM, one which will be no less of a betrayal than the one at Ford.

The bureaucracy is attempting to get ahead of and suppress opposition because it knows its deals with Ford, GM and Stellantis will be unpopular. The few details the UAW revealed Wednesday already makes clear that it is a complete betrayal of workers’ demands:

It contains only a 25 percent base wage increase over a

nearly five-year contract, far below the 40 percent or more raise demanded by workers, and nowhere near enough to make up for decades of declining wages. Meanwhile, the UAW has released no details about the “COLA” it says it won, what the formula is, who it will apply to, or when.

Any modest increases in wages will be more than made up by the companies through the forced retirements of higher-paid workers, mass layoffs, plant closings, speed-up and cost-cutting. Ford CFO John Lawler said Thursday there was “no doubt” the company would remain profitable under the agreement, and Ford would “find efficiency and productivity throughout the system and throughout the company to help mitigate the impacts of the higher labor costs.”

The deal maintains the tier system. It only “shortens” the wage progression scheme to three years and does not restore pensions and retiree health benefits for all current workers and new hires. The UAW has said nothing about what the “path” is to full-time employment for newly hired temporary workers, and how long they will be kept in temp status by the companies.

It paves the way for the destruction of hundreds of thousands of jobs during the transition to electric vehicles. The “right to strike over plant closures” held up by Fain is meaningless. The UAW leadership accepts that there will be mass job cuts during the EV transition, and only wants to make sure they have control over job placement to the low-wage EV battery plants, so that they get the dues.

It is certain that many more concessions will emerge in the coming days. But the UAW’s deal is already provoking broad opposition among autoworkers. Unofficial polls in autoworker Facebook groups with thousands of members show a majority would reject the contract if a vote were held today.

To prevent the defeat of their struggle, workers in every factory must begin organizing now. Urgent measures are needed to ensure that the will of rank-and-file workers is not again overridden by the pro-corporate UAW bureaucracy:

1. The full contract and all “letters of understanding” must be released immediately, not selective highlights and “change pages”!

All plans for plant closures which have been discussed at any of the Big Three companies must be made public immediately. There must be at least one week for workers to carefully study and discuss the full contents of the contract. Mass membership meetings must be held at every local where workers can ask questions and campaign against the contract.

2. The rank and file must have oversight over the vote and ballot-counting.

Autoworkers have already had many bitter experiences with the UAW bureaucracy's anti-democratic methods, including ballot-stuffing, voter intimidation and other dirty tricks. The UAW deliberately failed to inform the vast majority of workers that a national union election was taking place last year, leading to turnout of just 9 percent.

To prevent another rigged election, rank-and-file workers should organize delegations to monitor the contract vote and oversee all ballot-counting.

3. Rank-and-file committees must be expanded throughout every plant and workplace.

In every factory and workplace, workers should form or expand rank-and-file committees. These committees have already played a critical role in organizing the resistance to UAW-backed sellout contracts, such as at Mack Trucks, where workers overwhelmingly voted down a pro-company deal endorsed by Fain.

Rank-and-file committees are the organizing centers of opposition, providing a means for workers to exchange information and unite across all tiers, plants, companies, and even countries.

As the WSWS has warned, Fain and the UAW apparatus have planned from the beginning to betray this struggle. Fain's administration was brought into power earlier this year in order to counter a militant rank and file that is in no mood for another sellout. That is why Fain and his pseudo-left PR department (led by the Democratic Socialist of America) have used "radical" sounding rhetoric and rolled out their fraudulent "stand up strikes," which did more economic damage to the workers than the corporations.

Thursday afternoon, Ford reported that it made \$2.2 billion in profits in the third quarter, an increase of more than 20 percent from last year. The \$1.3 billion in lost income that Ford predicted from the 41-day strike is less than one third of the \$4 billion GM lost from a 40-day national strike in 2019—which itself ended in yet another sellout.

For the UAW bureaucrats to claim that they have won a

"record" contract at Ford after striking just three plants—with far *less* of an impact than the 2019 GM strike—only shows that they have nothing but contempt for the intelligence of workers.

For months, the UAW apparatus has conspired with the Biden administration to impose a deal that will allow automakers to decimate jobs and create a new low-paid workforce in the EV battery plants. After the UAW announced its deal Wednesday, Biden immediately hailed Ford and the UAW for "coming together" and producing a contract that "helps businesses succeed."

Biden has been focused on working with the UAW bureaucracy throughout to contain the struggle so that 1) it does not spread and galvanize a much broader movement in the working class for higher wages, and 2) it does not interfere with Washington's escalation of the war against Russia in Ukraine, and the US-backed war by Israel against Gaza, and plans for war against China. Last weekend, the UAW announced a tentative agreement for 1,100 General Dynamics workers who build tanks and armored vehicles for the US military.

All over the world, the ruling class is confronting both a growing strike movement and mass protests against war. In the past week, thousands of GM workers in Brazil initiated strike action to fight layoffs.

Workers at Ford have powerful allies among autoworkers in the US, Canada, Mexico, and other countries who are also looking to fight for a decent standard of living and against exploitation.

But for the enormous social power of the working class internationally to be unleashed, structures which are genuinely under workers' control are needed. Rank-and-file committees throughout the auto industry will provide the mechanism for workers to transfer power to the rank and file and prepare to launch an all-out strike.



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