

UAW announces tentative agreement with Allison Transmission, running roughshod over mass sentiment for strike

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Almost two weeks after defying Allison Transmission workers' 99 percent strike vote, the UAW announced a tentative agreement (TA) Wednesday before the Thanksgiving holiday. The Local 933 bargaining committee sent out a mass text message notifying workers that details would be released in the next 48 hours.

Workers began questioning the union leadership's initial 48 hours claim after George Freeman, the local chairperson, sent out a report that the details would not be released until after the Thanksgiving holiday.

One Allison worker stated, "Yeah, it's kind of funny how at the last minute there was a 'clerical' error so we couldn't strike, then 6 days later there's a TA? It's beyond discouraging as a working class individual who just wants fair pay for fair work and not have to work 60–70 hours a week to raise a family and therefore missing all the time with your family!"

To attempt damage control, a member of the bargaining committee, Kyle Colbert, posted on Facebook, "We understand the Membership's concern due to lack of communication during this time. The Membership's stress and frustration in this time of negotiations is not lost with this Negotiation Team." He goes on, "All this to say that in the coming week we want to give this Membership something to expect without violating any terms that have been agreed upon during our negotiations. Dates and times are currently being discussed between the UAW and the company to make sure our Members receive a Tentative Agreement that can be looked over, discussed, then voted on." In other words, "We will meet with the company to discuss the best measures to sell out the membership."

The Allison worker said, "They backtracked on the

48 hours to claim it was 48 business hours. Then the bargaining committee posts the timeline without a timeline. You can't tell people wait another 72–96 hours. It's a mess right now. Already new hires make \$14–15 an hour, year after year and Allison nets \$600–700 million in profits. There's lot of people disgruntled, fed up with not being told what's going on. We haven't had any weekly updates, then midnight there's a 'clerical' error.

"Everyone's guessing it's a terrible 'shut your mouth' TA, because they will put this TA forward for us to vote it down. They know it will go down. They're not answering questions on the extension. It supposedly ends Tuesday at midnight. Based on that we'll probably meet Thursday and vote Friday. Basically, that 99 percent was a formality for the UAW. Since our membership is under 2,000 like Mack, [UAW] International doesn't care. The Facebook post by the bargaining committee was basically just to beat around the bush and give vague responses."

In the concluding section of Kyle Colbert's post, he gave an outline stating that the TA will be rolled out in an informational meeting for all three shifts, then workers will vote. He ended by cynically asking workers to trust in the negotiating team as they have always had workers' best interests in mind.

Who is he fooling? Sixteen years have passed since Allison Transmission was sold by GM to Carlyle Group. Allison workers were promised by GM in 2007 that pensions and retiree health care costs would be guaranteed. Under the UAW-GM contract, the company unloaded the retiree health care costs into a voluntary employee beneficiary association (VEBA). It underfunded retiree health benefits and alongside this

the contract implemented the two-tier system, lowering the wages of new hires.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* noted, “Carlyle is not only a vicious corporate predator, it has long had the most intimate ties with the military-intelligence apparatus, particularly in connection with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The private equity firm has employed numerous war criminals from both capitalist parties, including former Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci, once its chairman, and former CIA director and Pentagon chief Leon Panetta, a highly paid ‘consultant.’ Both George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush were directors of the company or a subsidiary.”

There should be no doubt that following the Big Three and Mack Trucks contracts, Shawn Fain and Biden are again in close discussions with Allison Transmission to push through another sellout agreement so as not to disrupt military production for the expanding US wars. Allison Transmission was awarded a \$51 million contract to support Abrams tank production for the US Army and for export. Alongside this, Allison is partnering with defense contractors for Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicles and the XM30 Combat Vehicle Program. In the third quarter of 2023, Allison Transmission Holdings reported \$267 million EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization) up from the 2022 figure of \$245 million EBITDA. For the first nine months of 2023, Allison has surpassed their EBITDA from 2023, with \$831 million.

Undoubtedly, Biden assured Carlyle Group’s co-founder Rubenstein that he is working with the UAW to suppress workers’ opposition. The Biden administration and both Democrats and Republicans, while attacking workers at home, are prosecuting the war in Ukraine, the genocide in Gaza, as well as preparing for war against Iran and China.

Allison Transmission workers, like their brothers and sisters at other plants and industries, should expand the network of rank-and-file committees to oppose the betrayal that is underway. The veteran worker explained the necessity for a rank-and-file committee at Allison. “Biden is calling Fain saying, ‘I have a war in Ukraine to fund.’ As a father, the situation worries me as well as for my future grandkids.

“I’m optimistic. All over the world the gap between the top 1 percent and the rest of us is wider. I don’t

need millions and I don’t want to work 70 hours to raise my family. That’s the feeling of 75–80 percent of people here.

“They (management) see people banding together and are afraid. The more they screw us over, the easier we can build a rank-and-file committee, especially at Allison. It’s a small but critical step and important in the grand scheme.”



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