

UAW keeps Allison Transmission workers on job after 96 percent vote to reject union-backed deal

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Last Friday, Allison Transmission workers in Indianapolis, Indiana, voted down a United Auto Workers-backed sellout agreement by 96.2 percent. In defiance of the rank and file, UAW President Shawn Fain and Region 2B Director David Green are keeping 1,500 workers on the job even though they voted by 99 percent vote last month to authorize strike action.

The deal backed by UAW Local 933 officials maintained wage and benefit tiers, included a sub-inflation rate pay raise and an ambiguous “alternative work schedule,” which would likely follow the pattern at other UAW plants with 10-plus hour workdays with no overtime.

“We’re being left in the dark,” a veteran worker and member of the newly formed Rank-and-File Committee of Allison Transmission Workers told the *World Socialist Web Site*. UAW Local 933 Plant Chairman George Freeman, the worker said, “told us there would be no extensions, and when the contract expired on November 14, we were going to walk out. Then when the deadline came, he claimed there had been a ‘clerical error’ and the paperwork had not been filed in time to give the company a 60-day strike notice. With that they extended us two weeks with the understanding that we would fulfill the 60-day rule, which makes no sense mathematically.

“We were ready to walk out when two weeks ended, and they told us they reached a tentative agreement and would give us the details in 48 hours. At 48 hours, they said, the contract was ‘still at the printers.’ The next day, they posted a PDF file on the website instead of giving us a printed copy. Then we had an ‘informational’ meeting. The contract is 75 pages, and they wanted us to read it and vote on it basically in 72 hours, while we’re still working and have family matters to attend to. But it took workers about 10 minutes to decide this contract was nothing but a mere formality to keep us inside the doors at the factory. We voted it down by 96.2 percent.”

Region 2B Director Green, he said, told workers they were never cleared to strike by the UAW International. “Why did we

have a strike vote then? Fain says he’s all about transparency, but that doesn’t mean ghosting us. We’re tired of the rhetoric and the games. This is our livelihoods.”

The worker continued, “You’re noticing the tides turning with each and every betrayal, we’re get stronger, and workers are looking for an alternative to the UAW bureaucracy, which keeps selling us out for the benefit of the company. More and more of our membership want truthful answers and an alternative leadership to the current bureaucracy. With every backstab, people are getting more and more anxious to figure out a different route. People are tired of the rhetoric and the games. This is our livelihoods. That’s why we’ve founded the rank-and-file committee.”

The UAW bureaucracy worked closely with the Biden administration to wear down the resistance of 146,000 General Motors, Ford and Stellantis workers—through bogus “stand up strikes” that kept two-thirds of the members on the job—and pushed through a pro-company contract that paves the way for massive job cuts as the industry transitions to electric vehicle production.

Since then, Fain has been busy shutting down strikes, including one by 1,300 Blue Cross of Michigan workers, and seeking to prevent a walkout at Allison. This is particularly important for the Biden administration because Allison is a major supplier of military transmissions for Abrams tanks and Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicles, necessary to wage the US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and prepare for war against China. Under the terms of the proposed UAW tentative agreement, Allison would have virtually unlimited rights to dispose of the workforce as it saw fit, particularly at Plant 14, which produces military tank transmissions.

While the UAW bureaucracy used the holidays to prevent a strike, Biden celebrated Thanksgiving dinner at the Nantucket Island, Massachusetts, home of billionaire David Rubenstein, co-founder of the Carlyle Group private equity firm, which bought Allison Transmission from GM for \$5.6 billion in 2007. No doubt, the two discussed the profit potential of expanding US imperialism’s war abroad and the war against the working class at home.

The UAW's blatant strikebreaking against the Allison workers makes a mockery of the ceasefire resolution adopted by the UAW International last Friday. Far from opposing Israel's genocidal assault on the Palestinians in Gaza, the UAW bureaucracy is collaborating with the Biden administration to prevent any action by the working class that would prevent the flow of bombs and weaponry to the Israeli government.

Fighting to mobilize the workers against this sellout agreement, the Rank-and-File Committee of Allison Transmission Workers has issued the following statement:

Why we formed the Rank-and-File Committee of Allison Transmission Workers

A month ago, we voted by 99 percent to strike. When we were supposed to walk at midnight, L. 933 Chairperson George Freeman announced that we will work on an extension because of "clerical errors." The UAW Local 933 reps want us to believe this wasn't planned ahead of time. Especially right before Thanksgiving, they announced a tentative agreement telling us to wait 48 hours for information. We were told multiple times by Freeman and Kyle Colbert to have faith in the negotiations with no information. We waited more than 72 hours to receive the TA.

Quickly they wanted us to vote after only three days. That is not enough time to study and discuss with each other what's in the TA. Everyone knows Allison can't run this plant without us. They cannot get people in the door anymore. New hires start at \$14-15 an hour. We showed our strength collectively voting down this TA by 96.2 percent on Friday. Fain hasn't said a word since. On top of that, UAW Region 2B Director David Green is telling us to go back to work. The UAW doesn't have our backs. Some of us are saying to card out of the UAW and bring in another union. But that would trade one evil for another.

Under the TA, starting pay for production workers depending on classification would vary from \$18.50 to \$21.12 and reach maximum pay of roughly \$20 to \$30. The pay for new hires would barely budge over the life of the contract, with the lowest classifications rising to only a little over \$19 an hour by 2027. Then we have this Alternative Work Schedules memorandum that we know would mean 10-hour plus workdays and no overtime after eight hours like at Stellantis. The most important plant for Allison and Biden is our Plant 14, where this memorandum wants us to be at the mercy of Allison for wartime production against Russia then China.

We need to take control of the situation ourselves. We saw what happened to our brothers and sisters at the Big Three and at Mack Trucks. After Fain said he "squeezed everything" out

of the company, GM brags about their \$10 billion stock buybacks and saw their stock price go up 10 percent. Fain is working directly with the Biden administration. They are determined that there be no disruption to war plans and that the war profiteers keep making billions through the exploitation of workers.

To take this forward, we are fighting for the following demands:

- **Kick out the bargaining committee and Region 2B Director David Green, and replace them with a committee of trusted militants, elected by the rank and file.** All negotiations should be livestreamed every day, and members from every shift must have oversight over negotiations and bring notes back to the rest of us. Instead of our usual hush-hush, we need to know when the UAW and Allison are messing with our pay and conditions.

- **Hold emergency meetings of Allison workers to begin preparation for a strike.** We are not working without a contract and extensions. We voted down the contract by a majority vote, and George Freeman is telling us we have to work. They only want to buy themselves some time to try to bring the same agreement back to us. We must have strike pay of \$750 a week. The UAW bureaucrats lied to our Big Three brothers and sisters, when they told them that the strike fund would run out if everyone was out. If 146,000 members of the Big Three went out—even at \$500 per week—they would bring the companies to their knees in the first 10 days. The strike fund, paid for with our dues, belongs to us workers. It is not a slush fund for the UAW bureaucrats.

This place would not run without us. No one wants to come to work here replacing strikers for crumbs. We hold the supply chain in our hands with Allison Transmission in almost 200 countries. We could show not only ourselves but our brothers and sisters at Mack, the Big Three and others internationally. The tanks, commercial buses, trucks, semis internationally wouldn't move. We are connected to other workers all over the world. Just like them, we want to live our lives, retire and live peacefully. We call on not only Allison workers but the Big Three, Lear and other workers to join this struggle and expand these committees.

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