UAW continues to block strike at Allison Transmission more than 3 weeks after overwhelming contract rejection

George Kirby
22 December 2023

To contact or discuss joining the Rank-and-File Committee of Allison Transmission Workers, email rfcallisonworkers@gmail.com or fill out the form below this article.

Allison Transmission workers in Indianapolis, Indiana, continue to be strung out by the United Auto Workers bureaucracy after rejecting a UAW-backed sellout tentative agreement by 96.2 percent nearly one month ago, on December 1. The UAW has stonewalled the 99 percent strike authorization vote by Allison workers, who produce transmissions for both the Big Three automakers and the US military.

Anger has been growing among workers in recent weeks over the provocative move by management to withhold a previously agreed to $1,000 bonus heading into the Christmas holiday. An Allison worker, who asked to remain anonymous, told the WSWS, "As of today, 12/15, the president of Allison Transmission has refused 1,600 hard-working employees of their Income Protection (Christmas Bonus) this year. While a lot of people are only making $14.72 an hour, now they refuse to pay the bonus, which could help a lot of families. I have never seen so much greed in a company."

Far from mounting strike action and a serious counteroffensive against these attacks, however, the UAW bureaucracy has done nothing but offer hot air. In a memo to workers on December 15, the local wrote, "Many people are asking if that is illegal [withholding the bonus]. Our International Counsel explained that the International will advance all possible legal action to secure that payment if we cannot recover it in bargaining. However, be assured that we, your Bargaining Committee, will not let go of this issue and [Allison Transmission President David] Graziosi will be signing that $1,000 check. It may be a few weeks late, but you'll get that money."

In reality, the UAW officialdom at the International and local level welcome the aggressive moves by the company aimed at softening workers up for forcing through its demands.

At one company after another this year, UAW President Shawn Fain and his administration have worked to enforce the demands of management. At Mack Trucks this fall, the UAW International also promised workers "legal assistance" after workers overwhelmingly voted down a pro-corporate deal, which had been endorsed by local leaders and Fain himself. The union apparatus proceeded to isolate the strike by Mack workers and work with the company to ram through its "last, best and final offer" using threats against workers' jobs.

Facing growing anger among Allison workers over being kept in the dark, the UAW local has posted daily bargaining "updates" while providing virtually no concrete details of what union officials have agreed to with management.

On Friday, the UAW Local 933 bargaining committee posted a "summary" of what it had agreed to. Stating they were sharing "broad strokes of where they are at," local officials claimed that wage tiers would be ended "at least by the end of the contract term."

The UAW touted other supposed "gains," including "fixing 'exiting the workplace' benefits," increasing the 401K match for employees after February 1, 2008 and a "discount" on workers' health insurance premiums for participating in a "Wellness Plan." These supposed "gains" amount to cosmetic changes to the UAW's earlier sellout agreement voted down by the membership.

Significantly, the update refers to the company's plans to implement an Alternative Work Schedule, claiming that it will only be enacted in a department if it is

© World Socialist Web Site

supported in a two-thirds vote by workers. At most auto plants, the Alternative Work Schedule has been used to increase shifts beyond eight or even 10 hours, without overtime pay after eight hours, effectively abolishing the hard-won eight-hour day.

Another Allison Transmission worker voiced outrage over the UAW's continuing refusal to call strike. "It's bull crap with the lawyers saying we can't strike. The union is faking it with scare tactics. They say that since this is a right-to-work state, Allison could sue the union." Agreeing with the Rank-and-File Committee of Allison Transmission Workers demands, they continued, "There should be livestreamed [negotiations] every day; I don't even read the UAW updates anymore. We barely make it; hourly pay is ridiculous with cost of living. With the tanks, that's another reason supposedly there's a clause saying the federal government said we can't strike. It's all BS."

The reality is that the UAW is blocking a strike because Allison workers are essential to the production of tanks and other military vehicles. Fain and the UAW bureaucracy are intimately collaborating with the Biden administration both to impose the demands of the corporations onto workers and to suppress strikes and other workers' struggles to ensure there is no disruption to Washington's war against Russia, the US-backed Israeli genocide against Gaza and preparations for war against China.

Workers are thus not simply in a struggle against management at Allison but in a political fight against the UAW apparatus, Biden administration and both political parties.

The UAW has conveniently remained silent on Biden's Thanksgiving holiday with David Rubenstein, co-founder of the Carlyle Group which bought Allison Transmission from GM in 2007. As the *World Socialist Web Site* has 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 previous sellout contract and the latest updates further expose the UAW's role in enforcing Allison's demands for the greater exploitation of workers and maintaining the supply of tanks for the military. Based on the previous betrayals by Fain and his closed-door discussions with Biden, workers should be under no illusions that the UAW will correct its trajectory.

A seniority worker stated that the UAW "intentionally did not file the paperwork to strike." He continued, "A lot of people on the floor are suspecting that our negotiating team doesn't want to ruffle any feathers because they are getting special treatment, which probably includes various payouts, for favors traded back and forth. Just like our government, we pretty much suspect that our negotiating team is also compromised. This company has received nothing but concessions for the last 15 to 20 years, and now it's our time!"

Workers at Allison must take up the demands of their coworkers in the Rank-and-File Committee of Allison Transmission Workers. They state, "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." The rank-and-file committee is calling for:

• **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 report back to the whole membership. Instead of our usual hush-hush, we need to know when the UAW and Allison are messing with workers' pay and conditions.

• **Hold emergency meetings of Allison workers to begin preparation for a strike. Workers must uphold the principle, No Contract, No Work!** They voted down the contract by a majority vote, and UAW International, regional and Local 933 officials are ordering them to work. The UAW bureaucrats only want to buy themselves some time before they bring back the same agreement. Workers must have strike pay of $750 a week.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site