

UAW hails Trump tariffs, remains silent on coup after GM announces \$4 billion “commitment” to auto production in the US

Kevin Reed
12 June 2025

On June 10, General Motors announced a \$4 billion investment over the next two years at three of its US manufacturing plants: Orion Assembly in Michigan; Fairfax Assembly in Kansas City, Kansas; and Spring Hill Manufacturing in Tennessee.

The company's executives, including CEO Mary Barra and CFO Paul Jacobson, presented the move as a bold commitment to “American jobs” and “innovation.” However, GM has only agreed to shift some production from Mexico to US facilities because it has been assured by the United Auto Workers bureaucracy that it will be able to further slash labor costs and impose sweatshop conditions in US plants.

UAW President Shawn Fain has responded to GM's announcement by praising Donald Trump's tariff policies, claiming they will “level the playing field” for American workers.

In a separate statement, given by an aide via email to the *Detroit Free Press*, Fain doubled down, declaring, “All free trade means is that the companies can do whatever they want to drive a race to the bottom in the poorest, most exploited countries on Earth while shipping product back into the most lucrative markets, making massive profits, and pocketing the difference.”

In reality, Fain and the UAW bureaucrats are helping the automakers fire thousands of workers in the US, as they have helped destroy millions of jobs for decades, while attempting to cover their tracks by scapegoating “foreigners.”

By echoing Trump's lies that Mexican workers have “taken” US workers' jobs, the UAW bureaucrat is providing cover for the fascist president's savage crackdown on immigrant workers, along with escalation of state repression against those who are protesting against it. The UAW is one of several major unions whose officials have taken this position.

The UAW has yet to post a single statement on Trump's ongoing coup attempt, in which he has sent thousands of troops into Los Angeles and prepared to occupy other major US cities, while deploying thousands of soldiers to Washington DC under the guise of a parade celebrating his birthday.

The UAW has also avoided speaking about the death of

Ronald Adams, Sr., a skilled tradesman who died at the Dundee Engine Plant on April 7. Meanwhile, the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees has launched an investigation into Adams' death.

In a comment on Fain's support for trade war, the WSWS recently observed: “however much it may try to deny it, if one accepts a fascist economic policy one is compelled to accept fascist policies on immigration, free speech, and everything else.” The union bureaucracy's silence on Trump's active conspiracy for dictatorship is confirming this in real time.

What is really behind GM's plans

GM's official press release touts the \$4 billion investment as a means to “increase US production of both gas and electric vehicles,” aiming for more than two million vehicles assembled per year in the US by 2027.

The company's information is as follows:

- **Orion Assembly (Orion Township, Michigan):** Will begin production of gas-powered full-size SUVs and light-duty pickup trucks in early 2027, a reversal from previous plans to make it a center for electric vehicles. Factory ZERO in Detroit-Hamtramck will now be the dedicated assembly site for GM's flagship EVs.

- **Fairfax Assembly (Kansas City, Kansas):** Will start building the gas-powered Chevrolet Equinox in mid-2027—a model currently assembled in Mexico. The plant will also continue preparations to produce the Chevrolet Bolt EV, with future investments promised for GM's “next generation of affordable EVs.”

- **Spring Hill Manufacturing (Spring Hill, Tennessee):** Will add production of the gas-powered Chevrolet Blazer, also currently made in Mexico, alongside Cadillac EVs and the Cadillac XT5.

GM Chair and CEO Barra declared, “We believe the future of transportation will be driven by American innovation and

manufacturing expertise. Today's announcement demonstrates our ongoing commitment to build vehicles in the U.S. and to support American jobs. We're focused on giving customers choice and offering a broad range of vehicles they love."

In an interview, GM CFO Jacobson said, "The current landscape, including tariff issues and the pace of EV adoption, presents a prime opportunity for GM to realign its manufacturing operations. ... The \$4 billion investment is substantial but is seen as a necessary step for long-term success."

Workers should be under no illusions that GM's "restoration" of plants like Lake Orion has anything to do with raising living standards or increasing pay. On the contrary, it is about closing the wage gap with Mexico by imposing sweatshop conditions on both sides of the border.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has documented how, in 2010, the United Auto Workers (UAW) and GM slashed wages at Lake Orion by half, forcing many workers onto a "Tier Two" wage of \$14 per hour—setting a precedent for wage-cutting across the industry.

The UAW collaborated with management to push through these concessions, denying workers even the right to vote on the deal. The current "investment" will only deepen this race to the bottom.

As production of the Equinox and Blazer is shifted from Mexico to the US, GM's aim is to create a transnational regime of exploitation, where workers in both countries face relentless speedup, job insecurity, and poverty wages.

The retooling of the Fairfax plant is especially significant. GM will begin producing the Chevrolet Equinox—a model currently made in Mexico—at the Kansas City, Kansas facility in 2027. This move, driven by Trump's tariffs and the threat of further trade war, is not about creating "good American jobs," but about maintaining auto manufacturer profits in the face of shifting global supply chains.

As industry expert Sam Abuelsamid bluntly stated, "That's why these vehicles were built in Mexico in the first place." With production costs set to rise, GM and its Wall Street backers are preparing to pass the burden onto workers and consumers alike.

With the full collaboration of the UAW apparatus, the \$4 billion commitment from GM will lead to the deterioration of working conditions for workers and an increase in tragedies like the death of Ronald Adams, Sr.

It was lower wages and weaker safety standards in Mexico that allowed GM to maximize profits. Now, as tariffs and trade deals are forcing production back into the US, workers are told to accept "competitive" wages and conditions—meaning more work for less pay.

GM's announcement comes on the heels of a new U.S.-China trade deal, announced by the White House on Wednesday, which includes arrangements over rare earth metals critical for electric vehicle production. As *Automotive News* reports, rare

earths are "used in a wide range of parts in auto manufacturing," from batteries to motors and sensors.

The deal is meant to ensure a steady supply of these materials, but it also underscores the global nature of the auto industry and the impossibility of "national self-sufficiency" in a world economy dominated by transnational corporations.

Fain's praise for tariffs and his silence on the escalating repression of immigrant workers and the broader assault on democratic rights are a warning to all workers. The UAW bureaucracy has served for decades as an arm of management, enforcing concessions, suppressing strikes, ensuring orderly factory closers and isolating auto workers' struggles.

Now, under Fain's leadership, the UAW bureaucracy has engaged directly with the US president, first with Democrat Joe Biden and now with Republican fascist Donald Trump, to promote the unions as the so-called "Arsenal of Democracy," a euphemism for supporting imperialist wars around the world fought to protect and expand the interests of the capitalist class and the financial oligarchy on Wall Street.

The only way forward for auto workers is to unite across borders, breaking down the artificial divisions imposed by the corporations and their union accomplices. The WSWS and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) renew the call for the formation of independent rank-and-file committees in every plant and workplace.

These committees must take control of the struggle, fighting for real improvements in wages, working conditions, and job security—not just for American workers, but for workers in Mexico, China, and around the world.

GM's \$4 billion "commitment" is a smokescreen for a new round of exploitation. Only the international unity of the working class, armed with a socialist program, can defend jobs and secure a future free from poverty, repression, and war.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact