

Discussions with Ford Strikers on the Picket Line at Michigan Wayne Assembly Plant, Wayne, MI, September-October 2023

by Tim Hall

These are short *Facebook* posts about my visits to the Ford strike picket line at Wayne Assembly in Michigan in September and October 2023 and about the progress of the strike. They begin with my first comment and then follow my visits. I worked for Ford and was a UAW member in the early 1970s, but I did a 25 year-career with the postal service and am an active member of the American Postal Workers Union. I retired in 2013 from the USPS. I am a Marxist-Leninist member of the Communist Voice Organization.

First a comment on a *Payday Report* article on the onset of the UAW strike, *Facebook*, October 16:

Basically says that Shawn Fain said he would take a strong stand, striking all the auto Big Three, but in the end the way he did this was almost the weakest way possible: he picked three plants, one for each company, and had them struck and only them. and it so happened that those plants were not crucial to companies' operations. In fact they had been stockpiling cars for months, so that strikes there could go for months before they would have any impact.

In other words, the Big Three are relieved, for now, from any real pressure. Fain said this was to save the strike fund, but these strikes are using strike fund money for little or no results, spinning wheels, so to speak.

And why did this happen? Possibly due to pressure from President Biden, who calls himself a pro-labor President. Fresh from preventing a rail strike, now he is doing the same for his auto capitalist buddies.

No wonder that some auto workers are saying that the Democrats are no different, basically, from the Republicans -- both are working for the rich plutocrats.

I looked into the amount of stockpiling going on via these three plants. It looks like this article is mostly right. The Ford plant has way above-average stock of their product, the Ranger and Bronco trucks, the Jeep Wrangler plant in Toledo has jeeps coming out of its ears, and I was not yet able to get conclusive information about the GM plant in Missouri.

First visit, September 17:

"They" (the UAW) did not walk out on three companies; only one plant at each of the three is on strike, and those plants make models that have been heavily stockpiled in expectation of a strike, so all these three tiny strikes do is create a little excitement and drain the strike fund. they are spinning wheels, doing next to nothing. This was confirmed by several workers, pointing out that Broncos abounded at the dealerships.

This is not a powerful strike. not yet, but we will see what happens. This is not a good start.

Several postal workers from the American Postal workers Union (APWU), my union, Detroit local, joined a UAW picket line at Stellantis on the north side today, reported a good reception.

September 24:

On the UAW Ford strike picket line today in Wayne, MI at the assembly plant. Went back this late afternoon. Same place, same time, 7 days ago, same people. They remembered me from last week. We had good discussions. As Ford workers they were optimistic, as Ford has given them COLA again, same terms as before (they say) and a few other things, plus is offering 20% raises. I was not so sure that a big enough blow had been struck yet, but I liked their spirit. Almost all the vehicles passing honked. there were about 5 picket locations along Michigan Ave. Anyway, we had good discussion. They were very happy to get support from postal workers. I told them some of us had picketed elsewhere. It was a very friendly situation.

Forgot to take pics. The line was even stronger than before, 6 or 7 spots along Mich Ave in Wayne. The workers were happy to see me, remembered me from last week, were happy to get (again) support from a postal worker. I told them there is a lot of support among us and other workers for the strike.

Ford has offered to give the workers COLA, which was taken from them I think in 2008. and there is word of some progress on tiers, but no one could tell me what it was. Seems it is not clear or public yet. But these folks were quite optimistic. With this progress and the 20%-plus maybe a little more (they hope) wage offer they talk of Fain settling at Ford soon, maybe this week. I support what they want to do but I did say that there may not have been a big enough blow to management yet to get a major win and there should be more of a strike first. But they were in a good mood and their minds were on ending it soon.

Nearly every vehicle passing honked vigorously. The line was well-attended and people were not just sitting around, they were standing and walking and raising and waving their signs and shouting at the honking cars. It was a good show.

It's good to see this outright fight by a big union. even though very little of it has struck yet.



September 27:

Shawn Fain, the UAW president who is leading the present autoworkers' strike, has strongly denounced the plans of the notorious billionaire liar and ex-president, Donald Trump, to come to Detroit to speak to auto workers.

Fain points sharply to the billionaire nature of this fascistic fool. Fain tells the workers that Trump has nothing to offer them, especially at a time when they are struggling with their greedy bosses.

Trump's visit is clearly aimed at splitting the workers, some of whom are Trump supporters, just at the moment when they are uniting to fight the bosses. Trump should not be welcomed, but be denounced. (<https://www.rsn.org/001/shawn-fain-bashes-trump-ahead-of-michigan-speech.html>)

September 26:

RSN article, posted on *Facebook*:

Mexican Autoworkers Are Being Blacklisted for Organizing

<https://www.rsn.org/001/mexican-autoworkers-are-being-blacklisted-for-unionizing.html>

September 27:

Humor is always a weapon of the workers:



September 27:

Ford truck crossing picket line at Wayne Assembly plant:

<https://www.freep.com/videos/money/cars/ford/2023/09/27/uaw-strike-michigan-assembly-plant-wayne/8427013001/>

September 28:

UAW protests violent attack on a picket line:

September 29:

Again on the UAW strike:

Well, Shawn Fain today announced that some 7000 more auto workers, at GM and Ford, will join the ongoing strike.

This is not promising. Apparently Fain, whom I praise for calling the strike, for speaking out for the working class and for rejecting the fascist Donald Trump, apparently he thinks that the companies will significantly improve their offers in response to this small strike action. Apparently he thinks that his denunciations of the rich owners and executives, while certainly true, will cause greatly improved offers from the companies without a hard-fought, seriously major strike.

I think not. I'm just an observer, but I have some experience in these things. Frederick Douglas wrote long ago that power will give up nothing without a struggle. So far the UAW has gotten a few improvements just by calling out 25,300 workers, but now the improvements have stalled. The companies are not really suffering yet. A major blow has not yet been struck.

We need a major strike.

Other postal workers come out to support the pocket lines:





September 29

Gov. Whitmer is getting tired of striking:

"Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's office weighed in on Friday, saying in a statement from deputy chief of staff Zack Pohl that 'the prospect of a prolonged strike combined with a federal shutdown is the greatest threat to the American economy, future job growth, and our state's fiscal health if a deal is not made soon.'

"'The governor will always have working people's back which is why we need to get a deal done ASAP so everyone can get back to work making the best cars and trucks in the world,' he said. 'Time is of the essence.'" (*Detroit News*, 9-29-2023)

September 30:

I went to the Ford strike picket line in Wayne again yesterday, met different people, as it was a different shift.

They were pretty determined, spirited. they were happy to get support from a postal worker and i told them many of us support them. They were still optimistic about the strike, though Ford did not give up anything this past week and therefore another Ford plant, in Chicago, was called out on strike.

The workers said the media is lying about workers in the not-yet-struck plants having morale problems. They said people were in general eager to go on strike.

I said that I welcomed Shawn Fain and the new leadership, the victories so far at Ford (restoration of COLA, conversion of temps to full-time), but that I worried that this is not enough of a strike yet and that many more workers should be called out on strike. There was some agreement with this, but some of them cited difficulties the companies are now having with the new plants going out. They mentioned that the Ford plant in Chicago makes Explorers for the police departments nationally, so that closing it will put definite pressure on management. I agreed with that but stated that I did not think this would be enough to get major gains. There was some agreement with this, but generally they warmly supported Fain, seeing him as a big improvement over past leaderships (with which i agreed). Their spirit was high.

CNN was out there, setting up for TV coverage, but I left before it happened.

Later that evening I noticed reports that a Ford official, Hanley, and Mary Barra, the \$29-mil GM CEO, had sharply attacked the UAW on the news. The strike is starting to get more serious. I had said, on the picket line, that the union had won a few things by going on strike against all three (the above-mentioned gains at Ford, the offers of 20% or so wage increases by all three companies), but that now things were going to get real serious. And, with these press statements, that is just what the Big Three are doing. The first stage of the strike is over. On the picket line I had mentioned the first stage being over, and workers agreed. The workers seemed to have faith in Fain's leadership to deal with what comes next.

I think that to get much more from the companies, Fain will have to call a much wider strike. We will see that the coming week will bring.



October 1:

This sharply exposes management's lies about the "fat" raises they are willing to give auto workers:

"The average auto worker, when adjusting for inflation, has seen their wages fall 19% since 2008. The offer of a 20% pay increase doesn't seem so generous, when that is taken into account. Had the workers not taken pay cuts and just got modest cost of living increases, they would be making more than the 36% than they are asking for currently." (Letter in October 1 *Detroit Free Press*).

It is about to get serious. This is minor so far.

October 1:

I made it out on the Ford strike picket line again today, at around 4:30 to 6:00 p.m.

had some good discussions. Some are wondering, like me, if Shawn Fain will further ratchet up the power of the strike soon. Many have faith in his maneuvers. We agreed that the companies are talking very arrogant now, after having offered a few improvements to the workers.

We had a discussion of whether to call workers "the middle class" or "the working class," and the few I was talking with vastly preferred "the working class." They praised Fain for always saying "working class." They pointed out how we, the workers, are usually only a few paychecks away from homelessness, so how is that we are the middle between poor and GM CEO Mary Barra's \$29.2 million a year paycheck. One worker pointed out that Barra's pay is \$116,000 a day, which he called an insult.

I mentioned a letter to the *Free Press* today which showed how auto workers would be making the equivalent of a 36% raise right now if they had had their old COLA plan working since 2008, when they lost it. And we mocked how right now the companies are claiming that a 20% raise is big, while in fact it is way behind inflation and concessions already lost.

One worker, now 45, told how he spent 12 years as a low-paid temp, then 8 years to get to around full pay, but still had poor health benefits and no pension. He said that nobody hired after 2007 has a defined pension (an old-school, regular pension). I found that horrifying. He also told me that when a Ford worker retires, their health benefits are cut. This was really sad -- at the post office, which usually has worse conditions than auto, this is unheard-of.

This week I am taking a few friends out on the line with me. Anyone interested, message me. That will be Thursday and Sunday, from around 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.



October 2:

More postal workers join Ford strike picket lines.

October 2:

This article (*Free Press*, pay-wall) makes the argument that, while auto workers do deserve wage increases, the companies just cannot possibly, no way, no how! restore pensions and full health care for members and retirees.

But they have afforded paying GM CEO Mary Barra \$29.2 million a year!

So we say, rolling our eyes, oh--oh--oh--ok! Yah, right!!

Or, as a previous generation used to put it, I got a Brooklyn Bridge i kin sell yuh....

(This elicited a comment from a *Facebook* friend, herself an auto worker.):

“Interesting to know that German auto workers make twice the money as American autoworkers, and the price of the cars they manufacture are still competitive. Labor cost per car for big 3 is only 5% of each vehicle. They can afford the UAW demands, they just want to keep more money for the shareholders and and CEO’s.”

October 2 (after the *Free Press* and the *News* wept crocodile tears about the absolutely gigantic losses now being suffered due to the strike.)

<https://www.detroitnews.com/story/business/autos/2023/10/02/estimated-strike-losses-grow-to-nearly-4-billion-report-says/71030845007/>)

Uh, hello to auto capitalists: the strike is *meant* to cause losses to the bosses. The workers know *they* are losing money, too. This article just tosses it all in together, as if it was the same thing.

When there is a big fire, a city does not say oh, not only was property (and lives maybe) lost, but we also lost a lot of water!

THESE ARE NOT THE SAME THING!!!

The loss of wages has been incurred voluntarily by the workers in order to remedy the theft of their pay by the employers.

Duhhhhhhhh....

But it is nice to see that the strike is having some impact on the bloodsucking bosses!

October 3 (after Gov. Whitmer moaned that the possibility of a prolonged strike “concerns me greatly.”):

I don't like that she puts pressure on both the union and management. The workers need a serious victory.

This statement just shows that she is on management's side. This strike has just started, for crying out loud! It is not even large yet and already she is whining!

October 5:

Here is the battery-plant fraud by Ford:

Ford sets up a supposedly separate company to manage planned battery plants for EV cars. The workers there are not hired yet. Ford says they can choose to join the union if they wish. This is "right-to-work" trickery!

They will be hired by Ford. The separate-company trick is a fraud! They must be in the UAW as full members, not a new separate tier! (What would that be, tier number 23?)

One union, one contract, for all Ford workers!

Ford wants to introduce the EV era with a fraud! Cheating new workers out of full union membership or maybe out of membership altogether!

Don't buy it!!!

October 5:

Gov. Whitmer helps the Ford-EV-battery-plant fraud and blackmail of the workers.

She moans that she hopes there will not be a "prolonged" strike. Well, if there is, whose fault would that be? She clearly wants the workers to give up so that the strike will not be (horrors!) "prolonged".

And the fraud here is that Ford is holding the construction of the battery plants over the heads of the strikers. Ford stopped the progress of construction of the new plant in Marshall because of the strike. So striking is portrayed as being against the building of this plant.

And the fraud? The fraud (not in quotes) is the claim that the four new battery plants, which will make batteries for electric cars, will not be Ford plants, oh no, not exactly, but something else somehow related to Ford but separate enough so that the still-to-be-hired workers there will not automatically be part of the Ford contract.

Ford is building four plants to be a new UAW tier, or maybe not even UAW! The workers are supposed to swallow this lie about these plants not being Ford and accept that they either do not

have a Ford contract or that they will constitute a new and lower tier in the coming Ford contract!

Actually, this is not just a fraud but an act of blackmail on the part of Ford. and Gov. Whitmer, the great liberal Democrat (not that Republicans are any better!), is going right along with it!
<https://www.freep.com/restricted/?return=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.freep.com%2Fstory%2Fnews%2Fpolitics%2F2023%2F10%2F05%2Fford-marshall-battery-plant-restart-uaw-strike-whitmer%2F71069215007%2F>

October 6:

GM agrees to put its battery plant workers under the UAW master contract! just what I said Ford should do yesterday on here: include the battery plant jobs in the master contract, guaranteeing UAW wages instead of fast-food wages.

Stellantis calls on white-collar company employees and members of "marginalized" (read: minority) community groups to cross the striking UAW workers' picket lines and SCAB on the strike.

Apparently they have already been doing this over the weekend.

No comment from UAW leadership, according to the *Detroit News*.

This must be stopped!

All the major employers used these tactics to smash the unions in the last century as the workers tried to get organized in basic industry.

The more things change the more they stay the same, as the saying goes.

So the companies must be defeated again, as they were in the past.

Here is how they are organizing it:

"The company is requiring workers volunteering at its Center Line and Marysville centers to meet at its technical center in Auburn Hills and take a chartered bus to the sites. Effective this past Wednesday, the company was planning two shifts daily."

October 8:

Went to the Ford strike picket line again today on Michigan in Wayne, had some good discussions.

The workers are firm and in good spirits. They are enthused that GM conceded that its parts plant would be placed in the UAW master contract, and thus its members would be full-fledged union members, not a new, weak tier.

Some that I talked to felt this would be a long strike, as several really big issues -- the major pay raise, the tiers and the lack of pensions for the entire lower tiers -- will require a much larger struggle, a much bigger strike, but some others thought that with a few more victories like those of winning COLA and full membership to the electric vehicle battery plant workers at GM would lead to the end of the strike on a victorious note.

I questioned this, saying I thought that a much more powerful strike is needed. We will see.

Here I am at the line posing by a popular statue transported repeatedly on a truck along Michigan.

Early October:

The Hamas attack takes place in Israel. Some Ford workers express support for Palestinians but not for Hamas. One worker tells of a Lebanese co-worker who was “the best committee-man I ever had.” Many Detroit autoworkers over the past 70 years and more have been off-springs of the Arab communities.

October 14:

Some photos from my latest visit to the Ford strike picket line on Michigan Ave. in Wayne, west of Detroit.





The workers seem still determined but are feeling the stress of being a small section of the union having to do the striking. I asked, what kind of situation is strike pay for? I was planning to answer, "for big moments," but the worker said it first: "big moments." We both said, "this *is* a big moment." There seems to be a growing belief on the picket lines that a bigger strike should be called. Shawn Fain did call out Ford's largest plant, in Louisville, but that did not seem to be causing any enthusiasm. No one mentioned it. I think workers are seeing that they are not yet striking a powerful enough blow. The bosses are now talking tough. Ford says it has given all it will give. That is rhetoric, but not just rhetoric. I believe the companies are trying to make a stand at the present terms, and will only be moved further by a much harder fight. I hope Shawn Fain calls for it and leads the strike to a higher, more powerful level. I think there is a danger that the smaller number that have now struck for a month will become exhausted before the larger potential force is called into action. This is very dangerous.

Come out to the picket line, all you supporters of the strike! You will be welcomed warmly by the workers and will get to understand their struggle better!

And you will help the spirits of the strikers! Maybe some of you can organize physical support. too!

The photos below were taken Friday all along the near-mile length of picket locations on Michigan Ave. There are 8 or 9 picket stations, manned by workers on 6-hour shifts, 24/7, 7 days a week.

On Sunday workers told me that a group of four postal workers (from the American Postal Workers Union, APWU, my union) had come out to the line. Good for them! We had just discussed our support in our Sunday afternoon union meeting. Let's hear of others doing the same!

Come on out!!!

October 20:

Free Press: Fain calls for no new strikes for now.

I think this is a big mistake. He should have moved to an all-out strike, at least at one of the Big Three, in week three of the strike. Now you have all the suffering being experienced by a small section of the union. You do not have the feeling of power among the workers that you would have with a large strike, one small section is being asked to carry all the weight and exhaust itself.

October 22:

I got out to the Ford Michigan Assembly Plant in Wayne today.

There is considerable discontent among the workers at the lack of progress of the strike and a lack of discussion and information about the negotiations.

About discussion: they say Shawn Fain always just does the same thing: tell us about the offers and what the leadership has decided to do about them and that is it. The *Facebook* session, clever at first, has become boring and not encouraging. No back and forth, no other information. The local has a *Facebook* discussion group, but workers say there are too many different opinions and that some of them are really ridiculous, so ridiculous that their writers must not really work at the plant. This is bad, I thought, because it means that they do not feel there is a reliable place where their ideas and plans and demands are discussed.

About the progress of the strike, once again workers see not calling a wider strike in order to save strike fund money as a joke. They were roaring over a joke about saving it for "a big moment," when is that? This *IS* the "big moment!" They pointed out that once the contract is settled they can do little until four years has passed. It should be used now!

One worker said, I want them to bring everybody out! Others echoed the same sentiment. They seem to feel that Fain has to do something big -- or settle. And they believe that he will get a few more things and then settle. These workers have been out for six weeks. They are pretty grim and determined about it, but feel that others should have had to do the same. I pointed that this means

that the tactic has encouraged division. That union means union. I pointed out how much stronger they will be if all act at once and also how much stronger they will feel.

Another worker said the tiers issue has been solved, while another questioned this. The exact situation with tiers seems unclear, but they were only talking about pay grades. I said even if that is solved there is still the matter of two tiers on the question of pensions. Everyone hired after 2007 has no pension, while the earlier hires have a pension, and this, I said, is *MAJOR!* There was no more talk about tiers being ended, but we were left unclear about where the tiers situation in pay grade is right now. There was talk about the 401K but it was agreed that it is not a pension, it is a savings plan, just fine if you have a pension, but not a substitute for a pension.

In terms of pay, one related a debate he had with friends, who criticized the union's demand for a 36 % pay raise. He showed the friends how the UAW workers had lost at least 36 % since 2009, when COLA was removed. so our demand is just payback for what we lost, he said.

Everybody is still attending the picket lines and waving their signs at traffic, but they say things are different now.

We will see what the leadership has to offer next.

Come on out to the picket line, all you who appreciate the workers' struggle!!!

I won't name any names, you know who you are, lol!

October 24 (In the comments below, there are a couple of modifications from the *Facebook* post; also they are based on the Ford agreement, which is the basis for the other two):

UAW strikes two more big plants! :

GM in Arlington, TX, and Stellantis Sterling Heights Assembly north of Detroit.

A move in the right direction!

Should have been done three weeks ago.

Will it be enough?

Shawn Fain allowed the Ford strikers to stand out there for a month before these reinforcements were called in.

If he is serious about his rhetoric, he needs to call out the whole industry, or at least bring out the huge Ford Rouge complex.

And here is a lovely idea, which will probably not happen: bring the UAW downtown for a massive rally of the working class! Rally with the striking Blue Cross and casino workers!

Hit the bosses where they hurt, while you are hot!

URL's of articles

Arlington GM massive strike:

<https://www.detroitnews.com/story/business/autos/2023/10/24/uaw-adds-gms-profit-rich-arlington-texas-suv-plant-to-strike/71299337007>

<https://news.yahoo.com/uaw-members-strike-stellantis-plant-223333398.html>

Casino workers boiling hot: <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/business/2023/10/24/detroit-casino-workers-flood-city-council-calling-for-support/71291767007/>

Ford and UAW have a tentative agreement, October 26:

Shawn Fain is sending the workers back to work before they have voted on the agreement and before they have even read it! Why? This early send-back is even announced in the agreement material, do it was discussed in advance with the companies! This material has a chart of the usual five-step process of ratification, all the way down to the membership, which only then votes. What happened to the workers' rights to discuss? And a week later the Michigan Assembly Plant, where the prominent Ford picket lines were staged, held a vote that began on the morning of the day when the first discussion of the tentative agreement was scheduled! The media says that the workers voted by 80 % to ratify the tentative contract.

What's the hurry?

Shawn Fain claimed to put everything in the hands of the members. But the contract is not being fully discussed. Sending back the strikers takes the pressure off of management.

Why?

Let's take up the claims of the agreement itself.

It is not a "sellout," as some claim, but it still should be voted down. This workforce has almost no experience in striking. It was not called out to strike in full. Yet this relatively small force, about a third of the total UAW membership, waged a determined fight and held out without hesitation for over a month against some of the biggest greedy corporations in the world. This has been a heroic battle.

Surviving on their meager \$500 a week, the workers consistently manned their lines and greeted the public and the honking cars with militant enthusiasm. They showed the world that the working class could fight the greedy rich.. The strike inspired the workers of Michigan and the whole country a reason to believe again n their fight against the vicious capitalist exploiters. Here is a toast to the Ford, Stellantis and GM workers!

Well done!

Wages

25%. That's better than most strikes win these days. The employers ridicule the workers for demanding more, but auto workers lost at least 36% in wages since Obama took their COLA in 2009. The raises, with COLA returned and factored in, will bring wages up by over 30% by the end of the contract. They didn't win back all they lost with the crooks in power, but it's not a sellout.

Tiers

Shawn Fain claims tiers are eliminated. Progress was made on tiers, but they were not eliminated. The conditions and compensation of the tier workers was improved, with major pay increases for some of the existing temps and immediate conversion to career status, and faster advance for the tiered long-term workers (the 'in progress' workers). But tiers remain in other respects. Full-time temporaries (not part-time ones) are moved to career positions and given a good raise, but there will still be temps and management will still find loopholes to deny their advancement. "In progress" full-time workers will now catch up with "legacy" (long-term) workers in three years instead of eight, but that is still a tier.

The Rawsonville and Sterling Axle plants, which had a lower-tier wage structure, are now being raised up to equal with "legacy." But tier issues remain with the next two areas of concern.

Electric Vehicle Plants

The electric vehicle situation is still unclear, despite the publication of voluminous paper records of the negotiations and agreements. Shawn Fain claims that the workforces at the existing and planned electric vehicle plants at Big Three are now going to be full UAW members, operating under the UAW Master Contract, as GM had promised during the negotiations for its facility. But it is unclear if Ford is going to do this. UAW documents say that Ford has agreed to "a pathway" to such membership and a Letter of Understanding says they will be full members. But the workers at these plants members could end up suffering as a lower-wage *tier* of several plants. And in the future there will be many EV plants, joint ventures with other auto companies. Poor little baby Ford claims to have no say over the union status of the workers there, but it desperately wants these plants as a lower tier. The language of the tentative agreement on this is ambiguous and suggests that management at the EV plants would have considerable freedom from UAW interference.

The transition to electric (EV) cars is coming very fast and, as they require far less labor than internal combustion engines (ICE) cars, the jobs of thousands of auto workers are threatened. Bringing them under the UAW master contract could be a step towards unifying and protecting the workers, whatever the weaknesses of the UAW leadership.

But not all planned Ford EV plants will be included under UAW Master Contract (this is not mentioned in the Tentative Agreement): "But the deal wouldn't apply to 5,000 incoming workers at three future joint-venture battery plants in Kentucky and Tennessee, meaning those employees would likely remain nonunion. Ford said last week it would delay

construction of one of the Kentucky facilities, citing a slump in demand." Bloomberg Law, Daily Labor Report, Ian Kullgren, "UAW Scores Victory in EV Worker Battle Even With Wage Compromise (1)", October 30, 2023. <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/daily-labor-report/uaw-scores-victory-in-ev-worker-battle-even-with-wage-compromise>

Pensions

There was no action on pensions. No worker hired since 2007 has a defined pension. They have 401K's, but these are mere savings plans, not pensions. Pensions are paid for by the employers; 401K's are partially paid for by the workers themselves via deductions from their pay checks. The management contribution of 10% is a crumb compared to real pensions. The huge number of *un*-pensioned workers are a non-wage *tier*, of massive proportions! The elimination of pensions in 2007 was an immense blow to the workers' compensation! Thanks, Obama!

Shawn Fain promised to fight for pensions. But pensions are expensive; getting them restored would have required a much larger strike, one that shut the profitable plants, the ones with low backlogs of vehicles. But Fain dropped the issue of pensions during the strike. This aspect of this contract is a bitter defeat for the workers.

Over-All

Winning these actual gains by only one-third of the UAW workforce going on strike should give the auto workers a feeling of the immense power of the working class when it stands up to fight. However, if these tentative contracts are ratified, a major part of the workforce will toil for 4 ½ more years without promise of a pension in their old age, as their bodies inevitably break down under the battering of the work. This bitter potential defeat should urge the workers to fight back.

Therefore, I say VOTE NO!

DON'T LET THIS MOMENT PASS WITHOUT PROGRESS TOWARD PENSIONS! EVEN IF THE CONTRACTS ARE APPROVED, A SIGNIFICANT VOTE AGAINST THEM WILL STIMULATE THIS PROGRESS!

VOTE NO! YOU DESERVE BETTER, AND YOU CAN GET BETTER!

The fight for pensions is absolutely necessary. If these contracts are passed, this and other fights must be continued in the plants. The workers need organization independent of the union leadership, so that the issue of pensions, and others, are continuously raised for 4 ½ years. Pensions, job elimination due to EV transition, these and many other issues will not go away, will only become more pressing. Use the strength you felt in this heroic strike to organize your fellow workers as rank-and-file laborers, who know better than anyone else what you need and demand. Find ways to fight back on the shop floor against always arrogant management. Share ideas, possibly through *Facebook* pages. Read history of working-class struggle. Meet, if you can. Build common solidarity and organization, if only small at the start. The problems with the current Fain leadership show that even the reformers must be held to the demands of the rank and file.

Build the fighting strength of our class, the working class, the strength you felt out there on the picket lines, shouting to the honking cars.

Keep up the fight that you started!

Comments from workers since the Ford tentative agreement was announced (names will not be given):

A Ford worker: The workers should vote NO in my opinion. No mention of a pension/retirement benefits. 11% upon ratification? I'd say that's a loss. They need to get back to negotiations.... also no retirement Healthcare. If you've been following from the beginning Fain said himself that's what we're fighting for. Yeah, he got a decent raise (still doesn't equal what we would've been at had we never gave the company concessions) but no pension, or retirement Healthcare. That's a big fat NO from me.

Another Ford worker (from a web site): I keep seeing in a lot of groups on *Facebook* how this is such a great contract! How does anybody know when they haven't even gone over the whole contract with us?! Some of you like it because you get more money the raises sound good to you COLA sounds good to you. Think about the now what about the future? What about post-retirement healthcare? Is anybody considering how broken down their bodies are going to be by then? You should. Healthcare costs keep rising and I don't care how much money you're making now, it ain't going to be able to take care of what's going to hit you if you don't have any health care in retirement. Let's wait and see what it says before selling yourself short.... I really think he (Fain) was pressured by the Solidarity House and those around him to put this in front of us. He said that the power was in the hands of the members still. He said that a couple times. I am not the only one who feels this way. There is a lot we don't know I guess we'll find out Sunday when he does another Facebook live going over the contract. (After I – T.H. -- pointed out that Gov. Whitmer was pressing Fain too, this worker added: Yes. I would not want his job and I commend him for doing what he is doing for us. He's got more balls than many of the UAW leadership before him lol!

Another Ford worker: I'm pissed.. no I haven't.. but I can't believe he took out Ky truck plant for 2% more. I think he has pressure to have the membership vote on it. I hope it gets voted down. But people on strike shouldn't be going back till we vote.

A retired Ford Rouge worker: I'd like to try and go back and knock out my year and half for 40 bucks. COLA coming back, no tiers, and the 3 yr progression are great. I understand retired employees get a bump too. I haven't begun to get my pension yet, but I do know the amount projected. I'd vote yes.

A Ford worker: Well until I actually see it in print at least some of the highlights and hopefully lowlights I won't say just yet. The way it all has played out though it looks fishy. If I wasn't a legacy employee I'd be for sure voting no because of the lack of retiree healthcare for that group. And if that was a part of this TA Fain and Browning would have already mentioned that. I also think 25% is kind of low and that we should get better yet and the company can keep any signing bonus. I personally believe it should be 20% up front and 12% split up over the rest of the

contract. And having a retired father something good for the retirees is definitely needed. They paved the way and haven't gotten crap since at least 2003. Except for takebacks.

A retired Ford worker and longtime *Facebook* friend: I'll go read your post. Honestly everyone is entitled to their opinion. I have never found you to be very far off the mark. I'd like to understand why you would send people back to work, I don't like it, maybe I'm missing something but I think it's bad policy. Everyone focuses on the \$\$\$ but what about the language? Excessive OT, no pension, no old age healthcare, temp workers, work life balance, future work, EVs, batteries, retraining.....

Another Ford worker: I will make my judgment when I see the actual contract on Sunday. No point in speculating when we will see it in a couple of days. Unlikely I would vote for this contract because I have been a union member for almost 45 years (altogether), and I have never voted for a contract. That being said, it is the best contract I have seen in my lifetime, with the previous two contracts being the worst. Wondering what will happen with Stellantis. I expect that battle to go on a long while.

These next two are from just before the tentative contract was announced:

(This first one is by one of the leaders of the reform movement that brought Fain to power.)

Don't buy into the fear tactics the Big Three are trying to use claiming they've reached their limit on what they can offer and that autoworkers are going to bankrupt the industry. It's total malarky.

If there is no pension and health care at retirement they are selling us out worse than I thought possible. And those core elements should have been a starting point. Trash can again.

A Ford worker agrees: Tim yeah I don't get going back before a ratification because if it gets voted down I don't see them walking everyone out again!

T.H.: Yes, that is very hard to do and sustain morale. confusing. you will feel like you are pulled two ways. Therefore, there is no intent at all on Fain's part to re-strike. Therefore, you are back to work without having approved a contract. Therefore, you feel weak and disillusioned. Therefore, you have been misled. A strike is supposed to make the workers feel more power, not less, even if they lose, they knew they fought their best. Not here. This means crapped out, in a way that surprised everyone.

Ford worker: Oh I'm with you bro plus if people are back working, especially those that are struggling on strike pay because they didn't prepare, it will be easier to vote yes on a garbage deal. I hope I'm wrong and the not talked about details make this deal better than what it appears, but we'll see. <>