

“We should all be out right now”: At factory gates and picket lines in Michigan, autoworkers demand all-out strike

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Autoworkers across the Midwest are demanding an all-out strike by all 146,000 GM, Ford and Stellantis workers and an end to the phony “stand up” strike strategy by the UAW bureaucracy.

As contracts expired for autoworkers throughout the country last Friday, UAW President Shawn Fain called out less than 12,000 workers at two-and-a-half factories, ordering the remaining 90 percent of the workforce to remain on the job and continue making vehicles and profits for the Big Three automakers.

Underscoring the ineffectiveness of this “strategy,” Stephen Brown, the senior director at Fitch Ratings, told investors, “We expect the initial financial impact of this first round of strikes to be limited, since the UAW is only striking one plant each at Ford, GM and Stellantis.”

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Outside the factories and on the picket lines in Michigan, workers who spoke to WSWs reporters expressed their frustration with the situation and declared that all workers should be out on strike, especially after they voted by 97 percent to walk out when the contracts expired.

“We should have all walked out at 11:59 on September 14 to show them we mean business,” a veteran Stellantis worker at the Warren Truck

Assembly Plant in suburban Detroit told the WSWs. “I’ve been screwed over since the concessionary contracts and they don’t want to make it up. I don’t get Shawn Fain saying, ‘we mean business,’ but it doesn’t seem like we mean business.”

“This doesn’t look like a strike,” another Warren Truck worker said on her way into the factory Wednesday morning. “How can we be fully effective if we’re not all striking at once?”

“The union’s strategy is not sitting well with me,” another worker walking into the plant said. “We should be striking across the board.”

“I may be old school,” another Warren Truck worker said, “but we should all be out right now.”

Another worker said, “It seems to me Fain and the UAW leaders are just playing games, and it’s the same old corrupt UAW running things. I’ve seen a pattern here, the ones who say they have a solution to the problem are usually the ones who caused the problem,” he said, noting that Fain had long been in the upper echelons of the UAW bureaucracy before becoming president.

“I’m losing all faith in Shawn Fain. His actions don’t match up to his words.” Referring to the UAW’s regular discussions with Biden administration officials, he said, “The only reason Biden doesn’t want a strike is to protect Wall Street.”

At the GM Flint Assembly Plant, a young temporary part-time worker said, “All the plants should go out on strike. This is my first strike, so I don’t know how it goes, but this partial thing, I don’t know how it’s going to go. Especially with us working under an expired contract right now. I wouldn’t be surprised if they start taking people’s jobs for crazy, little things.”

“We don’t get paid enough. Especially when inflation is so bad. I’ve been here almost two years and it takes three to get to full-time. I got \$1,000 in bills every month, and some weeks I’m only working one day out of the week and get a \$100 check. It’s \$400 max for a week.”

WSWS reporters also spoke to striking Ford workers at the company’s Michigan Assembly Plant just west of Detroit. For a still unexplained reason, the UAW originally called out workers only at the factory’s final assembly and paint departments. Ford responded by laying off the remaining 600 workers at the plant.

One picketer said, “We should all be out on strike. This is the union’s strategy, but it is a strategy to get us to give in. At the other plants, the situation is hectic. The people don’t know if they should work or go home. At the Frenchtown Parts Warehouse, they are scheduling 9.5 hours and the people are afraid to go home after eight. They don’t know what to do.”

Another picketer, “With \$1.2 billion in assets the UAW has enough money for an all-out strike. Every plant should shut down. Everybody that I talk to that is still working feels that way.”

Pointing to the collusion of the UAW officials with management, he said, “When we were in the plant one of the union reps was telling new hires we should be thankful we don’t get beat up on the line if we work too slow like they used to. Why would you say that to a union brother?”

Focusing on the demands that workers want, Ryan, another striking worker, said, “It took me seven years to get to top pay. We need to get rid of this whole tier thing. The CEOs and everybody in management are getting 40 percent raises, and every penny they are making is coming off the sweat of our backs.

“A lot of us are working two jobs and cannot afford to buy a house. I live with a roommate from here because I cannot afford to buy a house. I’m fourth generation at Ford Motor Company. We are not ‘approaching’ wage slavery, we are in it now. That is what it is now when the CEO gets a 40 percent raise, and I cannot afford to buy a house.”

“We are drastically underpaid,” another Ford worker said. “At a Big Three plant you shouldn’t have to work a second job. You should be fine with 40 hours making a comfortable living wage. I know plenty of people that have two jobs working at Ford. It doesn’t even make

sense. We are dealing with a lot. People are doing the same exact thing you are doing but they are making more than you. It’s a bunch of madness going on here.

“A lot of these employees were here in 2008, 2009 when they helped bail the auto industry out. They took a pay cut. They gave up COLA and pensions. They gave up a lot of those things. Now they are looking for it back.

“They are feeding us crumbs while their salaries went up 40 percent. If you want people to work, then pay people; and people would come to work. You can’t even pay your bills so why is it worth coming in? This is the only way we can show our importance. You have got to fight for your rights. That is the only way that we’re going to get it.”

Commenting on the union calling out only a few plants, he concluded, “This way they are not going to give us anything. We need to shut down everything. Everything!”



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