

Daimler Truck Detroit Axle workers: Vote “yes” to strike! Build rank-and-file committee to fight for an immediate \$10 per hour raise, cost of living, no more tiers

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Are you a Daimler Truck Detroit Axle worker? Fill out the form at the end of this article to tell us about your struggle and join the fight for rank-and-file power.

The *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) call on Daimler Truck Detroit Axle workers to cast the largest “yes” strike vote possible on Wednesday.

Under conditions where Daimler Truck is posting massive profits (over \$3 billion in the first three quarters of 2024) there is no reason for workers to accept anything less than pay and benefits adequate to support their families, a safe work environment and a secure retirement.

With the January 24 contract deadline less than two weeks away, 500 Detroit Axle workers are ready for a fight. They have been saddled for five years with a miserable contract, with pay rates for assembly workers as much as \$10 an hour lower than Detroit Diesel workers at the same Detroit Manufacturing Plant complex, with no cost-of-living protection and no profit sharing. With starting pay at under \$16 an hour, axle workers earn wages similar to many fast food workers.

In recent weeks, the United Auto Workers has produced a number of glossy videos highlighting some of the conditions at the axle plant without mentioning the UAW leaders’ own responsibility for these conditions. UAW officials then pledge that they are ready to fight. But autoworkers have seen this movie before.

In May 2022, engine workers at Detroit Diesel voted down a sellout contract brought back by UAW Local 163 only to be forced to revote on the same deeply regressive deal. Engine workers wound up with a miserable 10 percent pay raise, far below the rate of inflation, and no cost-of-living protection. The contract maintained the divisive two-tier pay structure, only reducing the progression time to six years.

Since taking office in March 2023, UAW President Shawn

Fain has employed militant-sounding rhetoric about “eating the rich” while selling out one struggle after another.

This includes:

- The 40-day strike by 500 Clarios battery workers just outside of Toledo, Ohio, who were forced to vote three times on the same UAW-backed concession contract, which included a cut in real wages and a new 12-hour workday without overtime.

- After Fain’s bogus “stand up” strike, which kept the vast majority of workers on the job, the UAW bureaucracy pushed through a concessions contract on 150,000 GM, Ford and Stellantis workers that has paved the way for the mass firing of part-time workers and thousands of layoffs.

- Also in 2023, the UAW sold out the five-week strike by 4,000 Mack Trucks workers in Macungie, Pennsylvania, telling them if they did not vote “yes” on the rotten contract brought back by the UAW they would be replaced by strikebreakers.

- After 7,400 workers at six Daimler Truck plants voted to strike in March 2023, the UAW bureaucracy overrode their vote and announced a sellout deal one hour before the strike deadline before pushing it through.

- In the fall of 2024, Dakkota Integrated Systems auto parts workers in Chicago voted down four separate sellout contracts brought back by the UAW, with starting wages at just \$16.80 an hour and top wages of \$22, before Fain & Co. rammed through a fifth one.

If there is going to be a real fight to end poverty wages and secure a decent standard of living for axle workers, then the rank and file must take the conduct of the struggle into their own hands.

This means building a rank-and-file committee composed of the most trusted and militant workers who will not bow to the pressure of the UAW bureaucracy and their corporate masters. This committee should map out demands based on

what workers actually need and want, not what management and the UAW bureaucrats say is “realistic,” i.e., based on the profit requirements of wealthy stockholders.

As one Detroit Axle worker told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “We are fighting for equal pay and benefits. The starting pay is \$15.50. There is no way we can live on that. People at McDonald’s make that, it is ridiculous. We don’t even get profit sharing. They don’t want to pay the workers. We do exactly the same work as at the Big Three.

“The Diesel workers voted down their contract the last time and then they brought it back again and they had only changed one thing,” he said.

The rank-and-file committee should spearhead a fight for the broadest mobilization of the working class behind all-out strike action. This includes joint action by engine, axle and transmission workers at the Detroit Manufacturing Plant, and other sections of Daimler Trucks workers and autoworkers at the Detroit Big Three. An appeal should be made to Daimler workers in Europe who also face massive job cuts.

No contract should be ratified that does not meet workers basic needs.

This should include:

- No contract extension. A strike vote means strike.
- An immediate \$10 an hour across the board pay increase
- Fully indexed cost-of-living raises
- Restoration of pensions
- Eliminate the divisive two-tier wage structure and temp work
- No layoffs. Secure real job security

To carry forward the fight for these demands workers must enforce rank-and-file oversight over contract talks and ratification votes.

Workers are in a powerful position to win their demands. The Detroit Manufacturing Plant builds 400 engines, 250 transmissions and 1,300 axles every day for Freightliner, Western Star and Thomas Built Buses.

The fight by Daimler Truck axle workers is part of a growing wave of resistance by workers in the United States and around the world. This has included a strike last fall by 33,000 Boeing aircraft machinists, a strike by tens of thousands of East and Gulf Coast dockworkers, and the walkout by 30,000 Canada Post workers.

Last week, the largest healthcare strike in Oregon history began when 5,000 nurses, doctors and midwives walked out at Providence hospitals.

Workers don’t just face a fight against one transnational company but against the two big business parties as well. With the inauguration of the aspiring dictator Donald Trump next week, the attacks on workers will intensify even further. Trump has pledged to act as dictator from day one, tearing

up health, safety and environmental regulations and carrying out mass illegal deportations and detentions of immigrant workers and their families, along with the suspension of birthright citizenship guaranteed under the US Constitution.

The Democratic Party has offered Trump full cooperation on his anti-democratic immigration policy, along with his expansion of wars in the Middle East and elsewhere.

After stumping for Harris and the Democrats, Fain is now pledging to work with Trump on imposing tariffs aimed at stoking up conflicts with China, Mexico and even traditional US allies such as Canada.

But it is impossible to fight transnational corporations such as Daimler, General Motors, Stellantis or Ford, without unifying autoworkers across national borders in a common fight to defend the jobs, living standards and working conditions of all workers.

Low wages and job insecurity are not the fault of immigrant workers or workers in other countries but of the capitalist system and the drive by multi-billion-dollar corporations to lower labor costs and maximize profits.

The Daimler Trucks axle workers’ fight should be the starting point for a counter-offensive by autoworkers to reverse the string of sellout contracts and win substantial wage increases and real job security. This requires that workers organize independently of the pro-corporate UAW apparatus and establish real rank-and-file control over their struggle.

There is no time to lose. Join the fight to build rank-and-file power by filling out the form below.



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