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USA

Week Three—The UAW Strike Expands Again

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SEPTEMBER 29 — AT his Friday morning UAW negotiations update, president Shawn Fain surprisingly announced that at the last minute Stellantis had submitted a proposal to restore a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), impose a moratorium on outsourcing, and recognize the right to strike over product commitments and plant closures.

Compared to Stellantis' previous position of demanding the right to close up to 18 plants, this marked a step forward.

At the same time, negotiations with Ford and GM were proceeding slowly. This too was a surprise. Many labor analysts had been predicting that the UAW and Ford were close to a tentative agreement after the breakthrough negotiations with Ford the previous week.

On September 22 Fain had announced Ford had agreed to reinstate COLA, move all current temporary workers to permanent status after 90 working days, eliminate the lower tier at parts distribution sites and offer a two-year job security package for laid-off workers. However, Fain stated, there was more to negotiate – but perhaps Ford management thought they were done.

The 10:00 am UAW update was delayed by half an hour while the negotiating team looked over the Stellantis proposal and the decision made to pause on Stellantis workers walking. Instead, the strike has expanded to Ford's Chicago assembly plant and GM's Delta Township assembly plant in Lansing, Michigan.

This brings the total number of strikers to 25,000, one-sixth of the total number of UAW autoworkers at the Detroit Three. The strategy of taking on all three corporations and expanding the strike depending on the state of the negotiations is distinctly different from the old-time strategy of targeting only one corporation.

Inviting the community to join the picket lines, Fain emphasized how the unity of workers pressures all three corporations. From the UAW's negotiating standpoint, each corporation can't sit back after making progress at the negotiation table one week but rather will be judged by how well they continue to do the following week – as Ford just discovered.

For the 125,000 UAW members still at work, they too are part of the Stand Up strategy. They wear red to work on Wednesdays, talk about the negotiations with others on the job and monitor supervisors, who are not allowed to change rules given that the contract is expired.

This means that workers can refuse all voluntary overtime but also that they can perform their job as the instructions explicitly require, and nothing more. They are learning how to “work to rule,” which means maintaining one's pace and providing no solutions to the everyday problems that develop.

Fain denounced violent incidents over the past week in Michigan, Massachusetts and California where strikers were attacked by vehicles or threatened with guns.

Perhaps the most serious incident occurred on September 26, when five strikers were hit by a car leaving GM's distribution center parking lot in Swartz Creek, Michigan and two were taken to the hospital. (The driver and two passengers were later identified as janitors from a contracted company; GM later banned them from their facilities.)

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In response to some commentators who assert that strikes hurt everyone – workers, corporations and consumers alike — Fain asserted that “a union that’s not prepared to strike to win is like a fighter with one hand tied behind his back. Without the strike weapon, the war on workers is a rigged fight.”

Fain notes that solidarity is what makes unions powerful. He pointed out that power was what brought President Joe Biden to the picket line and voice his support for the strikers’ demands. But it is not the power of the president – either of the United States or of the UAW – that will win a successful contract, but the power of ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

Confident that the Stand-Up strategy is working, Fain quoted Martin Luther King’s “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice” and concluded that it is the UAW family and supporters that are the force currently bending the arc.

To join a picket line at one of five assembly plants now on strike, or at one the 38 [distribution centers](#). Most are being picketed around the clock. Different locals are also organizing caravans to other work sites and you are welcome to join.

If there are no plants or distribution sites in your area, leaflet one of the Detroit Three dealerships. You can find [information](#) for the dos and don’ts for leafleting a dealership and a couple of leaflets to use.

Source: [Solidarity webzine](#).

PS:

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