

GM retiree denounces UAW “sham” vote to cut medical benefits

15 November 2005

Last week the United Auto Workers union bureaucracy pushed through an agreement allowing General Motors to cut billions of dollars in health care benefits for its 750,000 hourly employees, dependents, retirees and surviving spouses. In particular, former GM workers and their families will be forced to pay hundreds of dollars in new out-of-pocket expenses for premiums, deductibles, prescriptions and emergency room visits.

Fearing widespread opposition, the UAW leadership refused to allow retirees to vote on the deal. The company's 110,000 active workers voted between November 2 and 10, under the threat, widely reported in the media, that GM could declare bankruptcy in the next two years if it did not drastically reduce its “legacy” costs. Under these conditions 61 percent of those voting ratified the deal.

Anticipating a wave of lawsuits challenging the union's right to strip retirees of their medical benefits, the UAW filed a complaint in US District Court asking a federal judge to sanction the agreement. (See: “US auto union goes to court against its own members”)

The following letter was sent to the WSWS from a GM retiree condemning the deal.

Dear Editor,

Yesterday will go down as a day of infamy, when the UAW, the United Auto Workers union, sold out their retirees. UAW President Ron Gettelfinger and his gang of scoundrels on the UAW International Executive Board authorized a “sham” vote on contractually negotiated health care benefits without permitting us UAW retirees—who helped ratify these health benefits and agreements—the RIGHT to vote on these concessions.

Gettelfinger expects us retirees to pay out nearly \$800 more per year for health care. This is a de facto cut of our pensions by the same amount. This hurts all UAW

members but hurts the retirees the most.

In effect our so-called “Union Leader” Ron Gettelfinger did what Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush and the rest of the Neo-Cons have been trying to do for years: take away the voting power of the working class.

Retirees are not afraid of a struggle. We have struggled and sacrificed in the past to make a better life for our families and all Americans. We will continue to struggle for greater economic justice in the future.

It is just a shame that our so-called union leaders have so little trust in us retirees that they felt the need to strip us of our democratic right to vote on this important issue.

I got some news for them. We have not yet begun to fight!

JG

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