

General Motors worker: “The UAW doesn’t lose, but the workers do”

Our reporter
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Some media reports on Thursday expressed apprehension that as details of the UAW-General Motors contract become better known, momentum will grow among GM workers to reject the sell-out. This fear was doubtless a factor in the decline in GM share values on Wall Street on Thursday, after a sharp rise following the suppression of the strike on Wednesday.

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke with a long-time GM worker who expressed opposition to the contract. Lyle, a worker at the Saginaw Metal Casting plant, said, “I wouldn’t vote for this. Maybe the union thought that by striking for two days we would go for this contract. The guys are very dissatisfied. I can’t see the membership ratifying this.

“I’ve read the *Wall Street Journal* and they’re gloating over the agreement. They took away our cost-of-living allowance and all we’re going to get are lump-sum payments. We fought hard for COLA to help against inflation and the union just dropped it. Now rising costs are going to continue to gnaw away at our hourly wages.

“GM will no longer be obligated to pay retiree health benefits when they set up this VEBA fund. Look at the history of these trusts—they’ve failed. Does the UAW think it can invest the money better than GM, with all their financial consultants? In ten years’ time the trust will be screwed up and we’ll be losing our benefits.

“Gettelfinger said the job security in the contract was the main achievement. If that was the main thing, then we’re in bad shape. For the last thirty years the union has talked about job security guarantees. At the same time the UAW membership has fallen from 1.5 million to 500,000. Two-thirds of us are gone. Is that job security?

“I’m now working at my fourth GM plant. I worked at three different plants that closed—Fleetwood Body in

Detroit, Willow Run Assembly in Ypsilanti and Buick City in Flint. There were once 20,000 workers at Buick City before they all lost their jobs.

“That’s letting us go slowly under the guise of protecting us. This talk about job security—it’s lies, lies, lies.

“This contract doesn’t make sense for a worker who has been there a while or for the young workers who will be coming in at a reduced wage of \$12-\$15, instead of the current \$27 an hour. They say that the lower wages will be for ‘non-production-related’ jobs. But that could be anything.

“The company wanted to outsource a lot of these jobs, but instead, with the agreement, they can keep them in-house and pay the same rate as they would to someone on the outside. The only difference is the union keeps these workers as dues-paying members. The UAW doesn’t lose, but the workers do.

“We want the details; they haven’t released anything to the members yet. When they do, it will be full of lies. I’m anxious to look at it because it will be entertaining. You never get the truth from the UAW.”



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