

UAW holds sham “information” meetings to push Indianapolis GM wage cut

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The World Socialist Web Site encourages workers at the Indianapolis GM plant and all auto workers to write in with their thoughts and comments on this crucial struggle.

United Auto Workers officials held “information meetings” Monday inside the Indianapolis GM stamping plant as part of their campaign to impose a 50 percent wage cut over the opposition of the factory’s 650 workers.

Fearing a repeat of their previous meeting with workers—when UAW officials were shouted down and thrown out of a local union meeting on August 15—the union executives held the gathering inside the plant, under the gaze of management. Small groups of workers attended the meetings during their breaks, and were given only a few minutes to ask questions before being sent back to work.

The meetings were part of a weeklong offensive in which the UAW plans to send out, receive, and count mail-in ballots on its deal. The workers have already rejected the proposal twice, first in May, when they voted 384-22 against reopening the contract, and again in August, when they kicked out union officials from their local.

The UAW is supporting GM’s proposal to sell the plant to JD Norman, a corporate raider who is demanding wage reductions from \$29 an hour to as low as \$14 an hour as a precondition for buying the plant.

In the five weeks since workers ejected UAW representatives from their union hall, the UAW international president Bob King and his subordinates have conspired with GM and Norman to force a vote on the deal. Last week, the UAW announced it would conduct a vote by mail-in ballot, and that a “third party”—the American Arbitration Association—would count the ballots by September 27.

UAW officials said that they organized the vote in response to an outpouring of support by workers for the wage-cutting deal. “We were inundated with calls, letters, petitions, here and Detroit both, requesting to vote on the agreement,” UAW Region 3 Director Mo Davison told reporters without presenting any evidence. “And they wanted it done in privacy so they wouldn’t feel threatened or intimidated.” Davison said he would “respect” the outcome of the new vote.

The UAW has claimed that only a “vocal minority” opposes the vote, and that it is protecting the interests of the majority who want to vote to cut their own wages. However, this claim is made problematic by the fact that 95 percent of workers voted to bar the union from reopening the contract in March—a vote the UAW ignored.

The “informational” meetings were held under the pretense of answering workers’ questions about the proposal and voting procedure. Workers who spoke to the WSWS denounced the fraud. “If all the union members came together they would shout them down again. But it’s a lot tougher when it’s a few at a time,” one worker told the WSWS.

“When we asked questions, the union officials blew us off with roundabout answers and then shooed us out the door,” she said. “Now they can say that they had their meetings and workers were ‘informed’ before voting.”

Responding to outrage by members over the violation of their democratic rights, certain local officials have made a show of protesting the revote. Officials are planning a “Solidarity Vote” on Thursday, in which they will encourage workers to cast their votes in front of a video camera, before shipping them via certified mail to the American Arbitration Association.

These officials have encouraged the illusion that a

defeated contract will force the UAW to back down. In reality, the UAW, which owns 17.5 percent of the company, has a direct financial interest in imposing the wage cut. This in turn will be used as a precedent to further drive down the wages of auto workers throughout GM and the industry, a policy that the UAW has carried out in conjunction with the Obama administration.

In contrast to the passivity of the local officials, the Indianapolis GM Rank-and-File Committee, a group of workers inside the plant, issued a statement in response to the vote, calling the whole procedure a “fraud” and encouraging workers to organize independently of the UAW.

The statement said that the UAW decided to hold the meeting in the plant because the union leaders “want the protection of corporate management, which they loyally serve.”

The UAW “organized the meeting under the watchful eye of management, with the hope that this would silence opponents of the contract.” Moreover, the UAW is conducting a mail-in ballot to keep workers from gathering to express their opinions. “They want a mail-in vote because they know that if workers come together we will once again reject this deal.”

The committee condemned the attempt to make the process look impartial by enlisting a “third party” to count the votes, saying, “The claim that this is being overseen by an “impartial third party” is a fraud. The UAW and GM are in fact “one party”, and the agency they pick to carry out the vote will be on their side as well. Workers should place no confidence in the integrity of this vote!”

The statement concluded by encouraging workers to break with the UAW, and to form rank-and-file committees. “Even if the vote comes back “No”, the UAW will try to find some way to push it through anyway. This is why it is urgent that we the workers organize independently to carry out a struggle... The UAW, which was once an organization that defended workers has turned completely against us.

“The rank and file committee is fighting to break the isolation the UAW has imposed on us. We are reaching out to our brothers and sisters in Marion, Flint and other GM plants to organize a common fight. At the same time the committee is making an appeal to all working people in Indianapolis and across the country

to stand with us to defend jobs and living standards.

“We must learn to recognize our friends and enemies. Our enemies are not only GM management and JD Norman, but also the UAW executives who benefit from our impoverishment. The UAW is not ‘our’ organization; it is ‘their’ organization.”

“We as workers have to draw a line in the sand,” the statement concluded. “It is time for us to fight back. For too long, the companies have been able to get away with anything they want. For too long we have given back. For too long we have allowed ourselves to be duped by the UAW into accepting the demands of the corporate executives and Wall Street investors. Workers throughout the country are watching us, and we have to lead by example!”

[Click here to read the committee's full statement.](#)



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