

UAW to hold revote at Chrysler Dundee, Michigan engine plant

Shannon Jones
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The United Auto Workers says it will hold a revote on the same tentative local contract agreement at Chrysler's Dundee, Michigan engine plant that workers overwhelmingly rejected last month.

The announcement came during a special union meeting called by officials of UAW Local 723 to lobby for a revote. The vote will be held the first week in October.

Predictably, the UAW is threatening workers with the loss of their jobs unless they knuckle under to the demands of Chrysler. In an attempt to intimidate opposition, union officials are spreading word in the plant that Chrysler could move production out if workers continue their opposition to the sellout local agreement.

The Dundee plant is a key facility for Chrysler. It is the only factory in North America that produces four-cylinder engines for Chrysler vehicles, including the Dodge Dart and Fiat 500. The plant was previously a joint venture of Chrysler, Mitsubishi and Hyundai. Chrysler bought out the shares of Mitsubishi and Hyundai in 2009.

In rejecting the agreement, Dundee workers gave voice to the growing anger and opposition among auto workers to the attacks being carried out against them by the corporations, with the full support of the UAW. In the wake of the vote it is reported that Dundee workers have started a petition demanding the resignation of the bargaining committee members who negotiated the local contract.

The rejection of the local contract by Dundee workers caught the UAW by surprise. Following the rejection vote, the UAW called off a scheduled vote on a local agreement at the Jeep complex in Toledo, evidently afraid that Jeep workers would follow the example of Dundee workers and turn down the contract. For its

part, Chrysler has said it will not reopen talks with the UAW on the local agreement at the Dundee Engine Plant, insisting that the UAW force through ratification. The UAW accepted a no-strike clause as part of the national contract agreement.

The contract rejected by Dundee workers ignored their basic concerns. They are being forced to work shifts of up to 12 hours a day, seven days a week in disregard of restrictions in the national contract. Half the workers in the plant are younger workers hired in at the second tier near-poverty level wage rate. In addition to the second-tier workers, there are contract workers making as little as \$9 per hour but still forced to pay dues to the UAW.

The attempt by the UAW to force a revote at the Chrysler Dundee plant follows a long and disreputable pattern. In 2010, the UAW waged a campaign of intimidation in an attempt to force through a 50 percent wage cut at General Motors' Indianapolis stamping plant to pave the way for the sale of the factory to a financier. The same year, the UAW imposed a 50 percent pay cut on recalled workers at GM's Lake Orion assembly plant north of Detroit. Workers with less than 11 years seniority recalled to the plant were forced to hire in at the second-tier wage rate, at that time \$14.65 an hour.

Workers at the GM Indianapolis stamping plant set up a rank-and-file committee, with the assistance of the Socialist Equality Party, to fight against the threatened cuts and closure of the plant. The committee became a focal point of opposition to the attacks on jobs and living standards being carried out throughout the auto industry by the corporations and the Obama administration acting in concert with the UAW.

For Dundee Chrysler workers to wage a successful struggle requires that they recognize that in the UAW

they face an enemy as ruthless and implacable as the corporate bosses. The unions are part and parcel of an international offensive being waged by the corporate elite to drive the working class back to conditions not seen since the times of their grandfathers and great-grandfathers.

In the United States, the Obama administration insisted on the two-tier wage structure as part of the forced bankruptcy and reorganization of General Motors and Chrysler in 2009. Obama has boasted of his policy of “insourcing”—driving down US manufacturing costs to attract manufacturing jobs.

In Canada, the Canadian Auto Workers just forced through a sellout agreement at Ford calling for an expanded two-tier wage structure, cuts in pensions and the elimination of wage increases and the cost of living allowance. The union blackmailed workers into accepting the deal by warning that if it was rejected, Ford would shift production out of Canada.

Chrysler Chairman and CEO Sergio Marchionne has threatened workers in Italy that if they do not accept new production standards, he will close their factories and send their jobs to the United States.

Chrysler Dundee workers must break free from the UAW and build new organizations of struggle, rank-and-file committees that reject the subordination of the working class to the profit drive of the auto companies. They should broaden their scope, drawing in workers at the other auto companies as well as transplants and auto parts suppliers across the US and internationally.

At the same time, the struggle to defend the rights of auto workers is fundamentally a political struggle. The alliance of the UAW with the Democratic Party and the Obama administration has proved a disaster for the working class. Under the Obama administration the auto companies have intensified their attacks on jobs, wages and working conditions, insisting that American workers accept a permanent reduction in their standard of living.

The task facing the working class is to build a mass political party of its own, fighting for a socialist program. Economic life must be reorganized in the interests of the working class, the vast majority of society, not Wall Street. The banks and major corporations must become publicly run utilities under the democratic ownership and control of the working class.



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