

UAW calls off Jeep contract vote

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The United Auto Workers has cancelled a scheduled vote on a new local agreement at Chrysler's Jeep complex in Toledo, Ohio, fearing a possible rejection by rank-and-file workers.

UAW Local 12 officials abruptly called off the vote—originally scheduled for September 7—saying they needed more time to work out issues. Local agreements deal with plant specific issues such as work rules, grievances and working conditions.

The two assembly plants at the complex build the Jeep Wrangler and Jeep Liberty, employing about 1,750. In August Chrysler suspended production of the Liberty while it did retooling, temporarily laying off some 800 workers. The plant is scheduled to add a third shift next year.

The decision by the UAW to cancel the pending vote at the Jeep complex follows the overwhelming rejection by workers at Chrysler's Dundee, Michigan Engine Plant last month of their local contract agreement. The move by the UAW reflects concern workers at Jeep would follow the lead of Dundee workers.

The sellout negotiated by the UAW and voted down by workers at the Dundee plant ignored the basic concerns of workers who are being forced to work up to 7 days a week, 12 hours a day.

So far Local 12 officials have not indicated when a vote will be held. In the meantime Chrysler management has said it has no plans to reopen talks with the UAW over the Dundee contract, pointing to the no-strike clause agreed to by the UAW in the 2009 national contract.

Forced overtime is a major concern among the Jeep workers, many of whom are older. Workers are also angry about the widespread use of Temporary Part Time workers who earn substandard wages and receive reduced benefits while still paying dues to the UAW.

After having taken round after round of concessions there is a widespread feeling that now that the auto

companies are making enormous profits, it is time to regain lost ground.

In 2009, as part of the forced restructuring of Chrysler and General Motors by the Obama administration, the UAW agreed to an expansion of the number of second-tier workers making little more than half the wages of senior workers. The deal imposed a no-strike clause, a wage freeze and slashed vision and dental benefits for retirees.

In 2011 the UAW agreed to another concession-laden contract. The agreement imposed a wage freeze for four years and eliminated cost-of-living adjustments. It also imposed a competitive award scheme tying wages to corporate profits while expanding the number of two-tier workers making substandard wages and benefits.

The agreement also slashed the wages of Temporary Part-Time workers, who saw their pay reduced by \$5 or \$6 an hour to "entry level".

Further, in connection with the planned expansion of the Jeep complex, the UAW agreed to job, pay and work rule concessions while pledging increased productivity.

In addition to two tier and Temporary Part-Time workers there is a growing use of a "third tier" of contract workers in the auto plants who make as little as \$9 and have virtually no benefits, yet still must pay dues to the UAW.

The vote by Dundee workers to reject their local agreement and the opposition of Jeep workers reflects a growing mood of militancy in the working class, which is coming into conflict with the bureaucratic apparatuses of the official trade unions. It comes at the same time that teachers in Chicago have walked out on their first strike in 25 years.

There is a growing feeling that the UAW, which controls 55 percent of Chrysler stock through its Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association, is little more than an arm of corporate management. As one

Chrysler Dundee worker told the WSWS, “There is a big conflict of interest with the union owning stock. They are not representing our interests. They are representing their own interests.”

According to a survey conducted by the *Detroit Free Press*, not a single Chrysler assembly plant or major factory has reached a local agreement since the national contract was ratified last year. The local agreement at Jeep expired in November of 2011, but has been extended automatically until a new agreement is reached.



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