

UAW used threats to stop walkout at Detroit Fiat Chrysler plant

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Autoworkers at Fiat Chrysler's Warren Truck Assembly Plant in suburban Detroit have reported that local officials from the United Auto Workers used threats and intimidation to stop workers from walking out when the contract expired at midnight on Monday night.

Fearing that a strike at the strategic Detroit plant could trigger a wave of walkouts at Fiat Chrysler (FCA), GM and Ford factories across the country, the UAW acted as a labor police force for management to prevent workers from exercising their collective strength.

Throughout the day Monday, UAW officials maintained a blackout on any information. Then after the deadline passed at midnight, the UAW International issued a perfunctory post on its Facebook page announcing that the contract would be extended for 35,000 FCA workers on an "hour-by-hour basis."

By the end of the day Tuesday, the UAW announced it had reached a tentative deal with FCA. While concealing details from workers, both UAW President Dennis Williams and FCA boss Sergio Marchionne boasted that the deal would maintain the company's competitiveness and help reduce health care costs.

It is entirely possible that no settlement has in fact been reached. Given the rebellious mood of workers in the factories, the UAW may well have felt it necessary to say it had reached a deal to beat back the pressure of workers to strike.

Inside the factories as the clock ticked down to midnight Tuesday, there was widespread sentiment for a walkout, including from tens of thousands of younger workers determined to end their poverty "second-tier" wages. FCA workers, like their counter-parts at GM and Ford, voted by 98 percent for a strike to win improved pay after more than a decade of wage freezes.

Workers who ~~Woke~~ spoke with the ~~Social~~ Site said one or two dozen workers from the Trim Department punched out and left the plant when the contract expired. "A bunch of workers walked out at 12:01 and security locked them out," a senior worker said. "The UAW reps were hiding all day and there was no communication. We didn't see the UAW until 12:01. They went around threatening people if they walked out they would be fired. The UAW didn't represent us."

"I was there at 11:59 pm," another worker said. "The union officials drove by and didn't tell us anything. They said 'listen to the news to find out what is going to happen.' It's outrageous."

"If we stuck together and all walked out they would not have been able to stop us," another worker said referring to the UAW. "If that had happened workers all over the country would have joined us."

"We were supposed to go out last night. I want to strike for more wages," a second tier worker said.

Another worker explained the feelings of second-tier workers, "We do the same work and get paid half as much. One of the workers did the calculations. We slave away producing 650 trucks in a 10-hour shift and are paid about 25 cents per truck, many of which sell for \$50,000 each. We're pissed we didn't walk out. A lot of us are saying the UAW is on the other side."

A veteran worker said, "They're not telling us anything. I've been here through the 2007, 2009 and 2011 contracts and all the concessions. I knew when the UAW said it would fight for us in 2015 that it was a lie. The UAW wants to be a business. It is a business entity and thinks like a business entity."

At FCA's Toledo, Ohio Jeep factory workers were also ready to walk out. One worker explained, "The union issued a statement saying, 'Stay at your posts.'"

The time just ticked down, people were pissed. On the local web site, some guy speaking for the UAW hinted that anyone who even talked about a strike or spoke about the negotiations could get fired. It's like you have no freedom of speech.

“The UAW preached about solidarity and a possible strike, and then they do nothing. It's cowardice. We could have brought Chrysler to its knees in an hour. But Dennis Williams and (UAW vice president) Norwood Jewell don't care. What could happen if everybody, all 140,000 people walked out. What are they going to do, try to replace us all?”



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