

“The UAW is corporate now. They’re the police of the company.”

Autoworkers across the US outraged over UAW-Fiat Chrysler deal

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21 September 2015

The WSWS urges auto and other workers to sign up for the Autoworker Newsletter and leave your comments. Sign up for the Autoworker Newsletter Facebook page here.

As details emerge of the agreement made last week by Fiat Chrysler (FCA) and the United Auto Workers, workers across the country say the fact the union would even bring such a sellout before the membership is an insult to their intelligence.

“I want to know how much Dennis Williams got paid off,” one Toledo Chrysler worker told the *World Socialist Web Site*. “There is no way that a company and a union could come to an agreement that screws the workers more and favors the company less.”

Nearly every line of the agreement—from the health co-op to the fake raises to the profit-sharing bonus scheme—is either a giveaway to the company or a trick to secure the contract’s ratification. (See, “UAW ‘highlights’ of Fiat Chrysler deal expose corporate-union conspiracy against autoworkers”)

Workers denounced the UAW for doing nothing to eliminate the tiered wage system—a central demand of workers everywhere. The Toledo Chrysler worker said, “[FCA CEO] Sergio [Marchionne] was quoted as saying when contract talks started that he wants to eliminate two tiers. Well, he really did. It’s now a five-tier wage system,” with tier-two workers receiving different amounts at the end of the contract and no guarantee of future raises.

A Louisville Ford worker said, “I’ve seen the chart of incremental wage increases, and I don’t like that at all. It creates divisions of workers and it keeps the tiers, which I don’t like. We believe in equal work for equal pay, but that’s broken with the tiers.”

In the words of a Sterling Heights, Michigan Ford worker, “The contract is BS. The two-tier system was put into effect to get through the recession and give the company an upper hand on its rebound, and now here we are with billions in profits trying to implement a system with five different pay scales, which is nothing but segregation. It is the complete opposite of what it is supposed to be.”

Workers are not fooled by the UAW’s attempt to paint minuscule wage increases as a gain. Tier two workers will take eight years to reach a new pay cap of \$25.35—significantly less than what tier-one workers currently receive. Tier-one workers will receive small raises of less than a dollar per hour in the first and third year of the contract, while receiving lump sum payments equaling 4 percent of their prior year’s wages in years two and four.

“The wage issue is a joke,” said the Sterling Heights worker. “It’s an insult. To keep up with inflation and the cost of living the base wage should be at \$38.”

A tier-one Lima Engine worker in Ohio told the WSWS, “I’m not trying to be greedy or anything, but we put off a wage increase for 12 years in order for them to hire new people and we’ve taken all kinds of concessions. An 84-cent an hour increase? It’s a joke.”

The Ford Louisville worker expressed the same sentiment: “I don’t like the wage agreement whatsoever. If you factor in the cost of living increase it comes out to about a 43-cent raise over six years and that’s what gets me. They are insulting our intelligence by putting out these things. I don’t even know what to say. I’ll continue to vote ‘no.’ It’s hard enough to survive, and now they’re going to want to keep you working for six more years so they can continue to line their pockets?”

Workers are correct not to trust the tier-two wage

increases beyond the life of the contract. “Any contract that has your pay scale set to be completed after the term of the contract doesn’t count in my opinion,” the Toledo Chrysler worker said. “What happens in 2019? If we have a down year, they’ll say we need to take another pay cut. The plan is then gone. It’s garbage.”

Workers also attacked the UAW’s plan to take control of the workers’ health care plans in a giant co-op that the union will be able to manipulate at will.

“The UAW wants to have their hands in more money, and people aren’t happy,” said the Louisville Ford worker. “The working class is going to have this on their backs and the health care changes will keep laying them down more and more.”

A Marion, Indiana General Motors worker sarcastically said that the health care plan was “just swell.” He added: “The union has not been responsive in negotiating for its members. Having them in control of the health plan is really a disaster.”

The Sterling Heights worker added: “This is too much money and power in the hands of the UAW. They are looking at us like dollar signs, and it is unacceptable. The UAW is corporate now. They’re the police of the company.”

The Lima Engine worker said, “I am not comfortable with the union taking control of the health care because they’re in bed with management, so once they start managing the health co-op it’ll mean bigger and more comfortable offices for the union officers and bigger co-pays for the rest of us.”

A second Marion GM worker said, “The UAW says you’re getting a three percent pay raise but then they bump your co-pays high enough to eat up all your pay raise, so basically you’re giving your pay raise back to the union. The union can alter your benefit without appeal, and that’s a tremendously bad idea.”

Workers say the profit-sharing bonuses are also a scam and will begin to standardize unbearable speed-ups that cause injuries and fatigue on the line.

“When is enough enough with the speed-ups?” the second Marion worker said. “They pay us something meager and then they set these standards that create problems like with the ignition debacle at GM—if our pay is tied to that, we won’t be getting any pay bonuses through no fault of our own and that is not fair.”

The Toledo worker added, “We just hit record numbers on the Cherokee at 576 [a day]. The line is sped up. They want us to stay an hour over, work through breaks, and come in earlier. They even took our Saturday family day

away because they scheduled an audit at the same time.”

As workers begin to pore over the contract, more and more unacceptable details are emerging. There is no cost of living adjustment included in the agreement, nor is there any fundamental change to the Alternative Work Schedule, which includes grueling 12-hour days. Temporary part-time workers will not receive a signing bonus (in the words of one worker, “the union says, ‘be happy you have a job’”). The cap of 25 percent for new hire wages that was included in 2009 contract—which has been repeatedly violated with impunity—will not be honored.

Adding insult to injury, the contract stipulates that the UAW will work with management to fire workers who are absent or tardy a certain number of times (another worker called it “mind blowing”). Further, it insultingly gives retirees nothing but a \$1,000 voucher to purchase a Chrysler vehicle.

The deal with FCA is further confirmation that the UAW is not a workers organization, but is in bed with management. It functions as a labor police force and health insurance provider, tasked with enforcing concessions on a hostile workforce. The WSWS urges workers to break the stranglehold of the UAW and form their own rank-and-file organizations to wage a real struggle against the companies.

The Sterling Heights worker said, “The rank-and-file committee is how it all begins. Every single person that I work with I forward the newsletter to, and I send every article that comes up. Every single day I’m trying to bring people into it.”

In the words of the Lima Engine worker, “We need to get the Autoworker Newsletter out to everybody and have meetings wherever we can without the union involved to let as many people know as possible what they’re trying to shove down our throats.”



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