

Third tier created for Mopar workers, axle operators in UAW-Fiat Chrysler deal

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23 September 2015

Voting began today for Mopar workers in Centerline, Michigan, amidst revelations that the new contract agreed between the United Auto Workers and Fiat Chrysler (FCA) would create a third tier for Mopar workers and axle operations employees.

Buried on pages 255-257 of the full contract, and not included in the UAW's "highlights," are the wage rates for these workers. "In-progression" Mopar workers (those hired after October 29, 2007) will have a cap of \$22 an hour, more than \$3 an hour less than the \$25.35 cap on second-tier workers elsewhere in Chrysler. The pay for second-tier axle operators will be capped at \$22.35 an hour.

These workers have effectively been established as a third and fourth tier within FCA, which owns Mopar, a parts distributor.

With the lower cap, Mopar and axle operators with four or more years on the job will see an effective pay freeze for much or all of the four-year contract, with Mopar workers receiving a lump sum payment instead.

The reports add to concerns among workers that the UAW-FCA agreement not only fails to end the hated two-tier system, it creates multiple tiers, pitting workers against each other and creating the conditions to reduce wages even further in the future. Among tier-two workers overall, those with less seniority will only reach \$22, \$23 or \$24 an hour by the end of the four-year contract, with no guarantee of future raises.

The *Detroit News* reported that UAW President Dennis Williams sought to justify the lower pay for Mopar and axle operators by proclaiming that the lower rate is not another tier because "there's a path" to get to higher wages. "They're not stuck. They're not dead end." This is simply sophistry aimed at rationalizing the lower wage rate.

Prior to the announcement of the UAW-FCA deal last

week, there were reports that the UAW was preparing to agree to a tier of "sub-assembly" workers at GM and Ford who would make even lower pay.

The latest revelations come as the UAW is seeking to push through the deal as rapidly as possible, leaving workers no time to study the contract or discuss its implications. Voting began at Warren Truck on Tuesday and will continue at other plants throughout the country into early next week.

Many autoworkers raised concerns about the possibility of ballot stuffing or other vote fraud on the part of the UAW. Workers at Mopar are reporting that there are no numbers on the ballots that they began using today. One worker noted, "There are 700 workers at Mopar in Centerline, and if there are only 400 votes, this gives the UAW the ability to add 300 additional 'yes' votes."

He also noted that the vote is being held at the plant, and according to company policy this means that workers cannot take photographs to prove how they voted.

"It shouldn't even have been on site," another Mopar worker with thirty years experience said. He noted that the UAW is "giving information and highlights in the same place as they are voting. Aren't there supposed to be procedures for elections to make sure they are fair?"

The worker reported that representatives of the UAW International were present at the plant, and that they had instructed workers not to take any picture of their ballots.

"People in there are totally disgusted," he said. On the need for new organizations, formed independently of the UAW, he said: "absolutely." He added, "After they go after auto workers, the teachers and other workers will be next. That's how it always is."



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