

“Workers are beginning to see through the lies”

Autoworkers hail “no” vote at Fiat Chrysler

Our reporters
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Autoworkers from around the country have hailed the “no” vote on the United Auto Workers-Fiat Chrysler deal. Votes at the last two major assembly plants took place on Wednesday, with results in Belvidere, Illinois adding to the long list of locals voting overwhelmingly against the agreement pushed by the UAW.

“I am elated that the contract was voted down because it means workers are beginning to recognize the handwriting on the wall,” a Fiat Chrysler (FCA) Jefferson North Assembly Plant worker told the WSW.

“What they were offered anyway was not really a raise. Now they are talking about performance-based increases, something very different that what we used to know as an annual pay increase. You also have the insurance co-op which will be separate, and the UAW will be getting a lot of income.”

“What I am most encouraged about is the fact that workers are beginning to see through the lies. They took the time to review the summary and some of us actually read the contract. The agreement the UAW negotiated exposes it for what it is, a business and corporation that is more corporate than Fiat Chrysler.”

The worker praised the role of the WSW Autoworker Newsletter: “You did a great job in disseminating your material to workers at the plant and keeping them informed.”

A worker at a GM parts facility in Colorado said, “Fiat Chrysler autoworkers without a doubt made the right vote.”

There are discussions within the UAW about possibly extending the contract at FCA while shifting focus to Ford or GM. “I don’t think anyone in Ford or GM should vote ‘yes’ on anything if they did not pass an agreement at Chrysler,” the GM worker said.

“Workers right now have the momentum. They hold

the court, not the corporations or the union. The people do. When you have stuff like that thrown on you, on top of the stuff that was supposed to be done that wasn’t done... I think it was long in the making. The anger was building up.

“You guys have played a crucial role, not only for the auto workers, for the entire United States,” he said of the WSW Autoworker Newsletter. “I believe that contract, if it was passed, would have the same ripple effect as early contracts, setting the stage for a new attack on the middle class.

“If you guys did not play the role you played, it would have passed.” The WSW Autoworker Newsletter “played a huge role in getting people educated, getting the message out. If you did nothing, I believe it would have passed.”

On the possibility of a limited strike called by the UAW, the worker said, “They are going to do little stuff like that to cover their ps and qs. But they don’t want to let go of any of that money [in the strike fund]. They are doing things with that money that they shouldn’t be doing, rather than using it for what they should be doing.”

A worker at Warren Truck, the only major assembly plant to report a “yes” vote, said, “I’m pretty sure the vote was rigged. The international had a big presence at the plant. The local president is on the bargaining committee, so it would be a good thing for him if the deal passed.

Another Warren Truck worker said, “The ‘yes’ vote came as quite a shocker. I voted when the ballots were supposedly good, so I didn’t revote,” referring to the fact that early ballots included a mistake, resulting in invalidation and a partial revote. “I agree that it is rigged.”

“I know [Michigan is] a right-to-work state, but if

they're getting control of our [health care] benefits then it doesn't matter if we don't want to be a part of the UAW. They'll still control our benefits and they'll just be able to do whatever they want.

He added, "You guys do an absolutely great job with the Newsletter. I wouldn't get the information if you were not putting it out. I think from what I've seen that building rank-and-file committees is the way we have got to go. Things have gotten really bad for workers.

"I'm with you guys 100 percent of the time, and I don't care what it takes. If I stay with this company, which I plan to do, I think, what kind of conditions would I want my kids to work under? Even if I have to live out on the streets, I'm willing to do it."

Another Jefferson North worker said, "There are two things that can be done, either they go back and negotiate or we go out on strike. Personally, I do not think the UAW will fight. The president Dennis Williams is in this for himself and not the members. They denounced the Autoworker Newsletter because you have exposed them."

"I am very disappointed with what the UAW negotiated and opposed it," a third Jefferson worker said. "It can never be overstated that having a two-tier wage system has killed morale throughout the plant. You have people making all different wages while they are doing the same exact job.

"Instead of getting equal pay across the board, the UAW is working with the company to set up different tiers and lower wages for the workers who remain. Having the different tiers creates terrible tensions among the workers and is not at all fair.

"Many workers at the plant are talking about opting out of the UAW. What is the point of paying dues to people who do not represent you? My parents strongly believed in the unions and taught us to do the same, but these organizations have changed over time.

"I live on the WSWs web site and get the newsletter on my phone to keep me informed about what is going on. This is a great source of information."

"With the recent media attention, there is no way they could force this through knowing that the workers don't want it," a worker at the FCA Toledo Jeep plant said.

"At Jefferson North, they are starting to crack the whip," he said, referring to reports that the company will begin increasing punishment for supposedly failing

to meet work standards. "Warren Truck was threatened with the loss of vehicles if they didn't vote 'yes.' We better be prepared to do the right thing now."

He added that if there was a contract that eliminated tiers, it could pass. Asked if he thought the UAW would bring back such a deal, he said, "Hell no. I can't feel strongly enough that they are going to screw us again. I would like to think that they got the message, but I'm not going to hold my breath."

The Toledo worker spoke about the impact of social media, which has been denounced by the UAW for its role in helping spread "misinformation."

"We now have the ability to instantly communicate. I can call any of 25 people that I have talked to at Ford and GM. Workers in California, Georgia, Kentucky, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana. I can message them on Facebook, send text messages, phone calls. We are communicating.

"We are talking amongst ourselves, going beyond Fiat Chrysler. If a contract goes through here, Ford and GM will be just as screwed. We are getting a lot of support from Ford and GM workers.

About the announcement from UAW Vice President Jimmy Settles that the UAW might strike a single Ford plant in Kansas City, he said, "It looks like a lot of smoke. What he is doing is great for PR. It is great for morale. Ford workers are seeing the crap that we went through. The UAW wants to relieve it. If they offered them a contract, they would just say 'no'. What he is doing now is trying to save face: 'I'm going to posture a bit.' That is what I think Settles is trying to do."



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