

After the “no” vote: The way forward for autoworkers

2 October 2015

The *World Socialist Web Site* and the *Autoworker Newsletter* congratulate Chrysler workers for courageously rejecting the UAW and Fiat Chrysler sellout agreement.

For the first time in decades, autoworkers have seized the momentum in their struggle against the corporate-UAW alliance and must not give it up. This poses a question that thousands of autoworkers are asking: What next?

The auto executives and UAW officials are nervously asking themselves the same question. The corporations, the UAW and the whole political establishment are preparing a strategy to stamp out the growing rebellion of the rank and file at whatever the cost.

Fiat Chrysler issued a statement yesterday afternoon noting the company’s “disappointment” with the rejection. The statement indicates that the company is preparing for a long battle: “We will make decisions, as always, based on achieving our industrial objectives.”

Autoworkers know that the company has only one objective: to profit as much as possible through the exploitation of their labor. For its part, the UAW’s objective is to help the company achieve its objective by ramming sellout contracts down workers’ throats.

As a result, autoworkers need organizations of their own that will defend and advance their interests as a class. The workers themselves must take the initiative to form rank-and-file committees of the working class by calling meetings and electing the most militant and self-sacrificing workers from the shop floor to take leading roles.

The first step of the rank-and-file committees elected at plants across the country will be to lift the UAW-corporate information blackout by linking up with one another to form a vast workers’ network for the rapid dissemination of vital information so that all autoworkers are fully informed about events as they

happen. Lines of communication must be opened up.

The rank-and-file committees will seek to unite workers on the basis of a series of demands, including:

1. Immediate end to secret negotiations

Workers have the right to know what is taking place in the negotiations on a day-by-day and hour-by-hour basis. A public viewing area should be set up in the negotiation room, and all meetings between the UAW and the corporations should be live-streamed on the Internet for all autoworkers to see.

2. Workers must set the schedule for ratification votes

It is not possible to read through several hundreds of pages of material in a matter of days. Workers must have at least two weeks to read, study and discuss any contract before voting.

3. Workers must monitor all vote counting

After allegations of vote rigging in some plants, workers cannot trust the UAW to conduct a fair and impartial vote count. The only reason why the UAW would not allow workers to monitor the vote count is if they were preparing to cheat.

4. Workers control over use of the strike fund

Since workers’ dues money built the strike fund, workers have every right to decide how the funds are to be used.

5. A contract that includes:

- immediate abolition of all tiers
- abolition of Alternative Work Schedule
- a 30 percent wage increase and restoration of COLA
- guaranteed healthcare
- restoration of guaranteed pension

Autoworkers can strengthen their position only by making these demands known to all autoworkers and to the autoworkers’ powerful ally: the working class of the world.

Autoworkers’ friends, relatives and coworkers in all

industries around the world face similar struggles against profit-hungry corporations and politically bankrupt unions in their places of work. As a result, they have every interest in defending the autoworkers in their fight against the Big Three auto corporations. The rank-and-file committees will organize delegations of workers to canvass local neighborhoods, factories, and workplaces.

The rank-and-file committees can build support for the autoworkers' struggle by educating the working class about the autoworkers' fight. By publicizing the truth about their struggle, autoworkers can counter the propaganda lies of the corporate press, which attacks them as "greedy" and "misinformed." The workers can harness the power of social media platforms like Facebook to break the news monopoly of the corporations and the UAW.

The auto companies, the corporate press and the UAW assert that autoworkers must take concessions because the corporations have the "right" to higher profits. In fact, the whole political establishment—from the local police up to the Obama administration and the Democratic and Republican parties—is set up to protect this so-called "right."

Under capitalism, the corporate drive for profit comes into conflict with the social rights of the working class to housing, healthcare, education, workplace safety, and access to transportation and culture, among others. Under capitalism, the needs of the vast majority of the population are subordinate to the interests of capital.

The Socialist Equality Party and the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* advance the call for rank-and-file factory committees as part of the fight to organize the working class, independently of the trade unions and the entire political system, which seek to subordinate workers to the demands of the corporations and the capitalist profit system as a whole.

Autoworkers: if you agree with these demands, the time has come to join the fight to establish rank-and-file committees in your workplace. With the "no" vote, the Chrysler workers seized the initiative, but the task now is to move it forward. A "wait-and-see" approach would be catastrophic. There is no time to lose.

Sign up today to join or start a rank-and-file committee and become an active partisan of the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* in your workplace.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact