

UAW announces last-minute agreement with Fiat Chrysler, canceling strike

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The United Auto Workers announced late Wednesday night that it has reached a new tentative agreement with Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) and immediately called off any strike action. Workers were informed just minutes before a midnight deadline, announced by the UAW on Tuesday.

The UAW Council, consisting of union representatives at FCA locals throughout the country, will meet in Detroit on Friday morning to ratify the agreement. The deal would then be sent out to locals for a membership vote.

Even before details of the deal are released, there can be no question that it is a complete sellout, with only the most minor modifications to the contract that was overwhelmingly rejected by FCA workers last week. Both FCA CEO Sergio Marchionne and UAW President Dennis Williams made clear following the landslide “no” vote that there was no better offer on the table. Williams and the UAW have now been given their marching orders from the FCA: push the contract through this time, using whatever means necessary.

The UAW’s “strike notice,” announced on Tuesday, was intended from the beginning as a cynical maneuver aimed at regaining control of the situation after the 65 percent rejection of the initial agreement, announced in mid-September. Stunned by the response of workers, which it neither foresaw nor desired, the UAW scrambled to find some way of overcoming this opposition.

The UAW will now marshal every possible tool at its disposal to push through the agreement as rapidly as possible, including lies, threats, redbaiting and intimidation. Nothing said about the deal by the UAW or the corporate-controlled media can be taken as good coin. The UAW is waging psychological warfare against autoworkers, attempting to confuse and wear

them down.

Reaction from workers on Facebook was quick and generally angry. “Sounds like another s**t deal on the horizon!” one worker wrote. Others commented: “I’m sure it’s the same deal”; “I can’t wait to see this bulls**t”; “I just read that it could possibly be the same agreement just worded differently.”

Responding to a post on the UAW Chrysler Talks Facebook page, proclaiming that the bargaining committee had “secured significant gains” in the agreement, one worker wrote: “I think the words ‘significant gains’ were used on the 1st Tentative Agreement they gave us ...”

Similar comments appeared on the UAW International Facebook page. “Odds are whatever they offered tonight still isn’t enough just another last minute effort to prevent a work stoppage,” one worker wrote. “I smell [the] same deal...reworded,” wrote another. “They don’t want a strike. That’s all there is too it.”

In the days following Tuesday’s “strike notice,” the UAW has continued its policy of telling workers nothing. In a Facebook post on Wednesday evening, the UAW International wrote: “Negotiators also keep bargaining deals close so that rumors don’t spread in the worksite (where supervisors also work!) and sensitive strategies remain protected to get the best tentative agreement for members.”

The argument that keeping workers in the dark is necessary in order to prevent information from going to supervisors is absurd, since the company already has access to everything going on in negotiations. The conspiracy of silence is aimed at only one party: the autoworkers themselves.

This post came only two days after UAW Vice President Norwood Jewell released a statement,

implored workers to get their information only from the UAW itself. “I would like to ask you, the membership, to get the facts from your elected leadership, at the website UAW.org, or at our International UAW Facebook page.”

From the beginning of the contract discussions, the UAW has continued to play the role of a labor police force for the companies. It is a union in name only, and is in fact thoroughly integrated into the structures of corporate management. The UAW functions as a business in its own right, whose sole interest is defending the salaries of its executives while suppressing the resistance of the working class.

Throughout its discussions with FCA, the UAW did not engage in any negotiations in the conventional sense of the term. In the months preceding the expiration of the contract, the UAW issued no demands, did not pick a strike target or make any preparation for a national strike.

UAW President Dennis Williams reported a tentative agreement with FCA, at a joint press conference September 15 with Marchionne, only a day after announcing that FCA was the target company in negotiations with the Big Three auto companies. Marchionne and his lawyers wrote the contract and told the UAW to sell it.

The UAW thought it could ram through the contract based on phony “highlights” and the campaign of corporate media lies about workers winning “loads of money.” But one thing got in the way: a well-informed and militant workforce determined to recoup losses from years of UAW-backed concessions.

Workers broke through the UAW’s monopoly over information with Facebook and other social media, exchanging information from the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* and other sources. They reacted angrily to the contract’s deepening of the two-tier wage system, its attack on health care for current workers and other measures.

The “no” vote was followed by a wave of denunciations of “social media,” by which the UAW and the media meant the ability of workers to share information and discuss the contract independently. Referring in particular to the *Autoworker Newsletter*, Williams denounced “outside groups” that “stir people up” for its failure to get the agreement passed.

New negotiations were announced, again without any

demands being presented.

If the UAW had called a strike, it would have been with the intention of isolating and wearing down opposition. Over the past two days, it told workers that strikers would be paid only \$200 a week in pay from the UAW’s \$600 million strike fund. The UAW evidently decided, however, that even a limited strike action could get out of its control and develop into a broader struggle of autoworkers against FCA and the Big Three.

Now that a new agreement has been proclaimed, the UAW will attempt a repeat performance, hoping that by rearranging some paragraphs, making minor modifications or adding to the signing bonus, it can successfully push through an agreement. This will no doubt be supplemented with jobs threats to blackmail workers.

This backstabbing by this utterly hostile organization must be defeated. The powerful opposition to the sellout agreement disrupted the initial game plan of the UAW. The momentum and vigilance of workers must be taken to the next stage through the organization of rank-and-file factory committees in every plant, to deepen the connection between different sections of FCA workers, establish lines of communication with GM and Ford workers and prepare a serious struggle against the auto companies and its agents in the UAW.



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