

“The UAW is using smoke and mirrors to get this contract signed”

Fiat Chrysler workers denounce second sellout, demand united fight

Our reporters
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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.

In the aftermath of last week’s overwhelming “no” vote from Fiat Chrysler workers, the UAW and FCA are conspiring to force through another sellout deal. This is the essence of the tentative agreement reached late Wednesday night.

The UAW is keeping details of the agreement secret from the membership, but what workers have seen, they don’t like. Although the UAW claims the deal includes “substantial gains,” an inside leak to *Bloomberg Business* reveals the deal would take second tier workers up to \$29 an hour after eight years—double the length of the contract.

Even if this occurred, and there is no guarantee it would not be scrapped due to “economic reasons” in four years, the proposal still leaves in place the hated two-tier wage and benefit system. It still meets the goal of FCA CEO Sergio Marchionne and the other auto bosses of establishing a permanently lower pay scale in the industry once higher paid older workers retire or are forced out.

In any case, whatever meager wage improvements or higher signing bonuses are offered will be more than chewed up by increases in out-of-pocket health care costs—imposed by a new UAW-run health “co-op”—the continued elimination of cost of living and stagnation in real wages contained in the contract, and the maintenance of grueling work schedules and speed up.

“All I know about it is \$29 in eight years. Screw that. The UAW is BS,” one FCA worker in Tipton, Indiana told the *World Socialist Web Site*. A worker from

Sterling Heights said, “\$29 for 2 tier? BS. After eight years, that’s probably how long Chrysler needs to move to Mexico. There are also many tiers still left.”

The second proposed agreement comes after the UAW’s most recent maneuvers aimed at strangling widespread opposition to 35 years of UAW-corporate attacks. The UAW cynically threatened a strike only to announce a “last minute” deal as the midnight deadline passed Thursday morning.

“It’s all about manipulating things for their gains and to use smoke and mirrors to get people to sign this contract,” a second tier worker at Detroit’s Jefferson North Assembly Plant said.

In the words of one Warren Truck worker in suburban Detroit, “That was really some nice theater the union had last night.” A second Warren Truck worker said, “I knew they weren’t going to call a strike. I think the contract is going to be the same deal just worded differently.” Another added: “I trust the UAW about as far as I can throw [former professional basketball player] Shaquille O’Neil with my arms tied behind my back.”

Workers also know they can’t trust anything that goes beyond the life of the contract. “It’s ridiculous,” said the Jefferson North worker. “It is pretty much assured that we will never make \$29. Eight years is a long time away and they could come back and say ‘we can’t pay you.’ They promised four years ago to restore the cap on second tier workers and that thousands of us would be transferred into the first tier. That never happened. The UAW and the company never keep their word, so why would they now?”

“The UAW never does anything right,” said a fourth worker at Warren Truck. “They’re tied in with the

company. They're in the back pockets of the corporations. The corporation knows it and loves it."

A Kokomo Transmission worker in Indiana added, "The UAW is no longer in our interest. They do whatever the hell they want. If this contract doesn't go through this time I think the UAW will just pass it anyway. It's fishy what they did to the John Deere workers. Why are they being so secretive about these votes? There should be no secrecy."

Workers want to wage a real fight against the company, but the UAW is holding them back. On the one hand, the UAW keeps workers completely in the dark. On the other, they propose sellout after sellout in an effort to convince workers there is no hope for a better contract. In effect, the UAW is telling workers that they might as well give up, since nothing they do will bring them a better deal.

Nothing could be further from the truth. A united struggle of the autoworkers across all three companies would deliver a powerful blow to the companies and the Wall Street investors behind them.

In the words of the Jefferson worker, "We could win everything we asked for if we hold out longer and possibly strike to get more. People are tired and fed up. We recognize the union is not for us. The UAW is for themselves and management, not for workers. The respect the UAW once had is long gone. You can see right through it."

Workers are ready for a fight.

"Wednesday night, everybody was ready to go to work, bags packed," said one Warren Truck worker. "At midnight, I threw my hands up, like, 'what's the deal?' and the steward said there was an agreement and we're not going anywhere. Everyone was pissed and pretty bummed out. We were ready to go!"

It isn't a question of "if" workers fight, it's a question of "how" workers fight.

The initiative workers took in building opposition to the first deal should be taken to the next stage through the organization of rank-and-file committees, made up of the most militant and self-sacrificing workers in every factory, to take the conduct of the struggle out of the hands of the UAW. The committees should unify FCA, GM and Ford workers and fight for the broadest support from workers in the US and in Mexico, Canada and internationally.

The Kokomo Transmission Plant worker said, "I'm

really starting to believe we need rank-and-file committees. We're smart enough to understand the UAW isn't fighting for us. Right now there's nothing we can do with the union."

The Jefferson worker said, "If it wasn't for the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* a lot of people wouldn't have rejected the deal. The *Newsletter* was instrumental and vocal in supporting us and giving us the knowledge we needed. We didn't have information and the *Newsletter* told the truth."



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