

“The union uses scare tactics to threaten workers”

## Fiat Chrysler workers denounce sell-out contract ahead of second vote

Our reporters  
20 October 2015

Fiat Chrysler workers in the US are scheduled to vote today and tomorrow on a pro-company contract backed by the United Auto Workers. The vote comes less than three weeks after workers resoundingly defeated the first contract by a two-to-one margin.

Following the “no” vote, the UAW and FCA made slight modifications to the initial deal, increasing signing bonuses and changing the pay schedule for second-tier workers. Any increases in labor costs have been balanced by cuts elsewhere, including an agreement from the UAW—not included in the self-serving “highlights” distributed by the union—to double the percentage of “temporary” workers from 4 to 8 percent.

The main aims of the contract are the same, including a permanent reduction in base pay and benefits by maintaining and expanding the two-tier system. Second-tier workers will have to wait eight years before reaching \$29 an hour—beyond the life of the four-year agreement—while there will be no change in their substandard health care and pension benefits. The contract gives first-tier workers, who have suffered more than a decade without a pay raise, miserly increases that do not keep up with inflation.

Behind the scenes, the UAW and FCA are preparing to implement significant cuts in health care benefits across the board, while FCA CEO Sergio Marchionne is enlisting the union in a plan to restructure the company, laying off higher-paid workers to be replaced by temporary and second-tier workers. (See, “New details from FCA-UAW contract reveal plan to create casual labor workforce”)

The UAW has responded to the “no” vote through a combination of threats, marketing and red-baiting

attacks directed at the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*, which has won a widespread following among workers. It hired New York-based PR firm BerlinRosen to engineer a social media campaign to spin a web of lies about what is in the deal.

The UAW is determined to get a “yes” vote by whatever means are at its disposal.

A worker at the FCA Warren Stamping plant in Metro Detroit called the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* to complain of non-standard procedures in the voting schedule and warn of a possible rigging of the ballot. “They are voting tomorrow [October 20] and then again the next day. Voting cuts off at 6:00 pm and then resumes again at 5:00 am. I don’t know who is supposed to watch the ballots between the two days. We are supposed to have continuous voting. I have never heard of a situation where there is a break.

“The contract got voted down before,” he added. “The local UAW officials didn’t know how to make up the percentages for the last vote, so they called up someone who works at the plant.

“When the current president was running for office, they had electronic ballots,” he added, noting that there was no electronic voting system for the contract. “They didn’t let TPTs [temporary part-time workers] vote last time, but this time they are saying they can.

“Local officials are telling people to vote ‘yes’, threatening people who say ‘no’. The appointed people [people on the local union committee chosen by the leadership], like the people on benefits and safety [committees], they are telling people to vote ‘yes.’

“I am voting ‘no,’ and a lot of others are voting ‘no.’ I never thought there should be a two-tier system. They are giving tier-two everything to get them to vote

'yes'. I believe there are going to be huge layoffs. These people are going to be on the street. How can you promise something nine years from now, when it is a four-year contract?"

Another worker at Warren Stamping told a team distributing the *Autoworker Newsletter* outside the plant, "The union is all based on management. They use scare tactics to threaten workers. 'You're going to lose your job.' That is all they do. I have learned so much about the union since I hired in 18 years ago.

"The people in the union are in it for the fringe benefits they get. They are not there to speak up for the workers. I became part of the shop committee and went to Black Lake and all that. But as soon as I found out what they were all about, I got out of it. Fast!

"In the union meetings, they cut you off immediately and don't give you the floor so you can speak. When you start to speak up, it is like they mark you. They know who you are and don't let you speak.

"But there are a lot of people here who are awake. That's what I call it. *Awake*. They are concerned about every little thing that takes place.

"I have witnessed people die in there. The systems exist to make the factory run smoothly and safely. We know how it should be run, but they don't use them. They prevent us from using them."

"The new contract still stinks," another worker at Warren Stamping said. "They just changed some wording to make it look better. They have made some tweaks to the tiers that basically create a third tier. Why can't everybody just get the same pay?"

"At the same time, some of the workers with lots of seniority might get bumped to the street on a technicality."

"The new tier system really is just a third tier," another worker also said. "It will just divide the workforce even more and make it more difficult for us to make a unified struggle.

"I am frustrated about the increase in temporary labor in the contract. I am even more frustrated about the UAW. This is not the first time they've taken stuff from us, and I know it won't be the last.

"The problem is the UAW. At this point, if we go on strike, they're going to put us all out on the street, and then we'll all be lower class. There is a lot of confusion, and the attitude in the factory is subdued for the moment, but there is going to be major fallout for

the union once the vote is over, either way."

A veteran worker at the nearby Warren Truck plant told the WSWS, "This contract is getting a big 'no' from me. They are not protecting our jobs. There is no job security. They are moving the Dodge Ram out of our plant to Sterling Heights. They will run one shift of the Wagoneer, and who knows how that will sell? There will be a lot of tier-two people who are put out of work because of this.

"This is a four-year contract, and they are talking about raising the tier-two wage over eight years. It doesn't make any sense. The whole thing is not right in my books.

"I think the union is so corrupt. On the previous contract vote I don't know a single person who said they voted 'yes.' But they nevertheless said it passed at this plant." Warren Truck is the only major plant where the contract was said to have passed, though many workers raised concerns about how the vote was conducted. (See, "Fiat Chrysler workers challenge UAW vote count at Warren Truck")

"No matter what we vote, it is going to go through. Many people feel it doesn't matter how we vote."

A second-tier worker at the Jefferson Assembly Plant in Detroit said, "It's the same contract, just reworded with a promise of maximum pay for tier-two workers. Even after eight years some tier-two workers will never see maximum pay. It keeps the division between tier-one and tier-two workers. A lot of workers think this contract was the original contract they wanted to impose all along.

"The contract is for four years. At the end of four years I will be at \$25. I don't know if I will ever see top pay. But a lot of tier-two workers feel if they vote 'no' they won't get any better. It will be even worse on the next go round.

"The tier-one workers are not happy," he added. "They didn't really get anything. They are being stabbed once again."



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