

UAW prepares snap vote as local union officials meet to rubber stamp GM sellout

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No details are being released on the tentative agreement reached between the United Auto Workers and General Motors in advance of the Wednesday meeting of the National GM Council, comprised of local UAW officials at GM plants.

A report Tuesday in the *Detroit Free Press* indicated that UAW locals at GM were gearing up for a snap vote. UAW Local 31 at the Fairfax, Kansas assembly plant posted a notice saying a vote on the national agreement would be held starting at 5:00 am on Friday. Other locals are preparing votes for early next week.

An official at Local 653 in Pontiac, Michigan told the *Free Press* that his local was looking at starting their vote Monday. Workers in Spring Hill, Tennessee, will vote next Wednesday, November 4, the newspaper reported.

While local officers must first ratify the deal before it goes to the membership for a vote, this is little more than a formality. Ratification by the local union handraisers for the UAW International is virtually certain. Symbolizing the lack of any independence by the UAW from corporate management, the local presidents will convene at 3:00 pm today at the joint UAW-GM Center for Human Resource Center in Detroit.

After the UAW pushed through a sellout four-year agreement at Fiat Chrysler last week, the union now appears to be rushing to secure ratification of the agreement covering 53,000 hourly employees at GM before workers can study it, let alone mobilize opposition. A GM worker at the Delta Township, Michigan assembly plant told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*, “We are not going to have a chance to seriously study it. They want to push it through before anyone can have time to read the fine print.”

There is widespread disquiet among the ranks of GM

workers over the terms of the Fiat Chrysler contract, which made permanent the two-tier wage system and set the stage for a concerted effort by management to drive out better paid tier-one workers, whose average age at GM is 51.

A *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* campaign team, speaking to workers at the General Motors Detroit-Hamtramck Assembly plant Tuesday, encountered strong opposition to the UAW-FCA deal.

One worker said, “I don’t want to see that contract here.” Another added. “They should abolish the two tier right away, not after eight years. At the very least I would like to see it go away in four years, by the end of the contract.”

After decades of concessions, GM workers are determined to make substantial gains in the current contract under conditions in which the company is recording massive profits, \$1.4 billion in the third quarter alone.

A worker from Wentzville, Missouri commented, “People I talk to on the line are just pissed off, just like leading up to the Chrysler deal. A lot of them have held back because the UAW keeps saying ‘this is GM, don’t worry about the Chrysler deal,’ but this last minute deal will produce a crappy contract and people are pissed. ‘Here’s a piece of crap, vote on it tomorrow,’ like they always do. Only this one is the worst contract ever because now they’re making record profits, and they’re still trying to screw us.”

After encountering mass opposition from FCA workers, the UAW has sought to prevent rank-and-file workers at GM from taking the initiative. First the UAW announced a bogus strike deadline Sunday night, only to announce a “last minute” agreement as it did at FCA on October 7.

A GM worker from the stamping plant in Marion,

Indiana said that workers saw through the ruse. “The script has proven to work so why not use it for the next company? Honestly I think they had all this worked out weeks ago, and this is just theater for the consumption of the general public.”

In the wake of GM’s earning report, Wall Street punished Ford Motor stock after the company’s third quarter results failed to match analysts’ estimates. While the company’s net income more than doubled to \$1.9 billion from \$835 million a year earlier, its earnings per share were 45 cents, below the 47 cents predicted by most analysts. Ford shares lost five percent, the steepest decline in more than a year.

The selloff reflected the ruthless drive of Wall Street for even higher profit margins. It underscores the fact that the auto companies are determined not to surrender an inch to the demands of workers for real improvements in their conditions.

This was reflected in the Fiat Chrysler deal which, in addition to maintaining the two-tier wage system, was riddled with concessions. Further, it failed to restore cost of living raises to either hourly employees or retirees and doubles the percentage of temporary workers the company is allowed to hire. There is every indication that like the FCA contract the GM deal will remove the cap on the number of second tier workers that GM can hire.

Some 20 percent of GM hourly workers are now second tier, a far lower percentage than the 45 percent of tier-two workers at FCA. With the assistance of the UAW, GM will use layoffs, speed up and forced retirements to rid the company of higher-paid tier-one workers and transform the entire workforce into low-paid, largely casual laborers.

A worker at the Toledo GM transmission plant spoke of his anger over the Fiat Chrysler deal. “The whole international is corrupt. Anyone can see that.

“They haven’t come out with anything yet, but is obvious what they are doing. I warned my coworkers that they would target Fiat Chrysler; the weakest of the three companies first and then go on to GM. Then the media will pound us about the bankruptcy and how the government bailed out the auto companies. They are not stupid people, but they are devious.

“This is not just about GM, Chrysler, Ford or John Deere, it is about the whole thing. Right is right, and the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* is telling the truth.

There is enough for everyone to live decently, no one should be wanting anything. I can’t figure out why someone would want so much money they can’t spend it in 1,000 years.”

In advance of the announcement of the details of the GM settlement the UAW Facebook page was full of comments critical of the Fiat Chrysler deal.

“Explain how this works,” one worker wrote of the UAW. “You guys vote yourself a raise, trips to Vegas, empty the strike fund and not required to pay it back. [UAW Vice President] Norwood H. Jewel appointed his son a union job. What cuts have you guys made? You can’t even get rid of two tier and get COLA back.”

Another commented, “UAW is BIG business no different than any auto manufacturer. It’s time for a NEW worker representative. So long UAW!!!”

A third wrote, “How is the union negotiating in their members’ best interest by agreeing to mandatory Saturdays for the next two years? Just one example: are the international reps working every Saturday for the next two years?”



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