

“We are not fools, we will not be bought out”

Autoworkers react to GM-UAW contract details

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In the wake of the release of the text of the tentative agreement between the UAW and General Motors, workers at GM plants across the United States are reacting strongly against the deal. The contract settlement is based on the sellout pushed through by the UAW at Fiat Chrysler (FCA) that preserves the two-tier system.

The contract offers an insulting bribe of an \$8,000 signing bonus in a transparent attempt by the UAW to buy off opposition. All that is offered to retirees is a \$500 gift card. First-tier workers will get a miserly 3 percent wage increase in the first and third year of the contract and a 4 percent lump sum in the second and fourth years.

The UAW is indicating it is pushing forward to a quick vote on the contract, giving workers just a couple days to review a contract covering hundreds and hundreds of pages.

A worker at the GM Assembly plant in Fairfax, Kansas spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* on the contract proposal. The UAW local at the plant has set a contract ratification vote for Friday.

“They are giving us an \$8,000 signing bonus instead of raises, when by eliminating cost of living they took away 2 percent a year for the past 10 years.”

She spoke about the decision by her local leadership to schedule a contract ratification vote on Friday. “There are a lot of people who are extremely pissed off. I think it is ridiculous. No one will have time to make an informed vote. Why is there such a rush, unless they just want to slam it through?”

“There is no obligation on their promise to bring the tier-two workers up to \$29 an hour after eight years. We never got anything back after bankruptcy, but

management did. All the talk that we would get things back was a lie. The way it is heading there won't be any difference between working at Ford or GM and working at Wal-Mart.

“They are regularly violating OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Administration] regulations. They don't care about employee safety any more than they care about their customers. It is all about the bottom line.”

She said that there was wide mistrust of the UAW. “How can the UAW possibly be working in our best interest when they own stock in the company? They take money from the strike fund and don't replace it. Then they try to raise union dues. They are in bed with the company.”

“We are voting on our local agreement too, but we haven't even seen it. They are doing at the local level what the international is doing. We were also told that to vote we needed a union card. There was a huge uproar on Facebook after that. There are a lot of people who don't have a clue where their union card is. They were just trying to make it hard for people to vote. Now it has been deleted from their web site, but we are not blind to what they are doing.”

A senior worker at Fort Wayne Assembly said there was already massive opposition building. “We have 4,000 at our plant and I think we will have 4,000 voting ‘no.’”

“They are giving retirees a \$500 gift card. What an embarrassment!”

“If you read the contract, they are actually adding a third tier that will cap out at \$19 an hour. As for the tier-two workers, after eight years, if the economy changes, they will be out of luck. They will never see \$29 an

hour.”

She said that the bonus offered senior workers to retire was insulting. “\$60,000 is as a slap in the face. I make more than that in a year. It’s going to take more than that to get me out of the plant.”

As in the case of the FCA contract, the UAW-GM deal forces second-tier workers to wait for as long as eight years to reach top scale.

A second-tier worker at the Flint Assembly Plant said she was voting against the contract. “I am very upset about it taking eight years to get to the top. I have been at GM since 2004, when I was hired as a temporary worker. I was laid off in 2007 and then later brought back as a tier-two worker making \$14 an hour. I was expecting to get additional pay to compensate for that.”

A veteran worker at the Spring Hill, Tennessee Assembly plant said she opposed the eight-year period for second-tier workers to reach top scale. “I think it should be right away. They should have taken care of them so that they work to the top after 90 days like it was when I first hired in.”

She also expressed concern over pensions. “I am going to retire right after this contract. The majority of workers at this plant are eligible to retire. If they want us out, they will have to offer more.”

A veteran worker at the GM Marion, Indiana stamping plant said, “Giving the retirees a \$500 gift card? Very generous!

“We want to see the lowlights, not the highlights. The last contract it said in the highlight that they took nothing from the retirees. Well, they flat out lied. They took away their Christmas bonus.

“I work on a nontraditional job that they would like to farm out. One of the things they are good at is bringing in outside companies to do the work and paying the workers less money and no benefits. They have brought in outside companies to do maintenance work that used to be done by skilled trades and are paying them \$10-15 an hour less.

“They talk about giving \$60,000 to 4,000 to retire. That is nothing. Do you know how many people are eligible to retire?”

The UAW Facebook page reflected an explosion of anger over the UAW-GM deal. One worker wrote, “If they propose \$29 an hour over the course of eight years my vote will be ‘no.’ There is no reason a company that profits over 3 billion dollars a year can not pay its

employees \$29 an hour over the course of a four year contract. We are not fools, we will not be bought out.”

Another commented on the proposal to raise second-tier workers’ pay over an eight-year period. “If this is correct trouble is coming. Record profits over the last few years is why the raise and bonus are expected. In these years of record profits we should be getting something back that we gave up in concessions. COLA, Retiree Christmas Bonus, a bump in pension, and do away with the 2nd tier at the end of 4 years.”

A third wrote, “If our Union leaders had any sort of backbone it would not be difficult to stand firm and demand a traditional pension for all and to demand improvements for the retirees. After all the scoundrels had no problem making concessions contract after contract and cutting pensions and benefits to the retirees. Now that the corporations have made record profits we should at the very least demand what we have had in the past. It is only right and just. Fair is Fair. And your job as Union Leaders is to represent our interests not the interests of the corporatists and we pay Union dues for you to do your job not to waste our money hiring PR firms to sell us on a pathetic contract.”



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