

Vote “no” on UAW-GM sellout contract!

Workers have the right to study the deal!

30 October 2015

A pdf version of this statement is available [here](#).

The United Auto Workers is seeking to ram through its agreement with General Motors in record speed, giving workers as little time as possible to study the terms they are signing on to for the next four years of their lives.

With unrivaled contempt for the workers they claim to represent, the UAW is organizing votes at locals throughout the country beginning Friday—less than two days after the self-serving “highlights” and well over 1,000 pages of the contract itself were posted online.

In discussions behind closed doors over the past several days, union officials no doubt debated what strategy they would use to push through a pro-company deal. While aware that a rapid vote will provoke anger and opposition among workers, the UAW functionaries also know that the more time that workers have to study the deal, the more they will learn about what it contains.

In consultation with their PR firm BerlinRosen, UAW President Dennis Williams, Vice President Cindy Estrada & Co. evidently decided that the quicker the vote the better. This can only mean that the contract is even more rotten than workers fear.

GM workers should reject this contract on principle. It is impossible for workers to make an informed vote without at least two weeks to study the full contract and organize meetings of the rank-and-file, independent of the UAW, to review and debate its provisions.

As for its content, the main aim of this “transformative” contract is the same as the deal pushed through at Fiat Chrysler: to establish a permanently lower wage and benefit rate for all autoworkers. This will be done by expanding the number of second-tier workers and driving out higher-paid, tier-one workers through layoffs, speed-ups and early retirement schemes. All limits on the percentage

of second-tier workers have been removed.

As details emerge, they expose the lies of the UAW:

- * The UAW claims to be creating a path to first-tier wages, but second-tier workers will continue to receive vastly inferior benefits even if they get to the new top wage rate after eight years.

- * The UAW states it will work with GM to reduce the cost of tier-one health care benefits so that they do not fall under the Obama administration’s “Cadillac tax” beginning in 2018. Precisely what services will be eliminated? What new costs will workers face? The contract eliminates the Blue Care Network as the company’s health care provider. Is UAW-GM planning to shift first-tier workers to an inferior health care plan?

- * Williams claims second-tier workers will get the same health care as first-tier workers after 91 days. However, the contract states that dental will be covered only after three years and full vision after five years. Why this discrepancy? Second-tier workers are also denied health care after they retire, with the aim of eventually eliminating retiree health care altogether.

- * The contract establishes two wage scales for temporary workers, effectively establishing a third and fourth tier. Second tier workers hired after 2015 receive a lower pay-in to their 401(k) pension plan. GM Components Holding workers are paid much lower wages. Just how many tiers is GM/UAW seeking to create?

- * Cost of living adjustments will not be restored under conditions in which the company is making record profits. Autoworkers will be forced to pay, through “profit sharing” schemes, for the criminal actions of the company, as seen in the ignition switch scandal.

- * A provision in the contract allows the company to implement “Alternative Work Schedules” on a plant-by-plant basis. What new schedules are being planned?

* The contract is filled with language allowing it to be reopened or for changes to be made under “exceptional” circumstances.

As workers study the contract, many more rotten provisions of the contract will be exposed. Nobody would buy a house if they were given only a couple of days to consider it, let alone a brochure of “highlights” prepared by a real estate agent who stood to make a lot of money.

It would be no less mad for workers to accept the word of Estrada and the rest of the UAW, who also have a business interest in swindling them into buying this deal. The UAW, after all, through its VEBA retiree health care fund, has a 9 percent ownership share in GM and will see a big payday if it can increase the exploitation of workers.

The attempt by the UAW to ram through the deal at GM is a continuation of its conspiracy, coordinated with the auto companies and the government, against the working class. At Fiat Chrysler, the UAW first organized a vote as quickly as possible. Autoworkers revolted, voting the contract down by a two-to-one margin, giving expression to the deep anger and opposition felt by workers throughout the country and internationally.

The UAW responded with a campaign of lies, threats and intimidation. The “yes” agreement on the second deal—essentially a rewording of the first—was not the product of widespread support for the deal. Rather, workers recognized that the UAW would fight for nothing more and reluctantly accepted the deal. The whole experience only demonstrated that it is impossible for workers to oppose the dictates of the company within the framework of the UAW.

Not only is there no “adversarial relationship,” between the UAW and the auto companies—as Williams has boasted—the contracts agreed to by the UAW are largely drawn up by the auto companies. Issues discussed behind closed doors relate to the specific interests of the privileged, upper middle class layer that runs the organization, such as the maintenance and expansion of various corporatist bodies that help finance the bureaucracy.

The UAW is a company union, dedicated to expanding the profits of the corporations at the expense of the workers. It is a labor police force and a business in its own right, allied to the state and dedicated to the

defense of the capitalist system.

It is impossible for autoworkers to express their interests within and through this organization. They are denied the most basic democratic rights, including the right to carefully study and discuss the contract that determines their livelihood.

Autoworkers are in struggle not just against GM and the Big Three, but the entire economic and political system, which enriches the few at the expense of the many. The allies of workers are not the big business politicians, like President Obama and the Democrats, who, just like the Republicans, want to turn the US into a cheap labor haven.

The allies of GM workers are the autoworkers, steelworkers, telecom workers, postal workers, teachers and other workers around the country who face the same struggle. Their allies are their class brothers and sisters in Mexico, Canada, Italy and around the world who are facing the same attacks by the global corporations and banks.

The WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* calls on GM workers to move immediately to elect rank-and-file committees, independent from the UAW, to take the conduct of the struggle out of their hands. A rejection of the contract should be followed by an appeal to Fiat Chrysler workers to reopen the struggle against FCA; John Deere workers laboring under a contract whose provisions they don’t even know; Ford workers, who are next in line after GM; and to the entire working class seeking a way forward in the fight against inequality and the relentless assault on jobs and wages.

We urge GM workers to contact the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* to take up this fight.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact