

Substantial opposition to UAW-GM sellout remains as voting continues

Eric London
5 November 2015

General Motors workers at assembly plants in Missouri, Michigan and Tennessee voted yesterday on a national agreement covering the company's 53,000 workers. While the deal was ratified at two of the factories, despite large "no" votes, there remains strong opposition to the sellout with voting continuing through Friday.

At the Detroit-Hamtramck Assembly Plant, the only GM factory in the city, the deal was passed by a 54-46 percent margin, although 58 percent of the skilled trades workers voted "no." At the St. Louis area Wentzville plant, initial reports said the deal was ratified by a 57 to 43 percent margin, with 66 percent of skilled trades workers voting "no." The contract was also ratified at the smaller Pontiac Metal Center, north of Detroit, with 64 percent of workers approving it.

As of this writing there were no results from the Spring Hill, Tennessee plant, where the UAW rushed a vote through the same day as an informational meeting on the deal.

The deal has previously been defeated in Fairfax, Kansas; Arlington, Texas; Toledo, Ohio and at the Tech Center in Warren, Michigan. Estimates show the deal is passing by a narrow margin with two major factories—Lordstown, Ohio and Delta Township near Lansing, Michigan—voting today.

Insofar as workers have voted "yes" it is not because they believe the propaganda campaign by the UAW hailing the deal as winning "significant gains." On the contrary, it is a vote of no confidence in the UAW, which has made it clear it would do nothing to fight for anything better.

Exploiting the financial difficulties it has inflicted on workers, the UAW has told workers a strike would only lead them to financial ruin, and, in any case, any concessions extracted from GM would be paid for

through reduced investments, leading to plant closings and layoffs. The UAW insists it cannot get anything more from GM, which is selling vehicles at a record rate, making billions in profits and achieving North American profit margins of 11 percent, which are the envy of every car manufacturer in the world.

The strivings of autoworkers cannot find any expression through the UAW, which is a tool of management and a business in its own right that controls 9 percent of GM's corporate stock. Confronting a disloyal and hostile force in the UAW, increasing numbers of autoworkers have turned to the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* to give them a voice and political perspective.

In recent days, workers subscribing to the newsletter have sent their comments on the contract and the vote. A worker at the Arlington, Texas plant, which defeated the contract 51-49 percent, with 84 percent of skilled trades workers voting "no" said, "We are all wondering why and how does GM's contract offer the same contract as FCA with the exception of \$4,000 extra signing bonus and quicker dental when GM profits are DOUBLE that of FCA. Their overall stock market gains are 12 percent thus far this year. They have earned \$22.6 billion since the bailout and they are making record quarterly profits...If we don't get what we feel we deserve in this contract then no auto worker ever will, long after we are all gone."

A GM worker in Indiana described similar opposition at his plant, "A lot of the opposition in the room was around the lack of cost of living adjustment. Also about the lack of increase in the pension amount, especially by some of the older guys, some of whom drive from remote locations for work and would like to get back home and not drive 75 miles to work every day.

"There's also the issue of the lack of targeted special

attrition package for skilled trades workers—those are only being made available to the top 4,000. 60,000 dollars. They want to replace the older workers with lower paid temporary employees or second tier workers.”

Another autoworker denounced the UAW for ramming through concession after concession. “International UAW vice president Joe Ashton retired from UAW after helping GM pass a contract that implemented the 2 tier system and received a GM job for all his help! That is what Dennis Williams is setting up for himself with Chrysler.

“In the full contract paragraphs have been deleted but were not listed in highlights, like the GMCH division could be sold and/or wages can be reduced. ‘In progression’ workers could probably lose their gained wages by being ‘laid-off’ and having to start from entry level again. This was confirmed at an informational meeting with International UAW today.”

Current workers are not the only ones who are angry over the current contract. There is deep opposition from tens of thousands of retirees—who are stripped of the right to vote by the UAW. The contract includes an insulting \$500 gift card to retirees, who sweated on the shop floors for 30 years or more and who have had to suffer stagnant pension benefits and higher out-of-pocket costs due to cutbacks by the UAW Retiree Medical Trust.

Many retirees have sent messages to the *Autoworker Newsletter* in recent days:

“I think the UAW and GM have forgotten the retirees for the last 12 years. It’s like the saying: ‘Where you are, I once was. Where I am, you will be also.’ It’s time to do something for the people who made both the UAW and GM,” said one GM retiree.

A retiree from Michigan wrote, “I think it is time to reject UAW trying to force feed us this BS. Give the UAW a no confidence vote. The UAW says they can’t represent retirees? BS, we built the UAW. Love to help anyway I can, once a proud UAW worker, thank you and fight the fight.”

Another former autoworker from Michigan said, “I am a retiree and I want my Christmas bonus back. They don’t even say what the gift card is for, cash or toward the purchase of a car. The new workers deserve equal pay for equal work. For years women have fought for these rights, but now everybody is back to fighting for

it. As a nation, we are going backwards.”

At each step of the way, the UAW has sought to mislead, divide, confuse and demoralize autoworkers—the vast majority who are looking for a real fight against the companies. For opposing the lies and propaganda of the UAW-corporate alliance, the *Autoworker Newsletter* has won a daily following from thousands of autoworkers.

Some request PDFs of articles to distribute at their plants while many have participated in online forums to discuss the building of rank-and-file committees to take the conduct of the struggle out of the hands of the UAW.

A worker at the Orion Assembly plant in Michigan kept it to the point, writing, “Love what you do!!!! Thank you.”



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact