

Ford workers denounce UAW efforts to push through sellout contract

Our reporters
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The United Auto Workers is moving as rapidly as possible to push through a sellout contract at Ford. Local officials from throughout the country are meeting in Detroit to rubber-stamp the deal today, followed by votes at plants as soon as this week.

The UAW announced an agreement with Ford on Friday, even as the deal at General Motors remains unratified. While the UAW has claimed that a narrow majority of 55 percent of autoworkers backed the deal overall, skilled trades workers rejected the contract by nearly 60 percent. According to the UAW's bylaws, both production and skilled trades workers must support a contract for it to be ratified.

There is widespread opposition among Ford workers, who have looked on as the UAW has used economic blackmail, lies and an orchestrated PR campaign to push through deals at GM and Fiat Chrysler (FCA). Last week, workers at Ford's Flat Rock Assembly Plant voted 55-45 to reject a local contract, with skilled trades workers rejecting the deal by 80 percent.

The WSWWS *Autoworker Newsletter* spoke to workers at Ford's Dearborn Assembly (Rouge) truck assembly plant in Dearborn, Michigan and at the Chicago Assembly Plant.

"I read your newsletter and I agree with a lot of it," said a younger worker at Dearborn Assembly. "The UAW has been in negotiations since July—five months—and they haven't come to us with any proposals, or a plan of action. It's upsetting. Ford made profits of \$8 billion last year. Why don't the people who work here get what they deserve? I like the *Newsletter*, and I like your action plan. It makes sense. It values people first, not the company.

"What I have seen of the contract—and they don't tell us anything, we are totally in the dark—it's awful. They are taking \$1,500 from our profit-sharing and putting it

in the signing bonus. That profit-sharing is money that we already worked for. It belongs to us. Just like the annuity, or 401(k). They don't have the right to take it into the signing bonus, which will be taxed at 42 percent. That cuts the \$1,500 down to \$900. The whole bonus of \$10,000 will be reduced to \$5,800, and wages will be kept low.

"You can see how they time the contract vote just before Christmas. The UAW knows people are under stress at the holidays and they can be pushed into making an irrational decision. We are so undervalued, but we create all the profit."

An older tier-one worker at Rouge said, "The VEBA [union-run retiree health care fund] is terrible. I understand they basically stripped the retirees. We haven't heard much at all about the current contract, a couple of rumors.

"Nobody on the floor really wants the two-tier system. Most people I talk to don't want it at all. I was hoping that if we didn't get any wage increase at all, if they just brought the second tier up to our level, I would support the contract. But from what it looks like, they are going the other way.

"I heard they are going to offer a huge exit bonus. If they raise the 25 percent cap on tier-two workers, they would use that bonus to get rid of tier-ones. It's all wrong. But we really don't know anything. All we hear is rumors."

Workers in Chicago are similarly opposed to the contract. "I'm voting 'no,'" said one worker with four years. "I think there's a lot of cover-up, too. I can't talk for everybody, but that's how I feel. We don't have any confidence in the UAW. We really don't. With profit-sharing, that money should be ours already. Why do they get to distribute it like that?

A first-tier worker said, "I'm voting it down. I'm a

senior employee, and I'm not happy.

"I don't agree with the eight-year progression on the entry levels. I don't agree with taking the cap off the number of second tiers. I don't agree with the second tiers not having pensions. And they want to eliminate us [first-tier workers]. That's what my main gripes are. I'm tired of corporate greed.

"They say this is the richest contract ever, and this and that. I had more benefits in 1999 when I was hired than I do now!"

One second-tier worker with four years said, "If we just go back over the last four years, their profits have been going up consistently. This is Ford, they're making a killing. And then they come up with a contract like this? Everyone is so pissed off.

"Some people are saying, 'I just want to sign it and get it over with.' It's fatigue, the UAW and the company did this on purpose. They said, 'Extend it, extend it, don't tell them anything.'

"Honestly, I'm going in there really angry, knowing very well that I have a coworker that's doing the same job I am, and I'm getting paid 10 bucks less on the hour. And I will never come up to his point. Maybe close, but in eight years. If! There's a big 'if' right there.

"They pushed a local contract last week. I don't know if you saw the pamphlet, but it said, 'stronger wording' on this, 'stronger wording' on that. And what does that mean? What does 'stronger wording' mean? You see it, and you just start laughing, because it's BS. It really is.

"We can't just go through this vote and say, 'That's it, it went through, forget about it, we'll gather up in four years.' Because the company doesn't do that. We're going through a negotiation now, but they're already thinking what's going to happen in four years, eight years, 12 years down the line. They're that far ahead.

"What I tell the guys I work with is, we can't win. Not like this, not on an individual basis. It has to be through a political stance. It can't be a fight of us versus this company or that company, and every four years having to go against them. The cards are against us; the system's against us. So we need to change that.

"And it can't be just the autoworkers. We've got to get everybody involved."

The WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* also spoke to a

Ford worker at Sterling Heights Assembly outside of Detroit. "These guys had their minds made out a year ago, they didn't have to meet, or talk, they just had to sprinkle some nonsense on the internet, and that strike was planned to blow off steam and they got the same deal. It's a show—its like a play at the opera." At both FCA and GM, the UAW announced fraudulent "strike notices" that were called off at the last minute.

"They put across all this dog and pony show and they change the contract whenever they want! The contract is just a pacifier anyway.

"All they're doing is shifting around money between different accounts. They're not gonna throw their record profits away. "

On the WSWS call for the formation of rank-and-file factory committees, he said, "As far as I'm concerned, we have to take it to the next level as soon as we can. We've got strength and organization, and we've got to have new organizations with our interests in mind. Right now we have no other alternative, and that makes it difficult for a lot of people. There's got to be a strong presence of an alternative, and that's us.

"Be careful who you trust. They're gonna do whatever they have to do, bring the gloves off to get this passed, and we've got to get ready."



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