

“The workers will never forget what happened here”

Dearborn Assembly workers allege fraud in UAW-Ford contract vote

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Autoworkers reacted with disbelief, anger and profound skepticism over the weekend to the United Auto Workers' announcement Friday that its agreement with Ford had been ratified with 51 percent support.

Going into the final days of voting, the contract appeared headed for defeat, with major plants voting early in the week by a 2-1 margin against. In order to pass the contract, the UAW had to secure an overwhelming majority of the vote at the last remaining plants in the Rouge Dearborn Assembly complex. This is what they claimed to have accomplished on Friday, resulting in a 'yes' vote by a razor-thin margin.

“Most of the people I talked to voted ‘no.’ It had to have been rigged,” a worker with more than 20 years seniority told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* at the Truck Assembly Plant in the Rouge complex.

Of the contract, he said, “I would have been happy with just a few of the things we gave up over the last 10 years, but we got nothing.”

“Of all the years to strike Ford, this was the one,” his coworker said. “They made billions. The plant was retooled for the new truck. This was the time.”

“The vote was fixed. We all think it was fixed,” added another assembler with high seniority.

Speaking about the video of UAW thugs ejecting WSWS reporters from the press conference at Local 600 last Wednesday, he said, “Why should Jimmy Settles be throwing anybody out of a union hall? What right does he have? He is supposed to talk to the media and answer questions.

“I voted ‘no,’ and most people I talked to did, too. Are they saying that 6,000 people in the plant are all a bunch of liars? They all said they voted ‘no.’ I don’t

believe them.”

His revulsion at the strongarm tactics of the UAW was similar to that of many workers who spoke to the WSWS. “When I went in to vote, the committeemen were all standing around the door saying, ‘Vote “yes.” It’s a good contract.’ I asked them, ‘Good for who? Good for you. Because there is nothing in it for me.’

“They want to push us out the door and get a rookie to do the job. Then they want to pay them \$18 an hour. They get no retirement. The co-pays [for medical coverage] are out the roof. They get no representation in the plant. They are going to say, ‘The hell with the UAW.’

“Right now I have four medical bills that are not covered by insurance. I am going to be slammed with bills. I am leery of everything the UAW does. If they get involved with our medical, who knows what will happen?

“We all know the strike fund is a slush fund for the UAW. They say they would only give us \$200 a week if we went on strike. [The strike fund] has \$600 million. They could pay us all \$1,000 per week. Where is all our strike fund money going? They put it in their general fund to pay themselves.

“The workers will never forget what happened here. There will be no UAW. We need somebody that is independent of the UAW and independent of Ford Motor Company.”

The UAW thuggery at Local 600 has backfired and only contributed to the growing respect for the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*. “You guys are brave,” an older worker commented on Saturday. “I’ll give you that.”

He added, “I don’t know if they rigged the vote, but it certainly seems like it because there is so much stuff

for their side and not ours.

“The world is just getting so ugly. They are cutting the main workers. The UAW used to be over a million workers and now it’s down to 200,000. That is a big cut.”

“It was totally rigged,” said another worker with 15 years seniority. “My buddy said to me as we were leaving work on Thursday night, ‘You watch. It’s going to pass by 51 percent to 49 percent.’”

Jimmy Settles, the UAW vice president who came from Local 600 and was in charge of the team of bureaucrats who negotiated the Ford deal, was the target of particular anger. “That is why they held this plant until last. They know that it was totally corrupt. Nobody believes them.”

Another worker passing by said, “They took away the ballot box and came back with a stuffed one. Nobody saw them count the votes. It was absolutely rigged.

He added, “A signing bonus of \$8,500 taxed at 42 percent. That is nothing. We haven’t had any raise in 10 years. They lied to us. They said that when the company made money, we would get everything back. The executives got everything, but we got nothing.”

Another worker said, “I heard it passed by 51 percent. I think it was going to pass no matter what. They were going to make it pass. They think we are stupid.”

On Friday, before the outcome of the vote was reported, a tier-two worker at Dearborn Truck told the WSWS, “The contract is unfair. I voted it down. It’s unfair for everyone, for the second tiers, the legacy workers, the retirees. There is no guarantee for anyone. The UAW works for the

company, they have screwed us.”

She said that UAW officials were walking the production line asking everyone if they voted and how they voted, or how they were going to vote. “They tried to scare some of the employees by claiming if they voted ‘no,’ they would lose their job. They walked the line, they were at the doors. ‘Hey, did you vote? Well vote yes, for your future.’”

“What a debacle! Everything they did regarding this vote is wrong! We heard they attacked your reporter at the press conference. As I said, this is a debacle!

“The union had two buckets set up for the ballots. You voted in the hallway, folded the ballot and dropped it in the bucket. It was not very private. In my opinion, if the contract passes here, it is because the union

manipulated the count.”



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