

The UAW's illegitimate vote at Ford

Form rank-and-file factory committee to carry forward the fight!

Jerry White
25 November 2015

The WSWS Autoworker Newsletter urges Ford workers to distribute this statement to fellow workers at the plants. Download the pdf.

The results of the ballot at Ford announced by the United Auto Workers late last week have no legitimacy.

The margin of the “yes” votes claimed by the UAW in the final days of the vote is not credible. With 85 percent of Ford workers having already voted and the contract heading to defeat last week, workers at the Ford Rouge complex (Local 600) supposedly overwhelmingly backed the deal, giving the UAW just barely enough votes to declare that it passed by the razor-thin margin of 51 percent.

Workers have reported that unnumbered ballots, marked in pencil, were simply dumped in buckets, making vote stuffing easy. Those who voted confronted a gauntlet of officials threatening that rejection of the contract would mean the loss of their job. Others have reported that local union officials drove around the Ford Rouge complex campaigning for “yes” votes.

Moreover, the vote at Local 600—the home base of UAW Vice President James Settles—was suddenly rescheduled to the last vote nationally so the UAW knew exactly how many votes it needed to ram through the deal.

These reports provide more than enough evidence for the opening up of a criminal investigation into what has taken place.

Settles declared on Friday that the deal had been ratified “through a democratic and fair process,” adding cynically that there is “no higher authority than the membership” in the UAW.

What lies! Leaving aside the issue of ballot stuffing, the entire contract ratification has been characterized by deceit and threats. Even by its own stated figures, the

Ford contract faced mass opposition, which the UAW worked to overcome in order to force the deals through.

The Ford vote followed a split vote at General Motors, with the UAW overriding the rejection of the contract by skilled trades workers. At Fiat Chrysler, the contract was first defeated before being pushed through with the help of a PR firm hired to sell the deal.

In the course of these votes, UAW concealed the truth from workers, issued phony strike deadlines, “last minute” agreements and bogus “highlights” to rush through deals without giving workers time to study the full details. It resorted to economic blackmail, threatening that plants would be closed if workers voted “no,” or that the UAW would call a strike and leave workers isolated on the picket lines for weeks or months with only a pittance from the UAW’s \$600 million strike fund.

Throughout, the UAW worked closely with both the auto companies and the Obama administration, which, along with the entire political establishment, sees the attack on autoworkers as a critical component of the attack on the working class as a whole.

The UAW conducts itself with no less hostility and venom towards autoworkers than the corporate bosses and wealthy shareholders. There is not an ounce of democratic accountability in the so-called union, which is nothing more than a corporate syndicate of cheap labor contractors.

The *Autoworker Newsletter* calls on Ford and other autoworkers to form rank-and-file factory committees to unify autoworkers on the basis of the methods of the class struggle, not class collaboration.

Workers feel deeply the need for organizations on the shop floor that genuinely represent them, that are democratic, controlled by the members, that unite all autoworkers with other sections of the working class in

the United States and internationally, that pursue class conscious policies and are not intimidated by the red-baiting and anti-socialist propaganda of the companies, the media and their UAW henchmen.

The bureaucratic numbskulls in the UAW hope that by ramming the contract through at Ford they can simply move forward with their plans to assist the auto companies in further transforming auto production into a new form of industrial slavery. They think that they can deal with opposition through fraud and force and that the anger of autoworkers is merely the product of “outside groups” who “stir things up.”

Whether they like it or not, however, the opposition exists, and it will grow. The challenge is to unify this resistance, to give it an organizational form and a program upon which to fight.

The WSWs and the *Autoworker Newsletter* will do everything it can to assist workers in carrying forward the struggle.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact