

Form rank-and-file committees to unite workers in the US and Canada

Vote “no” on the Unifor-FCA agreement!

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The WSWS Autoworker Newsletter is holding an information call-in meeting for autoworkers in Canada and the US on Wednesday, October 12 at 7:00 pm Eastern Time. To participate, dial 438-800-2937 in Canada and 213-416-1560 in the US and enter PIN 581 991 086#.

The WSWS Autoworker Newsletter calls on Fiat-Chrysler workers in Canada to reject the miserable sell-out agreement announced Monday night and form rank-and-file factory committees to mobilize autoworkers north and south of the border against the union-backed attack on wages, jobs and pensions.

Unifor has announced that voting on the contract will begin next week, and the union is calling out all the stops to push the deal through in the face of widespread opposition among autoworkers.

The Fiat-Chrysler agreement is modeled off of the “pattern agreement” narrowly pushed through at General Motors earlier this month. GM workers approved the contract by the lowest ratification margin in the union’s history (64 percent). At Fiat-Chrysler, there is widespread opposition from a large influx of second-tier new hires and from veteran workers who have endured a ten-year wage freeze.

FCA autoworkers have been treated to a shadow play over the past week, whereby Unifor President Jerry Dias first dramatically announced that FCA management were balking at the pattern deal because its new-hire provisions were “too rich” and then cranked up the last-minute theatrics with a series of cancelled press conferences and emergency caucus huddles meant to show that the negotiating team was “bargaining hard.”

Dino Chiodo, chair of Unifor’s FCA Master

Bargaining Committee, could barely contain himself in extolling the agreement. “This is a very good deal,” he told CBC News. “It’s probably the best economic deal I’ve seen in any of the Chrysler agreements that I’ve ever participated in.”

This is a monumental fraud. Veteran workers will receive a paltry two percent wage raise upon ratification, then another two-year wage freeze followed by another two percent in 2019. The four percent raise over the life of the agreement amounts to a real wage cut when even the current historic low inflation rates of 1.2 to 1.8 percent are factored into the equation. Quarterly cost-of-living allowances are to be suspended again until June 2020. A lump sum taxable payment of \$6,000 will be paid in installments through December 2019. There will be a taxable \$6,000 signing bonus. As usual, there is virtually nothing for retirees.

New hires will start at a slightly enhanced rate—43 cents an hour in the first year—escalating to full pay after ten years. The ten-year “grow-in” period institutionalizes the two-tier system in all but name. Since the proposed contract is only a four-year deal, there is nothing to prevent the auto bosses from stripping away incremental increases in 2020. Indeed, the “grow-in” period itself has steadily increased over the last three contracts from two years to six and, in 2012, to ten.

Moreover, in a major attack overturning rights won by workers in bitter struggle, all new hires will be stripped of the last vestiges of a hybrid defined-benefits pension system and be reduced to the inferior and unreliable defined contributions system. These workers will now pay four percent of their paycheck into their pensions. With three pension systems now in play in

the pattern contract—defined benefit, hybrid and now defined contribution—Unifor has, in fact, introduced three tiers of employees.

The so-called “job protection commitments” Dias trumpeted on Monday—\$325 million for a new paint shop in Brampton and a paltry \$6.4 million at Etobicoke Casting—will not solidify work at those two facilities. After all, Ford invested \$250 million in a new St. Thomas paint shop only a few years before that plant was closed. The retrofit in Etobicoke will not save 150-200 jobs slated for destruction as FCA phases out small car production in its North American operations. Workers laid off there will have still unclear “employment opportunities” at the Brampton operation.

Just as in the “framework agreement” at GM, workers at FCA will not be provided with a copy of the contract before ratification. Instead, they will be presented with brief self-serving “highlights” drawn up by the union. Absolutely nothing Unifor says can be taken at face value. The intention of Dias and the rest of the executives who run the organization is to conceal or sugarcoat the true nature of the deal and force through the contract before workers have had time to study the hundreds of pages of content and its full implications. Unifor hopes this will pave the way for ramming through another rotten agreement at Ford later this month.

There is immense opposition among autoworkers to this agreement. A struggle must be waged, but no fight is possible so long as it remains within the confines of Unifor. The WSWS calls on Fiat-Chrysler workers to take immediate steps to form rank-and-file factory committees to organize opposition. Workers should demand that they have the right to read and study the full contract before any ratification vote.

Like the United Auto Workers in the US, which rammed concessions contracts through last year using a combination of threats, intimidation and fraud, Unifor is not a working-class organization, but an arm of corporate management and the state. It is politically aligned with the big-business Liberal Party, which is committed to deepening the attack on autoworkers and the entire working class. The Liberals have hailed the deal at GM, promising to provide the company with cash grants and other incentives to boost corporate profits.

The struggle against concessions requires a new political perspective, one that rejects the nationalist and pro-corporate perspective and is based on a socialist and internationalist program to unite all autoworkers, in Canada, the United States, Mexico and internationally, in a common struggle.



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