

“It’s not a union anymore, it’s a business”

Canadian autoworkers react to Fiat Chrysler sellout

Our reporters
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Autoworkers in Canada are reacting strongly against the tentative deal between Unifor and Fiat Chrysler announced Tuesday. The sellout agreement is patterned after the contract with General Motors that was approved earlier this month over significant opposition.

Like the GM Canada agreement, the four-year FCA deal contains derisory job guarantees and a raft of concessions including the continued suspension of cost of living raises and a miserable 4 percent wage increase for veteran workers who have not seen a raise in 10 years. It also continues the 10-year “grow-in” period for new hires to achieve top pay and removes any vestiges of a defined benefit pension plan for young workers.

Reacting to word of the agreement, Tricia, a worker at the Fiat Chrysler Windsor minivan assembly plant, wrote on the Oakville Ford workers Facebook page, “Our local and in plant union office[s] are supportive of the GM agreement and are working hard to sell it on the floor. The members on the floor are not happy with the GM agreement with a small minority exception...”

A veteran worker at the Windsor Ford engine plant spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* by phone. He said he was strongly opposed to the FCA Canada deal as were many at his workplace. “I am speaking to my co-workers and it seems like we are giving up a lot and not getting a lot back. A lot of people are upset about this.

“Our cost of living raise has been frozen for 10 years. We haven’t had a raise in 10 years. This company is making billions on our backs.”

He said he did not think much of the so-called job guarantees being touted by Unifor. “We are down to 1,500 workers when we were at 5,800 at one point. We

have people on layoff and TPT [temporary part time] workers in the plant. We haven’t hired anyone new since 2000; everyone in the plant is over 40.

“This 10-year ‘grow-in’ for second tier workers I would like see reduced to two. Our benefits have been slashed and there is a lot in the contract they are not telling us. The wording is such that we don’t understand most of it.

“In my opinion the union is selling us up the creek to preserve its own income.”

Wally, another Ford worker, wrote on the Ford Oakville workers Facebook page,

“Jerry Dias and Local 200 President Chris Taylor make it sound like we are not supporting Windsor [Ford engine plant] workers if we don’t support the pattern agreement from GM.

“From my perspective that couldn’t be further from the truth. I was a Windsor employee and now an Oakville employee. I will not vote ‘yes’ on a contract that does not get Windsor a REAL product or a better than 10 year grow in deal for the newer hires with EQUAL benefits and a better deal for all Oakville and Windsor employees and retirees. Two 67 cent raises after 11 years of nothing doesn’t cut it.

“You would hope the National and Windsor’s leadership would also support Oakville and our 2200 or so newer lower paid employees and any future hires by not throwing them under the bus with more concessions (Pension giveaway, less benefits, 10 year grow in) and fight for REAL improvements and equality for all employees. If not now WHEN. Just don’t say that we don’t support our brothers and sisters in Windsor Local 200 because we do. That GM FRAMEWORK deal after 11 years of nothing and with the profits the

Companies have made is simply awful and we ALL have every right to expect better and I am hoping for the best for our friends at FCA.”

Another Ford engine plant worker also spoke to the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* by phone. “No one likes it,” he said of the settlements at GM and Fiat Chrysler. “Their investments are a joke. It is just preventive maintenance. It is not new investment.

“Dias met one-on-one with Marchionne. That is BS. You don’t do that in negotiations.

“That raise for tier two workers is peanuts. There should be no 10-year ‘grow in.’ I can’t see it taking any longer than three years. In fact it was just 18 months when I first hired in. Dias got crumbs and he’s calling it an ‘historic agreement.’ They got nothing.”

Asked what he thought of Unifor, the Ford worker replied, “We need a global union, it’s a global company. We don’t need Unifor. They should not be able to pit workers in the US and Canada against each other.”

The *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* continues to receive new subscribers and comments from workers critical of the concessions being rammed through by the Unifor bureaucracy in close collaboration with the auto bosses.

A retired worker from Ford in Windsor, Ontario who spoke with us by phone last week attacked the assault waged on working conditions over recent years. “It’s unfortunate that once they declared bankruptcy six or seven years ago they took advantage of that. ‘You do what we say or forget about it. We’ll close the doors and go somewhere else.’”

A worker at Ford engine plant in Windsor was openly critical of the union leadership and vowed Ford workers would reject a deal modeled on the GM concessions agreement.

“If they have no new product--like half a vehicle like they’re trying to give GM--how long do you think GM’s going to do that? I’ll bet you within a year they’re going to tell UNIFOR that the overflow’s not needed right now. They’ll cancel that in a heartbeat--but for Ford they got to give us something that we gave back. We haven’t had a raise in 10 years but their CEOs and their executives always get a raise and a bonus. They gave them \$72 million and they’re crying broke? Forget it.

“The reason they gave those 700 part-time workers

full-time positions is because they know they’re going to be laid off within the year. Dias should never have brought that back to anybody... It’s not a union any more, it’s a business.”

Another worker at the GM CAMI plant in Ingersol, Ontario with 27 years was equally critical of the pattern agreement and Unifor’s role in imposing it at GM.

“I think Dias sold out,” he said. “I think there was a scare tactic involved in this contract. In my dealings with Dias before I know how he plays the game--I’m not happy with him at all. He’s working for the corporations--he’s not working for us. This year would’ve been the year that we would’ve made a lot of gains back with all the profits that the Big Three have shown over the past year.”

The *Autoworker Newsletter* encourages workers at FCA, GM and Ford to send us your comments for dissemination among workers across Canada and internationally.



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