

“GM paid for this vote”: Autoworkers denounce sellout contract as opposition grows

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Tensions between autoworkers and the United Auto Workers are coming to a boil this week, as the UAW continues its attempts to force through the sellout contract and end the month-long walkout.

“Informational meetings” throughout the country have already seen showdowns between union executives and workers opposed to the contract, which gives the company a blank check to use temporary workers with a bogus, years-long “pathway” for temps to be hired in, and confirms the company’s shutdown of Lordstown and three other facilities.

In Spring Hill, Tennessee, local leadership called the cops on autoworkers campaigning for a “no” vote outside of the union hall. The contract was defeated later in the day. In Wentzville, Missouri yesterday, officials stopped a meeting while they forced a worker to cease livestreaming and yanked the microphone from workers who spoke against the contract, according to social media accounts.

Autoworkers have also written to the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* to voice their opposition. “GM paid for this vote, and [the UAW] sold their members down the road,” said one worker. “They have no backbone. The UAW does not care about the workers, they care about their own pockets. If the UAW cared about the workers, they would have taken the strike fund [up from] \$250. Not like that crook Gary Jones making \$5,000.00 a week.”

“It’s sad, but the cheating has been going on for a very long time,” a retiree from Local 663 in Indiana wrote. “If there is a way, they will cheat. Most local leaders have to support the contract, or they face not receiving any future help from the International. So I would bet the [local] presidents and the chairmen along with shop committees will be pushing the agreement, even. [They have probably] further packed the billfolds and pockets of local committees with lots of overtime...and God only knows what [else].”

World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter campaigned outside several meetings at locals throughout the Midwest and distributed copies of the statement, “Vote no! Reject UAW misinformation! Elect rank-and-file committees to expand the strike!” They encountered widespread anger among autoworkers.

Fort Wayne, Indiana

Hundreds of workers lined the streets on Wednesday to get into the informational meetings for Local 2209, which were held at an event center away from the union hall.

“Just before the strike they told me to go on ‘flex time,’ but I was still working full-time hours,” a young temporary worker said. “I’m classified as a disabled veteran, and I can’t get on full-time at GM. But they kept bothering me to fill out this paper, and I couldn’t figure out why. It’s because GM gets a tax credit for hiring disabled vets.

“Temps want to be hired full-time. But I was told that wouldn’t happen until [this contract takes effect] and that’s assuming that they’ll keep me instead of laying me off or firing me. They’re saying our local will work out whether we get hired in depending on how many people retire.”

The young worker also praised the stand taken by Mexican workers at GM’s Silao plant. “Someone posted a screenshot of the article about the Mexican workers supporting us on the UAW Facebook page, but they quickly took it down. The Mexican workers are getting the minimum to live and not enough to feed their families. American and Mexican workers have to come together so we all can have enough for our families.”

A full-time worker said, “The *Wall Street Journal* is

saying, ‘Of course, this is a great contract for workers.’ But inside the meeting today, workers were asking the union officials one thing after the other, about the temps, about the closing of Lordstown, about our pay. It was getting pretty heated.”

“We’ve got families too,” said a young temp worker who came to the meeting with her husband who is also a temp. “We can’t be walking a tightrope all the time, afraid to take a day off to take care of personal business. We get no sick leave, no benefits—and they say we have to work three straight years to get to full-time, and only if we aren’t laid off for more than 30 days. If we are, we go back down to zero.”

A veteran worker said, “They are trying to rush through this contract, like they have the last three. The UAW International think they are Congressmen who can use our money to go to Palm Springs and play golf. And the delegates from our local went and voted to put Jones and the others in.

“Everything is going up, housing prices, food, medical care—but our wages aren’t.”

Flint, Michigan

On Tuesday, Local 598, whose members work at Flint Truck Assembly, held its informational meetings at the Flint Cultural Center. UAW officials attempted to force out *Autoworker Newsletter* campaigners. They sought without success to discourage workers from taking copies of the *Newsletter*.

As with GM workers around the country, the question of temps was at the top of Flint workers’ minds. “If you listen to the media, they say seven percent of GM’s workforce are temps. But in Flint Assembly it’s 30 percent, the most of any other plant,” one worker said. “There are more than 1,500 temps. [But] they are saying we won’t qualify to be converted to full-time positions because we are only part-time temps, but we work full-time hours. I was working 50 hours a week before they knocked me down to 32 just before the strike.

“It would be in the interest of GM to hire nobody except temps. And the UAW is letting them do it. They’re supposed to support us, but they don’t. The UAW has millions in GM shares. If they get \$40 a month in dues from 1,000 temps they don’t have to represent that’s \$40,000 a month. A bunch of us temps are saying we

should just stop paying them dues.”

Another temporary worker said, “Temps used to have to be hired in after 90 days. And this contract is BS. When they had the bankruptcy we agreed to [their cuts] to get them back on their feet, so why aren’t you going to agree to a [better] contract with us, with 90 days and job security?

“I’m a temp. I started in July. After 90 days I should have already been hired in by now. And now you have to work years for almost the same pay, no raises, that’s baloney! They’re trying to keep the temps at the same wage to save hundreds of millions of dollars each year.

Don’t look at the signing bonus “and not read the fine print,” he continued.” What kind of contract goes on for 351 pages with what you know is some baloney? They want you to look at this \$11,000 bonus, but if you think about it, that’s the money that we would have been making if we weren’t on strike. And then they tax it at 42 percent.

The worker discussed the social devastation in Flint due to years factory closures by General Motors. “This is my first factory job. I used to be a schoolteacher for the Flint Board of Education. Due to lower enrollment they let like 700 of us go. This city has been devastated. And then they close down three plants, but, excuse my French, they don’t give a damn about their employees. That’s 17,000 people that went out with jobs. And they are taking these jobs overseas so they can pay those people \$1.90 so they can be greedy as hell and keep their salaries at \$22 million.

“You are treating us like s***. Especially the temps, and that’s [a huge portion] of your company! Why is it we are working year after year, and we don’t get any profit sharing, and we are in there busting our a**. I’m trying not to curse, but this is the way that I feel. We work the same amount of hours as the rest, and we don’t get paid vacation, we get no profit sharing, no bonuses or anything.

“The only thing that they give us after 90 days is the healthcare, but that’s bull. You work consistently for 90 days, let that person get that opportunity.”



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