

## UAW to autoworkers: “You don't get everything you want in life”

# More GM workers reject deal as UAW tries to suppress “no” votes

Jerry White  
24 October 2019

*Join us for an urgent discussion online tonight, Thursday, at 7:00 pm Eastern Time, examining the UAW-GM contract vote and the strategy needed to take the struggle forward.*

Striking General Motors in Kentucky, Tennessee, New York and Michigan have rejected the four-year deal brought back by the United Auto Workers despite the efforts of the UAW to suppress opposition and ram through the sellout agreement.

GM workers in Rochester, New York, who produce components for GM, voted overwhelmingly against the UAW-backed contract. Results posted on the UAW Local 1097 Facebook page Wednesday stated that of the 636 ballots cast, 526 voted “no,” or 83 percent. Only 110 “yes” votes were cast.

Workers at another components factory in Lockport, New York also overwhelmingly rejected the contract by a margin of 81 percent.

Both plants are run by General Motors Components Holding (GMCH), a GM subsidiary that operates four factories previously owned by Delphi Corporation. Under the terms of the UAW-GM contract, it will take GMCH workers eight years to reach top pay of \$22.50, or \$10 less than a full-time GM worker over the same period of time.

With no future product scheduled, the Rochester plant could be closed by 2022. Workers produced t-shirts displaying the text, “I walked the line for 30 days and all I got was this t-shirt.” On the back is a symbol of the UAW in a crossed-out circle.

“The ‘no’ votes are because of no promise of work,” one Rochester worker told the WSWs Autoworker Newsletter. “Without new work we will close.” He added, “Many people took concessions to save this company—no pensions, pay cuts, vacation cuts, and nothing has been returned. If 14 years ago, \$28 an hour was the livable wage, so, why now, with the even higher costs of living, is \$22 per hour acceptable?”

“We fought on the strike, and GMCH got nothing. Why strike and risk our households and health, if we weren’t going to be represented in negotiations?”

In Bowling Green, Kentucky, GM workers who build the Chevrolet Corvette Stingray sports car voted down the contract by a 55-45 percent margin, according to results released by UAW 2164. Fifty-two percent of skilled trades workers also voted against the contract at the plant that has 888 hourly employees.

Production workers at Lansing Redistribution Center in Michigan’s state capital voted by 55 percent against the contract, according to the UAW figures. The center has 166 hourly employees.

On Tuesday, workers at the Spring Hill, Tennessee assembly plant, which employs 3,330 hourly workers, also defeated the contract. In an effort to intimidate workers, Local 1853 officials called the police to threaten rank-and-file workers because they were campaigning to defeat the deal.

The “no” votes thus far and the deep hostility to the deal casts further suspicion on the UAW’s claim that Spring Hill workers defeated the contract by a very thin margin of 51-49 percent. Given that ratification requires 50 percent of the total vote, plus 1 more vote, the UAW is doing everything to suppress the total number of “no” votes.

The UAW intends to announce the ratification of the deal on Friday afternoon and an end to the strike come hell or high water. Its aims are so naked that GM has already reportedly announced the resumption of production for Saturday at its Flint Assembly plant, which produces some of its most profitable vehicles.

On Wednesday evening, the UAW claimed that the deal had passed at the Flint plant, the largest UAW local, by a margin of 61-39 percent. The official results released by UAW Local 598 cannot be accepted as accurate. There is deep opposition to the contract, particularly among temporary workers who make up more than 1,500 of the

4,800 hourly workers at the plant.

Under the terms of the UAW-backed deal, virtually none of the temps at Flint Assembly will meet the criteria for the supposed three-year “pathway” to a full-time job because GM and the UAW categorize them as part-time, not full-time temps. This is despite the fact that they work 40-50 hours a week.

There is widespread suspicion among workers over the integrity of the voting process, which is entirely controlled by the UAW, with no rank-and-file oversight.

UAW Region 1-C in the Flint area was previously led by Norwood Jewell, the former shop chairman of Local 659 at the Flint engine and metal center operations. Jewell is being sent to prison on January 1, 2020 for taking bribes from Fiat Chrysler in exchange for signing the sellout contract in 2015.

A close ally of Jewell at Local 659 who also moved up to the UAW International was Michael Grimes. Grimes has been charged in a multi-million kickback scheme involving misuse of training funds from the UAW-GM Center for Human Resources.

On Tuesday, another UAW official, Jeff “Paycheck” Pietrzyk, pleaded guilty for his role in the conspiracy, which allegedly involved the actions of Grimes and Joe Ashton, a former UAW vice president who headed up the 2011 UAW-GM national negotiating team. It is believed that Grimes and Pietrzyk are cooperating with federal investigators to charge Ashton, who was also the UAW’s representative on the GM board of directors until abruptly resigning when the corruption scandal first exploded.

In 2018, Local 659 called Grimes, the former shop chairman, “one of our own” who has “spent a lifetime helping and representing brothers and sisters in the UAW.”

These exposures have only deepened the opposition of workers to the UAW, which is attempting to defeat the strike and impose management’s dictates.

A Fort Wayne, Indiana worker on her way into an informational meeting told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* that the UAW “doesn’t care about us.” Referring to the bribe takers, she added, “They should get the hell out, and we should clean house.”

“This is a crappy contract,” said a young temporary worker carrying her small daughter with her to the meeting in Fort Wayne. “We’ve been on strike for a long time, but we want a contract that is right. The union is hoping people, especially the temps, will look at the signing bonuses and go for this. But there is no raise for the temps, and the wages are crap.

“They’re dangling the chance to become a temp in three years, but only if you don’t get laid off first. It’s like the lottery. You’re always hoping that you’re going to win, but

you aren’t ever going to win anything.”

Workers in Wentzville, Missouri reported that the UAW barred them from live streaming the “informational session.” The UAW officials are afraid that their efforts to dodge workers’ questions will provoke widespread anger among workers outside of the meeting.

One Wentzville worker told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* that Local 2250 Shop Chairman Alan Chambliss told workers, “You don’t get everything you want in life.” Lots of temps were talking to each other and going up to mic to challenge union officials over pay and seniority issues, she said.

After the meeting, one worker posted on Facebook, “They pulled the mic cord 45 seconds into my point that tier workers deserve top pay now, not in 4 or 6 or 8 years. They wouldn’t let me finish. A guy before me called tier workers entitled babies, and he was allowed to spew his filth. This is the UAW ... The UAW clearly doesn’t want you equal.”

One Arlington, Texas worker told the *WSWS* what happened at her meeting. It was “horrible,” she said. “No questions really answered. It took them two hours just to get to point #2.” She said that workers “were angry” when UAW officials told temps that they “should not have any absences or sick leave in three years” if they wanted a full-time job.

At several meetings, workers challenged union officials, saying the company would deduct the six-week strike from any accumulated “consecutive work” time needed for a temp to progress to a full-time position, and that therefore such workers would start a zero once the strike ended. There is nothing in the UAW-backed deal to prevent that.

The efforts by the UAW to betray the strike and impose management’s dictates can and must be stopped. But this means that workers must take the conduct of the struggle into their own hands by forming rank-and-file committees. These committees must oversee the voting process to stop vote-rigging and fraud, and rally Ford, Fiat Chrysler for an industry wide strike to win workers’ demands to defend their jobs, abolish the two-tier wage system and convert temps into full-time workers with full pay and benefits.



To contact the *WSWS* and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**