

“The UAW officials can’t be trusted, they’re greedy just like the company”

GM workers denounce UAW moves to end strike on management’s terms

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The United Auto Workers is rushing to end the 40-day strike by General Motors today and impose a deeply unpopular contract that will fundamentally transform conditions for workers throughout the global auto industry and beyond.

The UAW is acting as if the strike is already over. Workers in Arlington, Texas reported that the UAW began dismantling equipment on the picket lines Thursday before voting concludes on Friday. Workers in Flint, Michigan were told to get ready to return to work as early as the weekend, since GM had already scheduled production.

“They’re already taking down generators and other equipment,” an Arlington worker told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*. “They’re calling it quits before the vote is even over.” He said that there was widespread opposition to the sellout deal but that the UAW was exploiting the economic distress workers were in due to the poverty level strike pay doled out by the UAW itself.

None of the vote totals reported by the UAW can be taken as good coin. The entire voting process has been heavily manipulated, including the order of votes at locals, to push the contract through. There is no rank-and-file oversight of the balloting process, which is entirely controlled by an organization that has a vested interest in declaring a “yes” vote on Friday afternoon.

At the time of this writing, a running tally by *Automotive News* based on reports from UAW locals has 57 percent of production workers voting “yes” and 43 percent voting “no.” However, less than 50 percent of the votes are in. Results are not available for several

major assembly plants, including Arlington, Texas (5,078 workers); Ft. Wayne, Indiana (4,231); Fairfax, Kansas (2,198); and Delta Township, Michigan (2,350).

Workers resoundingly defeated the contract at two factories in Rochester and Lockport, New York with 80 percent and higher “no” votes. Both plants are run by General Motors Components Holding (GMCH), a GM subsidiary that operates four factories previously owned by Delphi Corporation.

The contract was also defeated at the Spring Hill, Tennessee assembly plant, despite the best efforts of the local leadership to suppress opposition, including calling the police on workers campaigning to defeat the sellout. Workers at the Bowling Green, Kentucky plant, which makes the Corvette Stingray sports car, also defeated the contract. The UAW, however, claims that the contract was defeated by narrow margins, 51-49 percent in Tennessee and 55-45 percent in Kentucky.

On the other hand, the UAW claimed last night that workers at Wentzville Assembly in Missouri voted by 65 percent in favor. It earlier reported that workers at the Flint Assembly Plant, one of the largest locals, voted “yes” by 60-40 percent, although the actual breakdown of the votes was not presented. The UAW also claimed workers at the neighboring Flint engine and metal centers ratified it by a 2-to-1 margin.

The UAW bureaucracy in Flint has long been dominated by corrupt elements, including former Local 651 officials Norwood Jewell and Mike Grimes, who have been convicted in the illegal bribe-taking and kickback scandal engulfing the UAW.

Workers said they had no doubt that UAW officials were capable of vote-rigging and fraud. “I was a monitor of an election,” a retired GM worker told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*, “and they do stuff the ballots.”

More than 30 percent of the workforce at the Flint Assembly Plant are temps. Virtually none of them will qualify for the bogus “pathway” to full-time employment because they are categorized as “part-time” temps, even though they work 40-50 hours a week.

Given the hostility to the contract, Flint workers expressed shock and disbelief with the large “yes” vote reported by the UAW.

“At our meeting, there were a lot of people against the contract, not just the temps but the more senior people too,” a young temp told the *Autoworker Newsletter*. “The union said it passed, but they have not released the actual numbers from the vote.”

She added, “The way I figure, I would have made \$4,500, the same as the signing bonus, if we were working instead of striking. So, why did we sacrifice to settle for this? This is a contract that GM wants. Corporate greed is at an all-time high.

“The UAW threw the bonus at us because they know people are in need, and it’s going to be Christmas soon. People voted under pressure. A lot are saying the UAW officials can’t be trusted, they’re greedy too, just like the company. They’ve been caught embezzling money.”

The UAW concocted a story about threats against the UAW International to delay to the very end at the Lordstown plant, where they expected to face an overwhelmingly rejection of the contract that sanctioned the closure of the plant.

A Lordstown worker told the newsletter, “The members have stood strong and have been ready to fight back. But the corruption of the International UAW was shown in the rollout meeting at UAW Local 1112 today. They did not have answers to the workers’ questions. We’ve been following the UAW International officials around, and they are giving one story to one local and another one to other locals.”

From beginning to end, this entire process has been illegitimate. The UAW is bought-and-paid-for by the auto bosses. It has been run by criminals under investigation or arrest for taking bribes from the

company to force through concessions contracts. Workers know even if they vote against the contract, the UAW would not bring back anything better.

Even as it works to shut down the GM strike, the UAW announced yesterday that it had reached an agreement to end the Mack-Volvo strike, and it is preparing to sell out the Detroit Diesel workers.

Whatever the UAW declares at its press conference today to announce final totals for the vote, the basic issue facing autoworkers is the same. Workers cannot defend their interests unless they build rank-and-file factory committees that fight for what workers need, not what the corporations and their stooges in the UAW say is affordable.

These committees must fight for the expansion of the strike to Ford and Fiat Chrysler. At the same time, US autoworkers must unite with Canadian and Mexican workers and demand the reinstatement of the nine GM Silao workers fired for resisting demands to increase output during the US strike.



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