

After announcing agreement with Ford, UAW seeking to force through sellout deal

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The United Auto Workers announced a tentative agreement for a contract covering 55,000 Ford autoworkers late Wednesday evening.

The deal can only be a sellout on the scale of that at General Motors, if not worse. The UAW is hoping to quickly bulldoze opposition among workers at Ford, and then Fiat Chrysler. It is desperate to prevent a revolt against its pro-corporate “pattern” agreement with the Big Three automakers by any means possible.

Ford workers must draw the critical lesson of the GM strike: In order to prevent the UAW from once again enforcing the company’s demands, workers must act now to form rank-and-file factory committees and mobilize support among Chrysler and GM workers for an all-out fight.

The UAW moved on to Ford as the next bargaining “target” after it shut down the powerful 40-day strike by GM workers last Friday, securing a concessions contract that sanctions the closure of Lordstown Assembly and other plants and enables GM to massively expand its temporary workforce.

The UAW was only able to achieve a questionable “ratification” by wearing workers down with \$250-275 a week in strike pay and isolating GM workers by refusing to call out workers at Ford and Chrysler.

The media has claimed that UAW negotiations with Ford over major economic issues just began “in earnest” Monday. In reality, the company-bribed UAW officials have had a deal with Ford for weeks, waiting to spring it on workers as soon the GM strike was safely shut down.

Union officials are moving quickly because they know there is widespread determination among workers to fight. “I’m ready to strike for the elimination of tiers and to make the temps permanent,” a veteran Ford Kentucky worker told the WSWS *Autoworker*

Newsletter earlier in the week. “When I was hired over 20 years ago, the old timers fought for me. I will gladly fight for the younger generation. Pay has gone downhill, and so has the way the workers are hired.”

The UAW stated Wednesday that its UAW-Ford National Council would convene on Friday, which will undoubtedly rubber-stamp “Solidarity House’s” agreement.

In a statement announcing the deal, UAW-Ford Vice President Rory Gamble wrote, “Our negotiating team worked diligently during the General Motors strike to maintain productive negotiations with Ford.”

“The pattern bargaining strategy has been a very effective approach for UAW and its members to secure economic gains around salary, benefits and secured over \$6 billion in major product investments in American facilities, creating and retaining over 8,500 jobs for our communities,” Gamble claimed.

Gamble and the UAW are hoping that workers have become stricken with collective amnesia. The UAW has spent the last 40 years selling off one right after another: creating and expanding the wage and benefit tier system, massively expanding temporary and part-time workers, and abolishing the eight-hour day, COLA benefits and pensions.

All these concessions have in fact gone hand in hand with the shutdown of plants and the destruction of hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Making clear that the UAW will keep workers in the dark about the proposed contract, Gamble cynically continued, “Out of respect for our members, we will refrain from commenting or releasing full details of the agreement until the UAW-Ford Council leaders meet and review the details.”

The UAW wants to rush through a vote at Ford in order to prevent opposition to its conspiracy with the

automakers from getting out of its control. Ford is planning to deprive workers of information until the last minute and then distort the terms of the contract on social media and in fraudulent “contract summaries” and “educational meetings.”

If it deems necessary, it would not hesitate to engage in ballot stuffing, as workers widely accused it of in the 2015 vote. That year, the UAW rescheduled its vote at the Ford Dearborn Truck Plant to the very end, allegedly used trash cans as ballot boxes, and ultimately announced a razor-thin ratification of 51 percent.

As with the other automakers, investors are pressing Ford to cut health care costs, which are estimated to top \$1 billion next year.

“Ford and the UAW have to figure out what the company gets out of this deal,” Kristin Dzciczek of the industry-aligned Center for Automotive Research told the *Detroit Free Press*. “The elimination of the wage gap between in-progression and legacy [workers] will be costly, and Ford will want offsets. Ford has some powertrain capacity issues, but will not be able to achieve anywhere near the cost savings that GM did by shuttering Lordstown and the three other locations.”

Workers should give no credibility to the UAW-company claims leaked to the media that the deal will “creatively contain” health care costs without raising workers’ out-of-pocket expenditures or limiting access to care.

Wall Street has been punishing Ford’s share price over the last year, demanding that CEO Jim Hackett accelerate his restructuring plan and attacks on workers. Any deal that fails to achieve the necessary cost savings and secure the steady flow of profits to Ford’s large shareholders is a nonstarter for the company’s financial backers.

Ford, along with all the other major automakers, is engaged in a global campaign to attack autoworkers’ jobs and increase workers’ exploitation as it prepares to meet the high investment costs of new technologies.

On Monday, Ford announced that it was cutting 450 positions at its Oakville assembly plant in Ontario, Canada, and on Wednesday, it completed the closure of its oldest plant in Brazil.

For its part, Fiat Chrysler, whose contract with the UAW would be up next, revealed this week that it is in advanced stages of merger talks with Europe’s PSA Group, which would inevitably entail a sharp escalation

of attacks on workers’ jobs across several continents.

The formation of rank-and-file committees independent of the UAW is an urgent necessity. Such committees must assert workers’ control of balloting and ensure that the UAW is unable to once again tamper with the contract vote.

There is sentiment among workers at GM, Ford, Chrysler and elsewhere to carry out a collective struggle. A key task of rank-and-file committees will be to immediately appeal for support and the mobilization of other sections—teachers in Chicago, copper miners, Amazon and UPS workers—and reach out to workers in Mexico, Canada, Europe, and elsewhere to coordinate the fight for workers’ rights internationally.



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