

Ford workers must reject deal patterned on UAW-GM sellout

Jerry White

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On Wednesday night, the United Auto Workers announced that it had reached a tentative agreement with Ford and plans to get 55,000 workers to ratify the deal by next Friday. Although the details are not due to be released until after the UAW-Ford National Council meeting today, there is no doubt that this deal, like the one at GM, has been written by the auto executives to ensure everything they are demanding.

Announcing the four-year deal, UAW Vice President Rory Gamble said, “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.”

By the next morning it was revealed that the agreement will allow Ford to close the engine plant in Romeo, Michigan, which employs nearly 700 workers. This is only the first of what is sure to be scores of job-cutting measures included in the “pattern” agreement.

At GM, the UAW gave the company the green light to close four plants and distribution centers, to push 2,000 higher-paid legacy workers out the door and to build up a workforce largely of temps who can be thrown out of work without incurring any costs during an economic downturn.

“As we need to hire additional workers, we will utilize those temps,” GM CEO Mary Barra told Wall Street analysts as she gloated about the new agreement earlier this week. “I am very proud that we provided an appropriate path to permanent employment to our temporary workforce, and maintained the in-progression flow, so we will utilize both of those depending on the situation.”

Under the terms of the UAW-GM agreement, the pathway to permanent employment is certainly

“appropriate” for the auto bosses and the UAW, but not for the thousands of temps at GM, Ford and Fiat Chrysler.

Temps will have to work three “consecutive” years without being laid off for more than 30 days before being considered for full-time employment. Otherwise, the clock will start again.

The contract will also give the UAW enormous power to decide who is worthy of full-time positions, exposing workers to more abuse at the hands of the UAW, which will be transformed into nothing more than a temp agency.

Summing up what GM had achieved in the new contract, GM’s CFO Dhivya Suryadevara boasted, “We have maintained our ability to adjust our workforce in response to changing industry levels, protected the balance sheet with no increases to defined benefit pension obligations and no payments or increased obligations to retirees.”

This is the “pattern” that the UAW is bringing to Ford workers, if not worse. Ford executives have said they will not accept the GM pattern on health care benefits and will demand higher out-of-pocket contributions from workers.

As for Fiat Chrysler, which is now merging with European-based PSA, they already have the largest temp workforce and the lowest labor costs, and they have no intention of changing that.

If Ford and Fiat Chrysler workers are not to face the same fate as GM workers, they must take the conduct of the struggle out of the hands of the United Auto Workers and organize themselves through the formation of rank-and-file factory committees at every work location.

These committees must act immediately to prevent the UAW from rushing through sellout contracts before

workers have sufficient time to study, discuss and organize opposition. At the same time these committees should prepare joint strike action by Ford and Fiat Chrysler workers and expand the struggle to GM and the auto parts industry.

In the UAW, workers face no less a bitter enemy than the auto bosses. Knowing that they could not get another nakedly pro-company contract past a rebellious workforce, Solidarity House concluded that it had no choice but to call a strike at GM.

But the UAW deliberately isolated GM workers, keeping Ford and Fiat Chrysler workers on the job, while seeking to starve GM workers into submission with poverty level strike payments that hardly put a dent in Solidarity House's \$800 billion strike (slush) fund.

After more than a month on strike, the UAW announced a deal and then held a quick succession of propaganda meetings and ratification votes. In a demonstration of the UAW's contempt for the democratic rights of workers, local union officials in Spring Hill, Tennessee called the cops on militant workers campaigning for a "no" vote.

In the end, the UAW claimed the deal passed by 57-43 percent. Though many workers challenged the UAW numbers, if it really passed it is only because workers knew if they rejected it the UAW would leave them on the picket lines for a week longer and then bring back the same deal.

The UAW has spent the last four decades colluding with corporate management against autoworkers. In exchange for its services, top UAW officials have received billions of dollars in "legal" and illegal bribes. On Thursday, Edward "Nick" Robinson, the chief aide to UAW President Gary Jones, was the latest UAW official to be indicted in the federal corruption probe of the UAW.

The UAW is not a workers' organization. It is a criminal syndicate. In the aftermath of the GM strike, the UAW has colluded with GM in a wave of retaliation against workers, including the firing of at least three Flint Assembly workers for comments they posted on social media. Workers have also informed the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* that UAW committeemen and shop stewards in FCA plants are telling temps and second tier workers they will lose their jobs if they vote to reject the coming contract.

It would be folly for workers to think that the UAW will treat Ford and Fiat Chrysler workers any differently than the GM workers. Autoworkers have every legal and moral right to organize themselves, defy the dictates of the corrupt company agents of the UAW, and come together to fight for what workers and their families need, not what Wall Street and the corporate CEOs say is affordable.

There is enormous support for a fight back in the US and around the world. In Mexico, GM workers refused to increase production during the US strike and have stood up to firings and blacklisting.

It is time for Ford and Fiat Chrysler workers build rank-and-file committees and fight to mobilize the broadest sections of workers against the efforts of the auto bosses to bring back conditions of industrial slavery not seen since the 1920s.



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