

Chicago Ford workers reject UAW agreement

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Nearly two-thirds of production workers at Ford's Chicago Assembly Plant have voted to reject the sellout tentative agreement the United Auto Workers is seeking to impose on 55,000 Ford workers. At the first major Ford assembly plant to vote, 1,497 workers (62 percent) voted "no" on the deal and 913 (38 percent) voted "yes," according to figures released by UAW Local 551.

The decisive rejection is the first for the UAW-backed deal, which is widely opposed for retaining the two-tier wage and benefit system, sanctioning the closure of the Romeo, Michigan engine plant and pushing out thousands of higher-paid "legacy" workers who will be replaced with low-paid temps and contract workers. On top of that, punitive absentee policies used to fire and discipline workers remain in place, a joint UAW-Ford committee will seek to reduce medical coverage and retirees will get no cost-of-living increases or improved health benefits.

The deal is patterned on the agreement the UAW reached with General Motors after isolating the 40-day strike of 48,000 GM workers. The UAW narrowly pushed through the new four-year contract amid charges of intimidation, ballot-stuffing and other fraud. But the resounding defeat in Chicago is a blow to the plans of the UAW, whose officials thought after the experience of the betrayed GM strike, Ford and Fiat Chrysler workers would be in no mood to walk out and would have to swallow the concessions deal.

There is widespread opposition to the collusion between the UAW and Ford at the Chicago plant, which employs over 5,000 hourly workers. "Management and union are in bed with each other," one Chicago worker told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*. "Our union is so corrupt. They try to deteriorate solidarity."

"The Temporary Part-Time (TPT) workers do the same work, and actually even harder work, than the full-

time people on the line and they have no protection, no pay, no health care, no benefits. Then they can get full-time when they move up to Short-Term Supplemental, but that's not guaranteed. They can switch you right back to TPT whenever they want, and you have to start from the bottom again. That is wrong, it should not be happening. Everyone needs job security."

Votes are scheduled today at the Buffalo Stamping Plant in western New York as well as the Michigan Assembly Plant, Flat Rock Assembly and the Rawsonville plant, located in the suburbs of Detroit. The deal includes special operating agreements to supposedly "save" the Buffalo and Rawsonville plants, which undoubtedly include "competitive wage structures," which pay lower than traditional wages.

The UAW will do everything it can to ram through this contract including resorting, as it did in 2015, to outright vote fraud. Workers report that UAW officials threatened workers for simply questioning the deal at an informational meeting Wednesday at the Local 600 union hall in Dearborn, Michigan. This underscores the necessity of workers forming rank-and-file committees, independent of the corrupt UAW, to oversee the voting process and to link up with Fiat Chrysler and GM workers to prepare an industry-wide strike.

The WSWS Autoworker Newsletter is holding a call-in meeting Thursday, 7 pm EST, to discuss a strategy for autoworkers to fight. To register, go to: wsws.org/autocall



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