

# UAW officials try to bully workers for opposing Ford deal at Michigan meeting

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During a meeting Wednesday afternoon to discuss the proposed Ford contract, United Auto Workers Local 600 officials sidestepped questions and attempted to bully workers into accepting the sellout deal, several workers at the meeting told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*.

Local 600 covers 7,800 workers at the Dearborn Truck Plant, which builds Ford's highly profitable F-150 pickup trucks, along with Dearborn Stamping, an engine plant and several other smaller facilities.

Around 300 workers attended the November 6 meeting, which local officials said would provide an explanation of the tentative agreement so workers could "make a responsible decision when voting for ratification."

According to workers who attended the meeting, however, local and national UAW officials sidestepped questions, shouted at workers and used physical intimidation to silence opposition.

These workers reported that a veteran autoworker with 29 years seniority said the contract had not restored the principle of "equal pay for equal work," which the UAW abandoned when they accepted the two-tier wage system in 2007. The worker also reportedly questioned how the ballots would be counted—a question on the mind of many workers given widespread allegations that UAW Local 600 officials rigged the vote to get the contract passed in 2015.

Officials at the front of the meeting told the worker that his questions would be answered if he moved to one side of the meeting hall to discuss it separately with union officials. When he approached the union officials, however, they began shouting at him and he left the meeting, witnesses told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*.

"They kicked him out for talking about equal pay for equal work," one worker told the newsletter. He added that the meeting became even more contentious afterwards, with workers peppering the union officials

with questions and criticisms.

UAW officials told the workers that the deal with Ford was the "best they could get."

They said past concessions were necessary to keep Ford—which just posted \$3 billion in third quarter profits—"globally competitive." The only reason workers still had jobs, the UAW said, was because the UAW had "agreed to givebacks."

This generated a shout from the floor, with one worker saying, "You guys only care about the shareholders." The worker then left the meeting in disgust.

"No, no, no we don't," came the pathetic reply from the Local 600 officials. The indignant protests sounded similar to the comments made by former UAW Vice President Norwood Jewell to Toledo, Ohio Jeep workers at a contract meeting in September 2015, when he said, "I'm telling you there is not one of us up here—and shame on you for suggesting otherwise—that has anything but the best interest of our membership in mind."

Workers responded with howls of laughter to Jewell, who will be going to jail for taking bribes from Fiat Chrysler.

Local 600 had all the temporary employees go over to one side of the meeting so that the full meeting could not hear the wretched terms that would be imposed on the

most exploited. Workers with three years of "consecutive work" will be rolled over to full-time and make only \$18.40 an hour. If they are laid off more than 31 days, the three-year clock can be started all over again.

Rank-and-file workers raised a number of other questions that were not answered, with union executives claiming that they had no idea what the contract contained about these issues.

"How can we vote on a contract when the people who were supposed to have negotiated it do not even know what's in it?" one veteran worker told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*.

Workers said the district premium that was paid in the last contract was not what workers were told in previous informational meetings four years ago. “We were not told the truth,” a worker charged union officials, according to witnesses.

A worker came from the Ford plant in Flat Rock, Michigan to denounce the “competitive operating agreement” at that factory. Contractor Roush Automotive is repairing trucks for wages that are a lot lower, he said, and Roush workers have to buy their own health care insurance. “Why can’t we be fixing those trucks?” he demanded to know. “You have to do that under the local agreement,” the union officials replied.

Another issue which came up in the meeting, a veteran worker told the newsletter, is that the C-Crew—which works split shifts during the week—is not getting paid shift premiums after ten hours. Multiple grievances are also getting swept under the rug, workers said. Lower seniority workers do not get vacation days and have to take their vacation days during shut down. What is worse, if they have not accrued adequate vacation time, they have to go on unemployment during shut down.

“The membership was not strongly in favor of being able to take vacation days when we want,” the local officials claimed. But the truth is that rank-and-file workers have absolutely no say-so in the negotiations, and the UAW does what management demands and ignores what workers need and want.

Summing up the widely-felt disgust with the UAW, one worker at the meeting later told the *Autoworker Newsletter*, “‘We have to be competitive means’, ‘You are not getting anything better than this.’ People feel like they are not represented.”

In 2007, the UAW handed over \$607 million in concessions to Ford, which was supposed to have been reimbursed when the company turned a profit. When the workers raised the matter, the reply was the same: “You are working today because we did that then. If we didn’t give up concessions, Ford would be building all its trucks in Mexico.”

In the contract the UAW is telling workers to ratify now, the Christmas bonus of \$1,500 is taken away and allowed absences are reduced from 9 to 7. “The union kept saying, ‘We fought for this, we fought for that,’ but they just gave things back,” he said.

In 2015, workers charged that Local 600 officials stuffed the ballot in 2015, enabling the UAW to claim that the contract passed nationally by a razor thin majority of 51-49 percent. Appeals for a recount to the UAW

International’s Public Review Board were rejected out of hand. Once again workers are raising concerns over the way the local is conducting its balloting.

One worker who attended Wednesday’s meeting told the WWS, “Nobody knew there was going to be a vote, or how the process was going to take place. The barrels are just sitting there from today until next Wednesday,” she said, referring to barrels the union uses to collect ballots. “It raised a lot of red flags in my eyes,” she said.

Outside the meeting, Local 600 officials also tried to bully supporters of the WWS *Autoworker Newsletter* who were passing out statements calling for a “No” vote on the contract. A group of five or six bureaucrats surrounded the WWS supporters and told them that public sidewalks outside of the union hall all belonged to the UAW and demanded that they cross the street. Then they followed the *Autoworker Newsletter* supporters, telling them that those sidewalks also belonged to the UAW.

In 2015, Local 600 officials physically ejected two WWS reporters from a public press conference where then-UAW Vice President Jimmy Settles threatened that workers would lose their jobs if they voted down the agreement.

Local 600 is the home local of UAW Interim President Rory Gamble, who recently took over from Gary Jones after federal prosecutors closed in on Jones as part of their investigation in the embezzlement of union funds.

Gamble was Local 600 vice president for two terms in the 2000s, when deep concessions were imposed on Ford workers. He was then promoted to UAW Region 1-A Director for three terms. While Gamble claims to be “cleaning up” the UAW, he is part of a corrupt union apparatus and, as head of the UAW-Ford Department, is the chief architect of the sellout contract the UAW is now trying to ram past Ford workers.

Ironically, a historical marker on the side of the Local 600 union hall honors the four workers murdered during the 1932 Hunger March at the Ford Rouge complex, when Dearborn police and Ford security guards shot and clubbed hundreds of workers demanding jobs during the Great Depression. Over the last four decades, Ford has outsourced its thuggery to the UAW.



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