

Ford Kentucky Truck workers speak out against contract: “The people on the floor don’t trust the UAW”

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Autoworkers continue to voice their opposition to the United Auto Workers’ tentative agreement with Ford Motor Co., which 55,000 workers are voting on through November 15.

Balloting began early last week, just a few days after UAW President Gary Jones announced that he was taking a leave of absence under the cloud of the ever-expanding corruption scandal. Two of Jones’ former lieutenants at the UAW Region 5 office, Vance Pearson and Edward Robinson, have now been charged for their part in a scheme to embezzle union funds, and Jones has been widely reported to be the unnamed “UAW Official A” who allegedly led the conspiracy and attempted its cover-up.

After the Ford Chicago plant voted down the tentative agreement by an overwhelming margin, the UAW has since announced “yes” votes at a series of smaller and mid-size plants, such as Buffalo Stamping, Chicago Stamping, Michigan Assembly, and Flat Rock Assembly. Late Sunday night, Local 249 reported that production workers at one of the larger plants, Ford Kansas City Assembly, had supposedly passed the deal by just 55 percent.

A worker at the Kansas City plant told the WSWs that even those who voted “know it’s a bad contract. But when you have committeemen going around the plant telling them that they’ll go on strike for 45 days and have the same contract sent back to them they believe it. Especially after seeing what happened at GM.”

He said Local 249 officials “flip flopped from announcing it was a bad deal and that they voted it down in the council meeting to making a [Facebook] post recommending to vote in favor of ratification. That

doesn’t exactly make anyone feel good about their chances of bargaining for more either. Pretty much everyone believes that the IUAW [International UAW] has pressured them in some kind of way to say that. Lots of frustration at the moment. I believe everyone, regardless of how they voted, feels like the IUAW is corrupt.”

Even if one were to take the UAW’s vote totals at face value—and given the union’s record of corruption and reputation for ballot tampering, there is every reason to view them with suspicion—they reveal widespread opposition to the UAW’s proposed contract. The deal would allow the closure of the Romeo Engine plant, sanction the use of video monitoring of workstations and other surveillance methods, and enable Ford to expand its highly exploited temporary workforce.

The union is continuing its “informational” meetings at locals this week, in which it is attempting to sell the deal either through lies, or, failing that, by browbeating workers and telling them that it’s “the best deal they’ll get.” Fearing opposition would get out of its control if a large “no” vote broke through, it has scheduled the biggest local union, UAW Local 862, which covers over 12,000 workers at Kentucky Truck Assembly and Louisville Assembly, at the very end.

Reporters for the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* recently traveled to Louisville to speak with autoworkers. A second-tier (“in-progression”) worker at Kentucky Truck contacted the WSWs and said, “I received the *Autoworker Newsletter* today as I was leaving my shift at KTP. I am very happy that people are getting the word out and spreading awareness about the issues we are facing.

“There shouldn’t be a tier system. I mean, it’s ridiculous... We’ve got a temporary who’s been on our team almost three years. He’s been doing the same job as I do or anybody else on the team does and he’s not making as much as we are, but he should be. It’s just ridiculous. The tier system, it divides everybody and it’s just no good.”

Speaking on the UAW’s starvation of striking GM workers, he continued, “The \$250 [strike] pay, that’s ridiculous too. That won’t pay child support, car payments, house payments, that’s no money to live off of. The GM contract in general, those people stood out there forever. And it’s like GM doesn’t appreciate them. We don’t want to feel that way here. So why not give us a good contract instead of threatening to move jobs or close plants here. You’ve made billions of dollars. I mean, come on.”

He continued, “I am deeply concerned about my future. Working at Ford is very challenging. The shift schedule is grueling, it takes away from time with family and friends. I work overtime almost every day. I am lucky to have the opportunity to take a drink of water between trucks. In the summer it’s hotter in the plant than outside of it. The fans we are lucky to have do little to help.

“I believe most doubt the union’s ability to negotiate a better deal. We just don’t feel like it’s been written in good faith. At the meetings there were members from the hourly negotiating committee trying to sell this contract. They said, ‘This is the best deal we can get—we follow pattern bargaining.’

“We also have concerns about the voting process. The people on the floor don’t trust the UAW.”

A younger worker at KTP said in relation to the contract, “I’m not just thinking about myself. I’m thinking about everybody, the temps, everybody. They are expanding TPT’s in the new contract. It’s wrong.”

The *Autoworker Newsletter* also spoke with a worker at Kentucky Truck who is employed by a third-party contractor, Leadec, an industrial services company based in Germany. The worker said, “We top out at \$15.88. For the dirty work we are doing, there are people making double our top pay. It is unfair and unjust. It is insane we are doing something that is so dangerous, for so little. All of these jobs used to be done at full pay. But the UAW has been steadily giving them back bit by bit. That is enabling Ford to cut their

cost. They should not be able to do that.

“The UAW is corrupt. That is sad to say that something that is supposed to protect everybody is hurting everybody. And with a company as big as Ford, they care so little about their employees. They are cutting our pay and medical benefits. This is crazy that one of the top car companies in the world is treating their employees like this.

“This plant [Kentucky Truck] here makes them some of the most money. They are making billions, but they are cutting everybody’s pay when they could easily pay it and give people raises. We are going to have to take the wealth away from them.”

The worker agreed that international collaboration is necessary in order to successfully fight back, saying, “The only way to do it is to unite with workers in Mexico and Canada and Europe. That is the only way to do it. Not one single plant, or one single country can do it on their own.”

The WSWS Autoworker Newsletter is holding its next online meeting Thursday at 7 p.m. Eastern Time to discuss how to oppose the UAW’s pro-company conspiracies and fight for workers’ interests. To register, go to wsws.org/autocall



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