

Detroit Diesel workers repudiate UAW sellout, vote by 79 percent to reject pro company deal

Shannon Jones
10 May 2022

Workers at Detroit Diesel sent a concessions contract brought by the United Auto Workers (UAW) to a resounding defeat in voting Tuesday. The margin announced by UAW Local 164 was 79 percent “no” to 21 percent “yes,” although the actual vote totals were not available at the time of this writing.

The vote is a powerful statement of unity and determination by 1,300 workers, who supply engines critical to the operations of Daimler Trucks and Freightliner. It is also part of a growing rebellion by workers against both management and the corrupt union bureaucracy, aimed at overturning decades of concessions and winning substantial raises in the face of record inflation. The vote took place amid an ongoing strike by 1,000 workers at farm and heavy equipment maker CNH in Iowa and Wisconsin and massive contract rejection votes and strikes by workers at Volvo and John Deere last year.

The vote, however, is only a first step. The UAW made clear in informational meetings last Friday that even if the contract were voted down, it would defy a 98 percent strike authorization vote and keep workers on the job. It was also adamant that any second agreement would contain no significant improvements on the fundamentals.

Without the independent intervention of workers, the UAW will simply repackage the same contract terms and force a revote. This means that workers need to organize themselves to take their struggle forward against both management attacks and the UAW’s betrayals by forming a rank-and-file committee to demand strike action and mobilize broader support from autoworkers and brother Daimler Truck workers in the US and globally.

The contract workers rejected provided a derisory 8 percent pay increase over five years and 10 months, back weighted to the end of the contract. This under conditions where inflation is running at 8.5 percent annually. In a further insult, the deal imposed higher out-of-pocket medical costs and maintained the two-tier wage structure, with new-hires earning significantly lower pay.

In rejecting this miserable contract, workers did not take the bait of a \$6,000 ratification bonus offered by management or accept the lying claims of local officials that the deal was a “great contract.” Workers well understood that the bonus and pathetic wage increases will be quickly wiped out by price rises and medical costs, resulting in a huge lowering of workers’ living standards.

The complete disdain of the UAW towards the membership was demonstrated by its decision to attempt to foist a contract on workers whose language had not even been finalized. In other words, the UAW and management were seeking a blank check which they could fill in with whatever they wanted after the fact.

The hostility of workers toward the sellout contract was evident at Detroit Diesel Tuesday. Most workers spoken to by Socialist Equality Party supporters outside the plant said they wanted to vote “no” and were eager to take copies of the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* with a statement addressed to Detroit Diesel workers.

The *Autoworker Newsletter* called for the rejection of the contract and for workers at Detroit Diesel to take the initiative by building a rank-and-file committee to organize a real fight for a decent contract. It called on

workers to demand the launching of a strike to fight for a contract that meets workers' needs for decent wages and benefits and safe and healthy working conditions.

Through the building of a rank-and-file committee, workers can assert their own interests by discussing and adopting demands based on what workers actually need, not what management and the UAW say the company can afford. A rank-and-file committee would allow workers to cut through management and union lies and misinformation to keep workers updated with timely and accurate reports.

Workers must insist that all future negotiating sessions be live-streamed over the internet for workers to view, and representatives from the rank and file be present. If the UAW rejects these conditions, then the bargaining committee must be thrown out and replaced with representatives from the rank and file.

The *Autoworker Newsletter* suggests that workers fight for demands that correspond to the actual conditions they face, not what management says it needs to be "competitive."

This includes:

- Cost-of-living adjustments fully indexed to inflation.
- A 40 percent wage increase to catch up with inflation and make up for decades of concessions and wage stagnation.
- Fully paid medical, with no deductibles or co-pays.
- A three-year maximum contract expiration.
- Workers' control over health and safety, including the right to refuse to work in case of a coronavirus outbreak.
- Restoration of full pensions and retiree health care for all classes of workers.

Detroit Diesel workers are in a powerful position, but they must organize themselves now for a fight. For assistance in organizing a rank-and-file committee, reach out to the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact