After keeping workers in the dark, UAW announces snap contract vote at Detroit Diesel

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Less than two weeks after 1,300 workers at Detroit Diesel in Redford, Michigan decisively voted down a six-year concessionary tentative contract agreement, the United Auto Workers announced a vote on a new deal for next Tuesday. Information meetings will be held today before and after work shifts where UAW officials will review contract "highlights."

Detroit Diesel workers voted by a 4 to 1 margin to reject a proposed settlement on May 10 that provided for an insulting 8 percent pay increase over six years with no cost of living adjustments. The contract maintained the hated two tier pay scale and reduced the wage progression from an outrageous nine years to six years by apparently reducing the maximum pay. It also institutes higher out-of-pocket costs for medical. To try to sell the deal, the UAW obtained a pathetic $6,000 signing bonus.

In reaching this miserable settlement, the UAW trampled on the 98 percent strike authorization vote turned out by members last month ahead of the April 29 contract deadline. Without explanation the UAW has ruled out a strike and refused at any point to set a strike deadline. The reason for this is fairly evident. Overseeing the talks is UAW President Ray Curry, who receives a $150,000 per year salary as a labor representative on the Mercedes Benz board of directors. Mercedes Benz is the parent company of Daimler Trucks and Detroit Diesel.

A Detroit Diesel worker contacted by the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* said that the UAW was rushing the vote and keeping workers in the dark.

"Why are we having meetings Friday and then voting on Tuesday? I don't know what they are trying to pull off here. Why wouldn't you just wait to Monday and vote the following week?

"In that short period of time, what could have changed? That's what I am curious to see."

UAW Local 163 at Detroit Diesel turned off commenting on its Facebook page after the previous membership vote to reject the agreement. UAW officials have also sought to harass*Autoworker Newsletter* reporters seeking to speak to workers about contract developments. By their actions the UAW demonstrates that they view workers, not management, as their real adversaries.

If the contract is so good, as the UAW claims, then there should be no problem giving workers the time needed to review the full contract details and discuss among themselves. The only reason to rush to a vote is if there is something to hide.

Throughout the contract negotiations, the UAW has maintained a complete information blackout, even refusing to reveal the union's contract demands. In the wake of the previous contract rejection vote UAW Local 163 shop chair "Gibby" Gibson stated that the union would not renegotiate the main economic package, meaning that whatever deal is unveiled Friday will keep in place management's wretched pay offer, which under the current rate of inflation would amount to a massive pay cut.

Such backroom wheeling and dealing only serves the bosses, who, after all, know exactly what is taking place in the talks. The only ones left in the dark are workers.

A Detroit Diesel worker told the *Autoworker Newsletter*, "It sounds like we are getting the same exact contract fed to us, maybe a few tweaks, but that's it.

"We need to find out what is in the contract. The full contract, not just the highlights. That's been a past practice for years," he said referring to the practice of the UAW withholding the full contract for review by

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the membership. “They just give out the highlights and then we later find out ‘this is in there?’ We had no idea.”

“As far as workers’ demands, they collect sheets and you turn them in, workers fill them out individually. I didn’t fill one out this year, because everything we always want, we never get.

“Everybody wants the cost of living. Some people say we make good money, over six years that money will change with inflation, people need to realize that.”

Another worker reported that workers had faced discipline for Facebook posts that were deemed hostile to management.

“Workers don’t like that the retirees only got a $100 monthly raise” in the previous tentative agreement, he said. “When they turn 65 they are shunted to Medicare and given a one-time $30,000 lump sum to buy supplemental insurance. The wage increase also did not keep up with inflation. When they got rid of the cost of living, they had justified it, saying we could negotiate something better, but that never happened.”

Workers at Detroit Diesel must mobilize now to reject whatever rotten agreement the UAW attempts to foist and prepare for all-out strike action to win demands that meet their real needs, not concessions contract dictated by management.

We advise workers to take control of the struggle themselves, independent of the UAW, to wage a real struggle for their demands.

The WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* recommends the following proposals as a starting point:

• Cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) 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 and 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; and

• Restoration of full pensions and retiree health care for all classes of workers.

Workers who are interested in organizing a rank-and-file committee can contact the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* for assistance.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

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