

UAW claims ratification of sellout contract at Detroit Diesel

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The United Auto Workers reported Tuesday night the ratification of a deeply regressive six-year contract deal by 73 percent by workers at Detroit Diesel. The contract covers 1,300 workers at the engine plant in Redford, Michigan west of Detroit.

The deal was identical in most fundamentals to the one workers rejected by a 4-1 ratio on May 10. Assuming the results are legitimate and not the result of ballot fraud by the UAW, the vote was not an expression of confidence in the UAW but just the opposite. Workers had no confidence that the UAW could be made to fight in their interests for a decent contract. Workers found themselves up against a brick wall, facing a “union” whose president Ray Curry sits on the board of directors of Detroit Diesel’s parent company Mercedes Benz AG.

From the outset of the contract struggle, the UAW ruled out strike action against the highly profitable engine maker, which supplies Daimler Trucks. The UAW also brushed aside a 98 percent strike mandate returned by workers and announced a sellout deal after ignoring the contract deadline.

Facing massive opposition to the first sellout deal, the UAW warned that if workers voted it down, the union would not seek any changes to the major economic package. True to their word, the new deal is largely a rehash of the previously rejected contract.

The second tentative agreement contains a cumulative 10 percent general wage increase, back weighted to the end of the contract, with no cost-of-living raises. The pay increase will be vastly outstripped by inflation, now running at 8.3 percent a year, potentially exposing workers to a 30 percent pay cut over the duration of the contract. The contract maintains the divisive two-tier pay structure, merely reducing the marathon nine-year pay progression to six years over the course of

agreement. These pathetic “gains” are offset by higher out-of-pocket medical costs.

To sell this, the United Auto Workers agreed to a \$7,000 signing bonus aimed at luring debt-burdened workers into voting “yes.” In the second, third and fourth years of the agreement, the company added a 4 percent bonus that is not folded into base pay.

In advance of the vote, the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* issued a statement calling for the rejection of the deal and for workers to take matters into their own hands by organizing a fight independent of the UAW. It warned: “The very fact that the UAW has brought this deal back proves that it cannot be trusted to lead a fight. Instead, workers should form a rank-and-file committee to demand an immediate setting of a strike date, an end to closed door ‘negotiations’ and rank-and-file control over the entire process.”

Among the issues left unresolved by the settlement is resolution of a disruption of parent Mercedes-Benz Kronos’s payroll system last December due to a data breach that disabled payroll time tracking, resulting in workers getting short paid, in some cases amounting to thousands of dollars. However, the UAW has allowed the massively profitable company to stall on repaying workers what they are owed.

A veteran worker told the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* he had voted “no.” “We’ve never had a good contract—all this one had was a bonus and small pay increase.

“All the union reps were out standing by the ballot boxes acting like they were proud that they got a good contract. I know they get their money—I know they get a lump sum of money for negotiating ... more than the average worker gets, but I can’t prove it.

“I have heard younger workers saying that they

would like an increase in pay, not a bonus—I thought that was excellent. Hopefully others are on the same page.

“A lot of people are dissatisfied; I heard the UAW didn’t even try to get us cost of living... They just changed a few things. They are not serving our interests.

“But some were wondering if we vote it down, will they bring the same thing to vote on again?

“They still haven’t given us the money from the Kronos issue. Shop chair “Gibby” [Gibson] said we would get our money, but did not say when. They are a multibillion-dollar company; they could resolve this if they wanted. But we need the money, it is already going on six months. It was worldwide, but they should still get on top of it.

“It’s not just us, it’s happening everywhere. The axle workers want to vote everyone in the UAW out; they are tired of them.” Several hundred workers at the same complex as the engine plant work under a separate UAW contract building axles. “At axle if someone has more seniority they can bump you off your job.”

The WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* spoke to several workers at the plant after they voted.

A worker with 30 years seniority said: “This contract didn’t really do it for me. It seems like all they did was add some more to the bonus money. I don’t know whether it will pass though because there are so many younger people here that they are trying to entice with that bonus. There aren’t too many of my generation left.”

An electrician at the plant said: “I’m in the IBEW but I support the guys in the UAW. We electricians had to give up a ton after the 2009 recession. We lost our national master agreement and now instead we have a huge number of local agreements. What we gave up in wages we’ve only just made back relatively recently. We need to get rid of the tiers.”

A young Detroit Diesel worker told the *Autoworker Newsletter*: “We have to do something at least to stay level with the rising prices. We need better wages and a bigger check. You are supposed to raise a family with one job. Everything is getting higher. When it was pointed out that the UAW contract only provided a 10 percent increase over six years, he said, “That is not enough. We have to have our voices heard.”

The WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* encourages

Detroit Diesel workers to share your thoughts on the contract vote. Contact us at autoworkers@wsws.org.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact