

Workers must mobilize against Unifor's sham ratification at Ford Canada! For a revote controlled by the rank and file!

WSWS Autoworker Newsletter
26 September 2023

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The revelation that the Unifor bureaucracy violated its own constitution by declaring its sellout contract with Ford Canada ratified despite the opposition of skilled trades workers is a further glaring demonstration that the entire five-day ratification process was fraudulent. It underscores that autoworkers must urgently seize control of their contract struggle from the union apparatus.

The bureaucracy has committed a flagrant attack on the democratic rights of all 18,000 Unifor members at the Detroit Big Three, as well as the almost 300,000 other Unifor members in fields as diverse as manufacturing, retail and transportation.

Sunday's sham ratification of a three-year agreement containing real-terms wage freezes, buyouts to secure the retirement of the highest paid workers and the perpetuation of the hated multitier wage system must be repudiated.

The legal and political case for a revote is irrefutable. Unifor has violated the will of the membership every step of the way, and appears to have perpetrated multiple violations of its own rules:

- Lana Payne and the bureaucracy trampled on workers' right to strike by arbitrarily extending the previous contract by 24 hours when it expired at 11:59 p.m. on September 18.

- They announced a "historic" agreement on September 19 but kept its contents entirely hidden from

the rank and file for over three days.

- The details of the agreement were presented at a single Zoom meeting controlled by the bureaucracy, after which workers had less than 24 hours to vote online.

- Many workers were excluded from the vote due to email issues.

- Numerous irregularities were reported by workers in the ratification process, including former workers and retirees being eligible to vote.

- Workers allege that mass emails were sent on the order of Unifor officials to temporary part-time workers late Saturday urging them to register to vote and dangling the bribe of a \$4,000 bonus from Ford if the contract was ratified, although the eligible voters' list had previously been closed.

- Unifor refused to publish the vote totals after announcing the contract's ratification. Only after outrage erupted on social media, did it acknowledge that just 54 percent had voted in favour.

- The union bureaucracy is still refusing to provide details about how many workers participated, how skilled trades voted and the vote breakdown by plant.

A skilled trades worker from the Oakville Assembly Plant subsequently reported to the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* that John Breslin, Unifor's skilled trades national director, told an in-person meeting of skilled trades workers Monday that they had rejected the contract. Sunday's "ratification" therefore amounts to a violation of Unifor's constitution, which stipulates that collective agreements must be passed by skilled trades before they can be ratified.

The *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* urges all Unifor members at Ford Canada operations to repudiate the

sham contract, which by rights should be declared null and void. Emergency meetings of Local 707 and Local 200 should be called in Oakville and Windsor to pass resolutions demanding the removal of the bargaining committee for organizing this anti-democratic farce, the publication of the results in full to reveal Unifor's skullduggery in its entirety and the holding of a revote under the supervision of trusted rank-and-file workers.

Such a revote should take place under the control of rank-and-file workers, but only after all workers have had at least a week to review and discuss the contract in full.

All of Unifor's 310,000 members should support these demands, which are crucial for the defence of the democratic rights of all workers. US autoworkers confront a similar conspiracy by the UAW bureaucracy, which pulled a similar move in 2015, when it declared a contract with GM ratified despite the opposition of skilled trades. They should support their Canadian colleagues.

The struggle against the Unifor bureaucracy's criminality must not be confined to a legal dispute. Breaking the "pattern" that Lana Payne and the Unifor leadership set at Ford Canada by means of fraud and antidemocratic scheming depends upon the mobilization of autoworkers across the Big Three's operations in Canada and the United States in a North America-wide strike. To fight for this strategy, workers must build rank-and-file committees at every plant to take the conduct of the contract struggle into their own hands and place power where it belongs, on the shop floor.

A key task of these committees will be holding Unifor bureaucrats to account. Documenting and publicly exposing Unifor's dirty tricks will be decisive in preventing similar treacherous betrayals during the upcoming negotiations at GM and Stellantis. The *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* encourages all workers with evidence of irregularities during the ratification to share them anonymously.

The Unifor bureaucracy's treachery is the product of its nationalist and pro-corporate agenda. The union leadership is integrated with the auto bosses and government ministers through various tripartite corporatist bodies that have planned the transition to electric vehicle production at the expense of autoworkers. This could include the loss of up to 40

percent of all auto jobs. Ramming through such a pro-corporate agenda is possible only through the violation of workers' democratic rights.

Unifor and its Canadian Auto Workers predecessor, together with their colleagues in the UAW bureaucracy south of the border, have proven themselves over the past four decades to be experts in the destruction of jobs, slashing of wages and gutting of workers' rights. Their promotion of Canadian and American nationalism has divided autoworkers along national lines, pitting them against each other in a race to the bottom in the face of the automakers' global onslaught to slash labour costs and boost corporate profits.

To reject the nationalism and corporatism underpinning the Unifor bureaucracy's shredding of workers' democratic rights, autoworkers must unify their struggles across North America. The fight to revoke the sham contract at Ford Canada and hold the bureaucracy to account necessitates the construction of independent committees as part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC). The IWA-RFC fights to unite Canadian, American and Mexican autoworkers in struggle against the auto bosses and their union accomplices, and for decent-paying secure jobs for all.



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