

GM workers vote down UAW contract at Michigan propulsion plants

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General Motors workers at the Romulus Powertrain and Flint Engine plants voted to reject the UAW-GM tentative agreement over the last few days. The defeat of the contract at the two key Michigan propulsion plants is a powerful blow to the United Auto Workers bureaucracy and the Biden administration, which are trying to rush through the ratification of the deals by 146,000 GM, Ford and Stellantis workers.

On Tuesday, UAW Local 163 announced that Romulus workers voted by 51 percent to 49 percent to reject the deal. Nearly 1,200 workers at the plant produce V6 engines and 10-speed transmissions used in a variety of Chevrolet, Buick, GMC and Cadillac vehicles.

Fifty-two percent of production workers voted down the deal at the Flint Engine Plant, where 650 workers build engines for GM passenger cars and its top-selling Silverado and Sierra pickup trucks. Officials at UAW Local 659, which also covers the nearby metal stamping plant and part distribution centers, claim the deal passed in the amalgamated local by 63 percent.

UAW Local 22 officials reported that that production workers voted by 54-46 percent to ratify the deal at Factory Zero in the Detroit enclave of Hamtramck.

Despite the constant claims by Fain, the Biden administration and the corporate media that the tentative agreements are a “historic victory” for workers, there is growing opposition to the deals. The contracts would pave the way for a jobs massacre as the industry transitions to electric vehicle production, while preserving the financial and institutional interests of the UAW apparatus.

Given the bureaucracy’s long history of manipulating

vote totals there is no reason why workers should take the UAW’s results at face value, especially since rank-and-file workers did not oversee the process. Nevertheless, even if the figures are valid, the vote totals over the last few days show there widespread opposition to the sellout contracts.

Last week, the UAW held a snap vote at Ford Michigan Assembly Plant—where workers were strung out on \$500 a week in strike pay for six weeks—and claimed that the deal passed by 80 percent. In the last few days, however, 45 percent and 43 percent of workers at the Kansas City and Chicago assembly plants respectively cast “no” votes, according to the UAW’s official totals. The deal was defeated by 69 percent of Local 788 workers at a Ford parts distribution center in Lakeland, Florida.

“This contract doesn’t give us back what we sacrificed in 2009”

“They’re taking money out of people’s pockets, and we’re supposed to be happy,” a veteran GM worker who joined his coworkers in voting down the deal at Romulus Powertrain Plant told the *World Socialist Web Site*. “We’ve been working six- and seven-day weeks, and this contract doesn’t give us back what we sacrificed in 2009. They’re floating this \$5,000 signing bonus to get the younger workers to bite, but that’s going to be taxed 47 percent, and the UAW is going to get dues out of it. That comes out to about 30 cents a day over four and half years.

“Senior workers haven’t gotten more than a couple dollars an hour over the last 20 years. We took a pay

cut to help the company. What did they give us back? Four years ago, we were on strike for 11-12 weeks, and we only got \$150 a week in strike pay in 2019. [GM CEO Mary] Barra's pay has gone up almost 40 percent since then. She's bringing home more than \$600,000 every week.

"This contract is especially bad for senior workers. Although you're supposed to get 200 hours of vacation time after working 20 years, if you take a vacation day on a Friday or a Monday, when you come back you have to work six days in a row at straight time. It's like they're getting your labor for free.

"They're trying to sell this to the temporary workers but there are so many loopholes in the contract that will let the company lay them off before they are converted to full-time. Fain and the UAW are trying to sell this contract, telling us we should be happy. A lot of people at first thought it was great but then they got talking to each other, especially on social media, and started reading the full contract for themselves. They went to the informational meetings and asked questions to get clarity. Then we voted it down."

The worker also expressed his anger over Fain's collusion with President Biden, who outlawed the railroad workers' strike last year and is sending billions of dollars in weaponry to Israel to carry out its genocidal war against the Palestinians in Gaza.

"At the end of the day, the US is funding all of this. Bush lied about weapons of mass destruction to invade Iraq. And the working-class people are being crapped on to pay for these wars. There is no real difference between the Democrats and the Republicans, they're all for the rich people like Mary Barra. People are starting to speak up and not take it anymore."

On Wednesday, supporters of the Autoworkers Rank-and-File Committee Network distributed the statement "Vote NO on the UAW sellout contracts at Ford, Stellantis and GM!" to workers during the shift change at GM Lansing Delta Township. There was overwhelming opposition to the deal from rank-and-file workers at the plant. Responding to the Flint Engine and Romulus Powertrain vote, one worker declared, "Yeah, I'm voting 'no' too."

Sensing the growing opposition, UAW President Shawn Fain held another livestream event Wednesday afternoon to try and sell the deals again. He reiterated his false claim that his "stand-up strike policy"—which

kept two-thirds of the membership on the job producing profits for the company—"forced the Big Three to put more money on the table than they've had to be forced to do in a very long time."

Pointing to the UAW's abandonment of workers' core demands, like 46 percent raises, the restoration of company paid pensions and retiree health benefits, the elimination of tiers, or a serious increase in pensions for retirees, Fain said, "We didn't win every battle. We made progress in most of these areas, but we didn't get everything we wanted." He then told workers to wait for the next contract in 2028.

The Autoworkers Rank-and-File Committees Network is urging workers to take the following measures to defeat this sellout:

- Exchange information with each other on the hidden clauses in the contract, including on job cuts, the continuation of temp work, punitive changes in attendance policy and other areas.
- At the coming "informational meetings" workers must demand the right to speak and get answers to all their questions.
- Workers should propose and vote on a resolution demanding an additional week to review and discuss the contracts.
- At the meetings, committees of trusted workers should be elected to oversee the ratification process and prevent any manipulation of the votes.
- Resolutions should also be proposed and passed that declare that the defeat of the contract at any of the automakers will result in an immediate all-out strike by all 146,000 GM, Ford and Stellantis workers.



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