UAW delays official announcement of GM ratification as questions are raised over vote

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18 November 2023

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The United Auto Workers leadership is in apparent crisis over the widespread rank-and-file opposition to the General Motors sellout contract, touted by UAW President Shawn Fain and the Biden administration as "historic." Despite the UAW's vote tracker showing the narrow approval of the contract, the UAW had not officially announced ratification of the contract as of late Friday. News reports had earlier indicated that Fain was to address UAW members and announce the results in a video livestream Friday.

Workers at a series of large assembly plants voted down the contract, leading to media predictions as recently as Wednesday afternoon that the contract would be defeated. However, the trend was supposedly bucked by a large "yes" vote at the GM Arlington factory in Texas.

GM workers have protested that they were forced to vote inside the plants, under the eye of management and company cameras. Reports posted on Facebook suggest irregularities in the vote in Arlington, including claims that ballot boxes were left unlocked and unattended, and that workers were forced to mark their votes with just pencil.

Most significantly, included in the UAW's national vote total were more than 1,400 workers at the Ultium Cells electric vehicle battery plant in Lordstown, Ohio, and about 1,000 workers at GM Subsystems LLC. These workers were technically not yet part of the GM bargaining unit, but supposedly voted by wide margins in favor of the agreement.

The workers at Ultium and GM Subsystems received larger overall raises than regular GM employees. At Ultium, however, workers are still locked into a substandard tier and paid well below the level of senior GM autoworkers.

The report that Ultium and GM Subsystems votes were counted toward the contract ratification totals evoked angry posts on Facebook. One worker wrote:

> Right now it looks fishy and crooked. I had faith in Fain. But not now. Contract is just as bad as the previous ones. I still don't have all my seniority back. Lost nine years even though I worked for GM. But because I transferred out of a CCA [Customer Care and Aftersales] I was treated as a stepchild. They just keep renaming the tiers.

It appears increasingly likely that GM workers will officially appeal the UAW's "ratification." On Thursday, Local 2209 Bargaining Chairman Rich LeTourneau at the GM Fort Wayne Assembly plant told Northeast Indiana Public Radio WBOI that the result will likely be challenged due to irregularities, including the fact that Ultium and GM Subsystems workers were allowed to vote. Production workers at Fort Wayne Assembly voted down the contract by a margin of 1,922-1,147, a 62 percent margin.

WBOI reported, "[UAW] Membership has 45 days to appeal before the vote becomes solidified. LeTourneau said UAW leadership told him if the tentative agreement is not ratified, they will go back to the negotiating table without starting the strike back up.

"He said if Local 2209 does not file, 'somebody will.' He believes that appeal will come within days."

Overall, the United Auto Workers vote tracker indicated that the GM contract passed by a narrow 53.24 to 46.76 percent among GM production workers and 54.74 to 45.26 percent overall, when the votes of skilled trades are added in. Under the UAW's constitution, production and skilled trades must each vote yes by a simple majority in order for the contract to be ratified.

Workers have contacted the *World Socialist Web Site* about vote irregularities at Ford and Stellantis factories as well. Figures posted by the UAW indicate that the contracts at both companies were headed for ratification, but with strong opposition, including contract rejections by workers at major plants such as Ford Kentucky Truck and the Stellantis Jeep complex in Toledo.

The growing reports by workers of voting irregularities

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underscore the importance of the demand raised by the *World Socialist Web Site* for a full and independent audit of the vote, including an examination of how the ballots were handled. The audit must be conducted under the supervision of committees of trusted rank-and-file workers, elected from the shop floor. Rank-and-file committees should gather testimony from workers on irregularities and instances of intimidation.

In the midst of ramming through contracts at the Detroit Three automakers, the UAW forced a revote by workers at Mack Trucks on the same contract they had rejected by a 3-1 margin more than a month ago. The UAW put a gun to workers' heads, telling them that if they voted to reject the deal they would be replaced by strikebreakers.

On Friday, the UAW also announced a tentative five-year contract with three Detroit casinos in a strike that has involved a coalition of unions covering some 3,700 casino employees. In addition, the UAW announced a last-minute contract extension at Allison Transmission outside of Indianapolis, Indiana, blocking a potential strike by 1,700 workers at that facility, despite a 99 percent strike authorization vote.

Even if the vote totals at the Detroit car makers are accepted as accurate, they were obtained through the usual strong-arm methods of lies and intimidation utilized by the UAW apparatus. From the start of the contract negotiations workers were subjected to incessant media propaganda, reinforced by the Biden administration, calling the Fain leadership's demands and any eventual agreement "historic."

Instead of mobilizing the full power of the UAW membership against the auto companies, the union divided workers through phony "stand up" strikes, which kept the vast majority of workers on the job producing profits for the companies, while others walked the picket line for just $500 in weekly strike pay.

"We shouldn't trust anything the UAW is reporting about the vote"

A leading member of the Stellantis Warren Truck Rank-and-File Committee said, regarding the vote at General Motors:

> The union used dirty tactics to get this passed at GM. They used the Ultium and GM Subsystems workers as pawns to get enough votes. The union doesn't care about them, they just wanted to get their votes.
>
> The union officials pit workers against each other and love to see us fighting amongst ourselves. I'm not mad at someone because they're in a class making less money. I'm not going to turn my nose down on them. I was there before, making $15.78 an hour as a temp and struggling to make ends meet.
>
> We shouldn't trust anything the UAW is reporting about the vote. Why can't we see the count? Why weren't there rank-and-file workers overseeing the tally? They always tell us one thing and do another. If the majority voted "no," they'd find a way to say it was "yes." They've been doing these dirty tricks for 30-40 years.

Another Warren Truck Rank and File Committee member said of the vote at GM, "Why would they vote in the plant? That's wrong. They should vote at the union hall. Management should never have been there. To me, that shouldn't happen. It's like fraud."

The powerful opposition manifested in the contract votes points to the massive chasm separating the corrupt and highly privileged UAW bureaucracy from the vast mass of workers in the auto plants. The UAW apparatus under Shawn Fain and its patrons in the Biden administration thought they could force these rotten agreements through with little difficulty based on carnival tricks and slick marketing tactics. But in attempting to impose the companies' demands, the UAW bureaucracy stands further exposed as frontmen for corporate management.

Far from being "historic," the contracts fail to restore wages given up through past concessions, bring back pensions and retiree healthcare, or end the abusive temp and tier systems. Critically, the contracts leave workers vulnerable to massive job losses in the transition to electric vehicles.

The fight by autoworkers takes place amid a global upsurge of class struggle against rampant inequality, attacks on social infrastructure and escalating wars. To carry forward their struggle, autoworkers should join and build the Autoworkers Rank-and-File Committee Network as part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).

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