

Vote “no” on UAW-Ford sellout contract!

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The WSWS Autoworker Newsletter urges Ford workers to distribute this statement to fellow workers at the plants and upcoming contract votes. Download the pdf.

The United Auto Workers is seeking to rush through a new contract on Ford workers and wrap up its months-long campaign to break the resistance of 140,000 US autoworkers and impose contracts dictated by the auto executives and Wall Street.

The UAW is organizing votes at locals throughout the country beginning Thursday, only days after self-serving “highlights” and well over 1,000 pages of the contract itself were posted online.

Ford workers should reject this contract on principle. It is impossible for workers to make an informed vote without at least two weeks to study the full contract and organize meetings of the rank-and-file, independent of the UAW, to review and debate its provisions.

The main aim of the Ford contract is the same as the deals at Fiat Chrysler and GM: to establish a permanently lower wage and benefit rate for all autoworkers. This will be done by expanding the number of second-tier workers and driving out higher-paid, tier-one workers through layoffs, speed-ups and early retirement schemes.

All limits on the percentage of second-tier workers have been removed, with these workers now renamed “in-progression.” This means that thousands of second-tier workers who were to be transferred to the first-tier wage will now be permanently stuck in the lower wage and benefit scale.

It will take eight years for “in progression” workers to reach top wage, a meaningless promise since the contract runs just four years. The scheme is modeled after the “grow-in” policy of the Canadian Auto Workers (now Unifor), which began with three years in 2008, and was expanded to six years and then 10 years in subsequent contracts. As with the Canadian workers, second-tier workers will continue to receive

substandard health care and pension benefits.

Far from eliminating the two-tier system, the contracts at all three companies give the auto bosses free rein to expand third-, fourth- and fifth-tiers of temporary and contract workers. At Ford, workers at Sterling Axle, Rawsonville Powertrain and the Woodhaven Hot-Metal Forming Facility will get at least \$7 an hour less than other tier-two workers in the name of ensuring a “competitive wage structure” at these plants.

Meanwhile, the insulting 1.5 percent annual wage increases for traditional workers will leave them with a two-decade decline in real wages of 25 percent by 2019.

The “transformative” character of the contracts goes beyond wages. After dumping their retiree health care benefits into a UAW-controlled trust, which promptly slashed medical coverage for hundreds of thousands of retirees and their dependents, the new agreement will slash the coverage of current workers, or force them to pay deductibles. This has been worked out in conjunction with the Obama administration, which wants to shift the cost of health care from the employers to the backs of workers who are already making barely subsistence wages.

The auto companies are already reaping record profits and a staggering 10+ percent profit margin in the US after the deals in 2007, 2009 and 2011, which reduced per-vehicle costs by more than half. However, the money-mad speculators on Wall Street want even more, and the UAW, which owns a substantial portion of the automakers’ stocks, has been more than eager to comply.

The WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* calls on Ford workers to deliver a powerful “no” vote. However, the experience of the past two months has made clear that this by itself is not enough. The fight to defend the interests of autoworkers requires new organizations and a new political strategy to defeat the joint conspiracy

by the auto companies, the UAW and the two parties of big business.

At every stage of the contract struggle, the UAW has kept information from workers and lied to them, using threats and economic blackmail to beat back rank-and-file workers. UAW officials have unabashedly spouted the company line, insisting that the corporations have nothing more to give and that if workers press for any improvements then the companies will simply shut their factories and move to Mexico and other low-wage countries.

After workers resoundingly rejected the first UAW-FCA deal, the UAW hired a public relations firm to sell its lies to workers, while during ratification votes it made workers run the gauntlet of local union functionaries who denounced them as “greedy” and “stupid” if they were planning to vote against the deal. As for the final vote counts, the UAW is more than ready to rig them to get the “right” result.

The vote is being pushed through at Ford even before the resolution of the vote by 53,000 workers on a similar agreement at GM, where the deal was rejected by nearly 60 percent of skilled trades workers. The UAW is claiming that the contract passed overall with a narrow majority of 55 percent of all workers, but the union’s own bylaws require it to be approved by both production and skilled trades workers.

It is impossible for autoworkers to express their interests within and through this organization, which is a corporate-labor syndicate and a police force.

Autoworkers are in struggle not just against Ford and the Big Three, but the entire economic and political system, which enriches the few at the expense of the many. The allies of workers are not the big business politicians, like President Obama and the Democrats, who, just like the Republicans, want to turn the US into a cheap labor haven.

The allies of Ford workers are the autoworkers, steelworkers, telecom workers, postal workers, teachers and other workers around the country who face the same struggle. Their allies are their class brothers and sisters in Mexico, Canada, Italy and around the world who are facing the same attacks by the global corporations and banks.

The WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* calls on Ford workers to move immediately to elect rank-and-file committees, independent from the UAW, to take the

conduct of the struggle out of their hands. A rejection of the contract should be followed by an appeal to GM and Fiat Chrysler workers to reopen the struggle; John Deere workers laboring under a contract whose provisions they don’t even know; and to the entire working class seeking a way forward in the fight against inequality and the relentless assault on jobs and wages.

We urge Ford workers to contact the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* to take up this fight.

To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>