

Autoworkers denounce UAW deal with GM

By a WSWS reporting team
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Autoworkers on the General Motors picket lines, at Ford and Fiat Chrysler factories and on social media are denouncing the tentative agreement the United Auto Workers has reached with GM.

The UAW released its self-serving “highlights” of the four-year agreement during Thursday’s meeting of the GM Council, the body of local union officials who voted to back the deal and are now tasked with pushing it past a resistant membership.

Based on the UAW’s summary alone, it is clear the contract is a betrayal of the month-long strike. It accepts the closure of factories, maintains the hated two-tier wage system, and expands the number of low-paid temps GM intends to use as the model for its future workforce.

The opposition of rank-and-file workers was first seen by the group of dozens of Lordstown, Ohio workers who showed up outside of the GM Council meeting to demand a “no” vote because the deal sanctions the closure of the massive assembly plant, which once employed 4,500 workers.

“This is a bad deal and that’s why we’re saying to reject it,” one Lordstown worker said. The working class, he added, was “being torn apart in the Lordstown area by shutting the plant down. It’s a repeat of the ‘70s when they shut down the steel mills in Youngstown.”

“We will vote this contract down and fight to get it voted down because it is Lordstown today and it may be another plant tomorrow. When are we going to say, ‘enough is enough’ not just for this corporation but for every corporation? I will stand with the Ford and Fiat Chrysler workers on their picket lines too. We have to stand strong and unite.”

Striking workers on the picket line at Warren Tech reacted with skepticism about the tentative agreement, with one commenting, “Until the contract is read and ratified by the membership, we should not go back into

the plant.”

Two women who work at Aramark said they had absolutely no confidence in the UAW and said it is hard to be part of an organization that you could not even trust. They pointed to the corruption scandals and explained that they paid dues to the union while having no representation at all and have not had a contract for two years.

Other workers took to Facebook to express their opposition and to break down the deal.

SC wrote: “Total betrayal. I feel broken hearted and ashamed this contract is what we got after 30 days on picket lines! With record profits and a CEO making \$22mil+, there should be NO closures! Which plant is next when things get bad or during the next contract?”

Another worker pointing to the contract summary booklet said, “They essentially created more tiers and it keeps saying ‘We are One’ in every middle section of the contract lol.”

NT wrote: “Notice the contract language. 52 weeks worked. Not a year after your first raise but weeks worked so essentially taking longer to get to full scale.

“Out on medical: No 52 weeks worked

“Hurt on the job: No 52 weeks worked

“Plant shuts down: No 52 weeks worked

“They actually pulled off creating another tier: Legacy, in progression, temp path to perm”

Debunking the claims that the contract shortens the time second-tier workers must accumulate to reach top pay, JK wrote: “Let’s see full timers that already have five years in will take another three years to get top rate, that’s the original eight-year term that they were talking about for pay progression. As soon as the contract is signed, they should go up to top rate. They already did their four years.”

The GM Council meeting went on for nearly seven hours because local union officials feared the opposition they would encounter when they brought

back the deal. The council also considered ordering an immediate end to the strike before workers had a chance to vote on the contract, but that was dropped out of concern that GM workers would ignore their back-to-work order.

Looking haggard and frightened, UAW public relations spokesman Brian Rothenberg gave a brief statement to the press after the meeting. Neither UAW President Gary Jones nor UAW Vice President Terry Dittes were anywhere to be found. In a lying statement Rothenberg claimed that the contract was leading to the end of “perma-temps not just in this industry but in the nation.”

Although he faced few challenging questions because WSWS reporters were barred from the press conference, one reporter asked, “GM has 7 percent temporary workers now, how many will they have by the end of the contract?” Rothenberg claimed he did not know and would “have to check.” In reality, the UAW has given the greenlight to GM to drastically increase the number of temporary workers.

Rothenberg said the UAW would begin holding contract “education sessions” for their members beginning Saturday and get the vote wrapped up by Friday, October 25. These “education sessions” are nothing but exercises in shutting down opposition. Afterwards, the UAW hopes to impose the same if not worse contract on Ford and Fiat Chrysler workers.

But there is widespread opposition among autoworkers and other sections of the working class. This is shown by the spreading strikes of Mack truck workers, Arizona and Texas copper miners and Chicago teachers, along with the courageous stand by GM workers in Mexico who have defied company and union victimization to support the US strike.

A second-tier Fiat Chrysler worker who spoke to the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* gave her analysis of the contract and urged workers to reject it.

“This is the exact same contract we got in 2015! Workers have not gained back what they lost in the bankruptcy. We will still work 10 hours on straight time, with no overtime pay. We still don’t have pensions. We are not getting anything back. This is slave labor. I was thinking that maybe the *World Socialist Web Site* was wrong this time. I was thinking that maybe we would get something. But you hit it dead on.

“If I was Mary Barra and I could make \$22 million to sit up and talk to a bunch of criminals in the UAW, I probably would do it too. The fact is, the contract was already signed and paid for a long time ago. The strike was just a way of breaking the workers at GM down so they would be forced to take the same contract they got in 2015.

“How can they make record profits and then turn around and give the people who make these profits, the workers, nothing? There has never been a time when profits were this high. And we get nothing.

“They don’t want workers to look at the real contract language, just the highlights—or really the low lights. They are going to try to force this through. GM wants those workers back in the plant and the UAW is right with them.”

This conspiracy can be defeated and the strike won. But everything depends on workers taking the conduct of the struggle out of the hands of the corrupt UAW through the building of rank-and-file strike and factory committees.

Workers should demand the full contract and a full week to study and discuss it. Rank-and-file committees should oversee the voting process to prevent ballot stuffing and fraud. A rejection of the contract should be followed by a call for mobilization of GM, Ford and Fiat Chrysler workers in an industry-wide strike as part of building up a powerful counter-offensive by the working class against capitalist exploitation and social inequality.

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