

Vote “no” on the FCA contract! Form rank and file committees to oppose UAW sellout!

By the WSWs Autoworker Newsletter
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The United Auto Workers is seeking to ram through a sellout contract at Fiat Chrysler that will lay the basis for the expanded use of temporary workers and further attacks on healthcare. The WSWs *Autoworker Newsletter* urges workers to vote against the contract and begin forming rank-and-file committees now to organize opposition.

The contract details, released in the form of highlights and accompanying “white books,” show that the deal is a sellout that in some respects surpasses even the historic concessions the UAW rammed through at General Motors and Ford. It includes the following:

- **The contract allows FCA to employ workers as temps indefinitely, without even nominal restrictions.** The unattainable “pathway” to regular employment for temporary workers in the GM and Ford contracts, which require workers to be employed continuously for three years, is not in the FCA contract. Instead, temps will only be hired full-time when the company is seeking to fill full-time positions. This gives FCA a blank check for the unlimited use of temps, allowing the company to maintain the lowest hourly labor costs of the US automakers.

- **The contract lays the framework for new attacks on health care.** The UAW boasts that the contract will give tier-two and “in-progression” workers the same health care as “legacy” workers. But the contract commits the union, jointly with management, to implement “such actions deemed necessary to eliminate the identified excess costs,” including through prescription drug co-pay increases, out-of-pocket increases for doctor’s visits, “other benefit plan design changes the parties may deem appropriate,” and “plan terminations.”

- **The two miserly three percent wage increases**

will barely keep pace with inflation with and Ford contracts, the FCA deal would replace wage increases in two of the four years of the contract with four percent lump sum bonuses. The deal also eliminates the cap on profit sharing, a cynical ploy given that the industry is already entering a protracted downturn.

- **The deal’s “moratorium” on plant closures is worthless, and closures are still possible over the life of the contract.** It contains exceptions allowing the company to close plants in case of “acts of God, catastrophic circumstances, market related volume declines, or significant economic decline”—in other words, any conceivable reason that the company might cite to justify closing a plant.

The UAW itself admits that it is possible that Fiat Chrysler’s Marysville Axle plant, which it operates jointly with German parts supplier ZF, may close when FCA pulls out in 2021. Even if it does remain open, ZF will undoubtedly demand deep concessions if it decides to operate the plant on its own.

The agreement contains special buyout packages for workers at less profitable plants, including at Belvidere Assembly west of Chicago, Milwaukee PDC and Mount Elliot Tool and Die and Marysville Axle. These programs could be the first step towards reduced production at the plants or their outright closure. The company already eliminated a production shift at Belvidere earlier in the year.

- **The contract deepens management’s dictatorship inside the plants.** Previously accumulated absences and tardies will not be wiped clean in the new contract, as was customary in previous contracts. This lays the groundwork for the company to turn the screws on workers or fire seniority workers under cover of “accumulated absences.” The

Alternative Work Schedule, which has abolished the eight-hour day at many facilities, will be maintained.

The corporatist labor-management bodies, through which the UAW has become integrated into the company as an arm of management, will be maintained and expanded. As at General Motors, the contract establishes a new joint committee on technology, making the union jointly responsible for job losses due to the implementation of new electric and automated vehicle technologies.

• **The National Training Center, one of the main conduits for company bribes, will be maintained in all but name.** The NTC will be closed, but its finances will be transferred into two new trust funds, which will continue to operate “joint training activities.” In plain language, this means that they are establishing new fronts to funnel millions of dollars in corporate cash into the pockets of the bureaucracy.

Fiat Chrysler workers face the UAW as an enemy, not an ally. Since former Chrysler CEO Lee Iacocca first brought the UAW onto the company’s board of directors in 1979, the UAW has worked hand in glove with the companies in converting American autoworkers, once among the highest-paid industrial workers in the world, into industrial slaves.

This process has been cemented through millions of dollars in bribes. A lawsuit against FCA filed last month by General Motors alleged that, under former FCA chief Sergio Marchionne, the UAW was converted into an “FCA-controlled enterprise.” In reality, the UAW is just as much a “GM-controlled enterprise” and “Ford-controlled enterprise,” having collaborated with them in a similar fashion for decades.

In 2015, Fiat Chrysler workers sparked a rank-and-file rebellion when they voted down the UAW’s tentative agreement, the first UAW national contract to be voted down in a generation. But the experiences since then—including the vote-rigging at Ford in 2015 and the UAW’s betrayal of this year’s GM strike—demonstrate that the UAW will not respond to a “no” vote by coming back with a better contract. The UAW will stop at nothing to run roughshod over the democratic will of autoworkers.

Fiat Chrysler workers must take the initiative into their own hands. They must form a network of rank-and-file factory committees at every plant, consisting of workers themselves and excluding

members of the union bureaucracy. These committees must demand the right to oversee the balloting process to prevent any dirty tricks by the UAW.

They must also organize democratic discussions among workers, outside of the prying eyes of the company and its hired UAW lackeys. If, at official informational meetings, UAW officials attempt to intimidate workers who ask critical questions, autoworkers must vote to throw those officials out of the meeting.

Rank-and-file factory committees will be the starting point for a much broader struggle. None of the problems that Fiat Chrysler workers confront can be resolved at FCA or in the United States alone. Fiat Chrysler’s proposed merger with French automaker PSA, which portends a transatlantic jobs bloodbath, testifies to the global strategy of the auto companies.

Autoworkers need their own global strategy. They must appeal to workers around the world for support and collaboration, including in Europe, Central and South America, and Asia, where autoworkers are facing the same assaults on their standard of living. As part of the fight for the international unity of the working class, Fiat Chrysler workers must also demand the immediate reinstatement of the Silao Seven, Mexican GM workers fired for supporting the strike in the United States.

If you agree with this perspective, contact us at autoworkers@wsws.org.

To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>