

# Kokomo Transmission workers denounce UAW-Fiat Chrysler sellout

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Workers going in and coming out for the 6 a.m. morning shift at Fiat Chrysler's Kokomo Transmission Plant in Indiana expressed their anger, as details of the sellout agreement reached between the UAW and FCA became known.

"It's B.S." was a common refrain. Several said they were going to vote "no" and particularly condemned the fact that the two-tier system would not be abolished. Under the proposed deal it reportedly will take until 2023 for second-tier workers to see their wages rise to \$25 an hour, a new maximum wage in the industry, well below the current wage of \$28.50 for workers hired before 2007.

According to the current rate of inflation, \$25 in eight years would be worth \$19.74 in today's dollars—approximately the same as the \$19.28-an-hour top pay rate earned by a tier-two worker today. This means tier-twos will get a zero percent increase in real wages.

A younger worker said, "They are not getting rid of the second-tier. They are getting rid of the older tier of workers so everyone makes a lower wage."

The UAW and FCA have also reportedly agreed to a \$3,000 signing bonus, hoping to exploit the desperate economic conditions, particularly among tier-two workers, to get the deal passed.

A Kokomo worker shook her head as she spoke to a campaigner from the *World Socialist Web Site* Autoworker Newsletter. "They're offering a \$3,000 signing bonus to get it passed and half of that will be taken in taxes. I've been through that before."

"The bigger the bonus, the worse the contract," another worker said.

"Eight years is too long to get top pay. I'm 45 and I don't want to make \$25 in eight years." Her friend added, "I don't like this at all—we're voting 'no'."

Workers at the morning shift welcomed the WSWS Autoworker Newsletter, with several stopping to discuss the rank-and-file committees the WSWS campaigners were calling for. "I see you are socialists, does that mean you are anti-union?" one worker asked. The campaigner replied that there would never have been unions if it were not for the fight of socialists in the 1930s.

However, because the trade union leaders subordinated the working class to the Democratic Party and defended the capitalist system they long ago degenerated into tools of the corporations and the government. Workers need new organizations of struggle, he said, which unite all workers in the US and internationally and are independent of the trade unions and the big business parties.

Another worker expressed agreement for the need of autoworkers to unite with steelworkers, teachers, Verizon workers and other sections of workers facing similar battles. "It's everyone going through this. We should all come together."

A more senior worker called the WSWS after the distribution to say that the Autoworker Newsletter was being read widely throughout the plant. "Everyone is saying what you guys laid out. The union is not letting us know anything. They are in bed with the company."

"Everyone is saying that we're going to vote 'no'," he added. "If [the agreement] gets pushed through, that itself shows it is rotten, because everyone is talking about voting 'no.' Newcomers are beginning to see what a lie Fiat Chrysler is."

While workers received the WSWS Autoworker Newsletter warmly and were keen to find out as much as possible about the deal signed by the UAW, union bureaucrats at the Kokomo plant came into the parking lot to scream obscenities and threaten campaigners,

saying that they had no right to be on company property.

According to a Reuters report, FCA boss Sergio Marchionne sent a memo to company employees Wednesday saying the four-year pact signed by the UAW would tie workers' pay to increases in productivity and company revenue. "If the final plan targets are met, and I am confident they will be, workers will receive significant economic benefits tied directly to their commitment," Marchionne wrote.

The deal will also give the union the assignment of cutting the company's health care costs through the establishment of a so-called health care co-op run by the UAW.

Under the new contract, in other words, the UAW will be put in charge of overseeing the speedup and exploitation of workers and ensuring their "commitment," i.e., enslavement. In return, the UAW will receive billions more to run its new health care insurance business.



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