

# UAW Local 600 members speak and write about the No vote

Thursday, 19 November, 2009

Dear Local 600 list:

Thanks to all who contacted us in the Vote No campaign, including Local-wide Vote No leaflet signers: Judy Wraight, M&C, former T&D Exec. Bd. Gary Walkowicz, DTP Bargaining Cmte, gwalk15@peoplepc.com Dan Sultana, M&C Donnie McCuien, T&D Dave Gelman, M&C Victor Bean, DSP/Body, Gen. Council Ali Shamsedean, T&D Murray Boyk, T&D Bruce Price Sr., former Fin. Sec. UAW 919, Norfolk , VA, now DTP Eric Truss, DDMP Jim Benson, DEFTP Robert Morris, Parts Bargaining Cmte, Harold Corey, T&D Dan Bartle, M&C Charles R. Mattison T&D Doug Kowalske, Parts, ret., former Alt. Cmte Ron Matley, T&D, ret. Ron Lare, T&D, ret., former Local 600 Guide

We had replies responding to the Vote No campaign, to the Kansas City strike vote, and to a request for Labor Notes article quotes. That article can't use everything, but below are longer versions of most replies. We disagree with some replies, but we include whatever won't be understood as anti-union and doesn't use extremely provocative language. Tell us if we missed your reply. Names used by permission. Vince Vincentini's note is repeated because members replied to him. (Our own views are in list Editorials about international labor solidarity and other subjects.)

--Solidarity, Judy Wraight, Ron Lare, 313-492-7657. Send us Local addresses for the list!

DEARBORN TRUCK PLANT, President Nick Kottalis: They tried so desperately to pass these concessions. And lo and behold on Monday morning, the day after, they found a billion dollars that they made.

PARTS UNIT: Robert Morris, bargaining committee, Parts unit: Some of our leadership are too long removed from the 40 hour member to understand their concerns, needs and fears. I define my leadership as my ability to recognize and follow the wishes of my membership. This attempt to give contractual parity ignored the sacrifices already made by my membership which allowed Ford to survive without going on welfare like Chrysler and GM.

TRUCK PLANT: Gary Walkowicz, Dearborn Truck bargaining committee: The No vote gathered speed at the end because workers started to see they could do it. All the anger and frustration of auto workers started coming out. Kansas City gave us a big boost and workers in Kentucky and Dearborn Truck wanted to get an even bigger No vote. This is not the end of concessions attacks, but the first step is just saying No. That opens the door for other workers, too.

DEARBORN DIVERSIFIED: Eric Truss: They say we only lose the right to strike over improvements in wages and benefits. But that's what people want the right to strike for. I can't believe our Local 600 is defending the agreement in spite of all the opposition. Gettelfinger shouldn't have said he didn't sell the agreement well enough. He should just say the membership spoke. I campaigned for No, so my co-workers are telling me to run for office.

STAMPING AND BODY, Victor Bean, General Council delegate: I'm happy to see the No vote but it needs to go a bit further than that. We've got a Constitutional Convention coming up. Ron Gettelfinger said "We didn't sell it the agreement well enough". But if you're selling shit, no one will

buy it unless they need fertilizer. The Convention should pass a resolution saying no raises or bonuses for International Reps if we are giving concessions. I'm going to run for Convention delegate.

STAMPING AND BODY, Robert Wade, hi-lo driver: It's a crying shame that upper management at Ford can't realize that enough is enough. Why should hourly workers continue to take more concessions when they keep getting their raises and bonuses. Between the top five executives at Ford they are making over 60,000,000 a year.

TRUCK PLANT, from QG: THE FORD EXECS MAKE MORE THAN PRESIDENT OBAMA. AND HE HAS TO RULE THIS COUNTRY AND MAKE PEACE WITH OTHERS. IF FORD WAS SO BROKE WHY IS ANYBODY MAKING MILLIONS OF DOLLARS FOR DECISION MAKING? WE THE UNION WORKERS ARE FORD'S BREAD AND BUTTER, BILL CAN TAKE THAT 25 MILLION HE'S GIVING ALAN MULALLY AND GIVE US BACK OUR COLA, BREAKS, AND HOLIDAYS. FORD CAN MOVE THEIR PRODUCTS OVER SEAS IF THEY WANT BUT THE US WILL NOT BUY THEM, WE THE UNION WILL MAKE SURE OF THAT.

M&C -T: Greg DeOrnellas, DTP electrician, formerly Local 36: Based on my firsthand experience with repeatedly granting the Company concessions at Fords Wixom Assembly, where the workforce was whipsawed against other plants all threatened with closure and after doing all that was asked, Ford Management still closed Wixom sending half the work to Mexico and half the work to Canada. Unless we are willing to match the wages of Mexico or South America or China and in the absence of Socialized medicine like they have in Canada, at some point we, the UAW workforce must decide when enough is enough. I work at DTP. I have already agreed to concessions in the National contract as well as concessions to the local operating agreement. I don't blame the company for asking for continual givebacks that is only smart business but I don't see real estate agents willing to work for 5% commision.' I dont see plumbers willing to make house calls for less than \$75 an hour,'mechanics,'etc. Stick together and have pride!

M&C -T, Judy Wraight: Concessions are a way to lose the union. We need our union. The song "Solidarity Forever" says: "Without our brain and muscle, not a single wheel would turn."

ELECTRICIAN, M&C-T UNIT: "We must be competitive", Mullaly AND if we had voted for the concessions on top of concessions the non union transplamt shop down South would simply say "We will work for even less,still" and the race to the bottom would continue.I am working a mandatory 12 hour day,,the first 10 at straight time followed by 1.5 at time and a half and on Saturday and Sunday I must work my scheduled 12 hours,,the first 8 at time and a quarter.ENOUGH!!!!

DTP WORKER (in reply to a letter from a Local 3000 appointed rep who was threatened for opposing concessions): THIS IS AGAISNT THE LAW, THEY SHOULD PUT TOGETHER A CLASS ACTION SUIT. WE NEED TO GET THOSE UAW BIG WIGS OUT OF THE OFFICE. IF WE DON'T, YOU BETTER SAVE YOUR MONEY FOR THE STRIKE IN 2011.

PARTS UNIT RETIREE, Doug Kowalske: Ron, Lots of things run through my thoughts on this. The sustainability of our Union has always been that those who come in help take care of those who go out .Having new hires come in at half the pay and with woefully inadequate benefits for a modern western economy is just not sustainable for ANYONE, the Company, the Union, or the local and national economy. I have read that if the minimum wage had been adjusted for inflation and maintained at a comparable level to its' inception, it would be between \$12.75 and \$14 an hour. Can we build a State or

National Economy on minimum wage labor? NO! From a UAW retiree standpoint; at some point, when the \$14 an hour new people realize they make LESS and have no benefits than all of those hundreds of thousands of retirees, they are going to say "Screw those old people. They didn't stand for ME when they had the chance" Or as my DAD, (a Local 600 retiree, 34 years), said when I came into Ford Motor, "Always watch out for the Union guys with shiny shoes. They ain't on your side anymore."

M&C -T: You might focus a little more on the implications going forward. I was glad to see that you mentioned the apparently largely clean vote. It might also be worthwhile to speculate a bit more about the next contract round, to create interest. What demands will Ford workers raise in 2011? At the top of my list: Bring back COLA, step increases directly to full rate wages for new hires, hands off skilled trades job classifications, and absolutely NO MORE CONCESSIONS!

BROTHER VINCE VINCENTINI'S LETTER AND THE REPLIES TO IT: Here we repeat a letter from Vince Vincentini, Local 600 M&C - T Unit...Replies to his letter follow below it.

This No vote should not be confused with a rejection of the UAW or its leadership. The membership clearly understands that without a union we would not have even had an opportunity to vote. When the management of the non-union transplants decide that it is time for them to take a pay cut or reduction of benefits it just happens. No voice! It is also important to know that there is no law requiring a vote of the membership to ratify a contract agreement. It is our UAW constitution that gives us that right. We are very fortunate that our predecessors fought to bring the UAW to Ford.

We find ourselves in the position we are in today because unfavorable trade laws and the fact that we have not been able to organize the transplants. We need to recapture the auto industry. This will not happen until the public realizes that the middle class was built by the labor movement. When we speak to our friends, family and neighbors we need to tell them of the good things that unions bring to the nation.

I am proud to be a member of the UAW and I know you are too. There was a large turnout for this vote but the job has just begun. Apathy and cynicism are the enemy of justice. Don't think that voting is the end. Attend your union membership meetings. Help guide our union. Show up at rallies. Pay attention to politics. Listen to the advice of those who look out for working people.

Regardless of whether you voted Yes or No, now is the time all of us to stand together as one. Please use your energy to build upon this great union foundation that we were so fortunate to inherit.

In Solidarity, Vince Vincentini

PARTS UNIT RETIREE, Doug Kowalske, in reply to Vincentini:

Amen, Brother! Doug Kowalske

TRUCK PLANT UNIT, in reply to Vincentini:

VINCE NEEDS TO TELL THIS TO THE BIG WIGS OF THE UAW. WE NEED TO CLEAN HOUSE AND START OVER.

M&C-T UNIT, in reply to Vincentini:

To Brother Vince Vincenti ,Thank you said what has always been in my heart and mind from your brother...

MILAN PLASTICS RETIREE, former General Council member, Mark Farris, in reply to Vincentini:

Vince cannot bring himself to criticise Gettlefinger and that is the problem with restrained dissent. The same old failed tactics from the last 25 years have accomplished absolutly nothing. I stand by everything I said in Plymouth a couple years ago. Bayonet charges against tanks do not work. Any dissident who has stock in the auto industry is a part of the problem. FoMoCo will probably sweeten up the signing bonus to two thousand and the concessions will fly. Are we going forward or are we going backward?

LETTERS FROM OTHER UAW AND CAW LOCALS:

OHIO ASSEMBLY PLANT, LOCAL 2000 Mary Springowksi, Alternate District Committeeperson:

When Ron Gettelfinger and Bob King said they underestimated the membership, that was very true. The day when the International said 'jump' and the locals said 'how high' is over. We reminded them the membership is the highest authority.

AUTO ALLIANCE, UAW Local 3000, Pam Powell, said: The result restores some of my faith in the voting process. I just hope we didn't wait too long to say what we think.

MICHIGAN ASSEMBLY, UAW LOCAL 900, Gary Polen, carpenter: We pay our union for collective bargaining. How can the union negotiate a binding arbitration instead of the right to strike?

KANSAS CITY, UAW 249, Tony Scalici, Strike votes are taken annually over workload in Kansas City.

KANSAS CITY, UAW 249, SUV ASSEMBLY LINE, Dennis Gallie: I voted Yes to strike because I think the mood of the rank and file is very much opposed to more concessions but we haven't had any word about forming a local strike committee. We should get serious about this because we are faced with a situation like the 1930s. We had a strike vote over production standards. It has been really rough in the plant. It's the worst speedup I've ever been through. It's enforced with discipline and workers are resisting it. You can't just make an idle threat. We've got to get serious right now.

OAKVILLE, ONTARIO FORD ASSEMBLY, CAW LOCAL 707, where the Canadian version of the concessions passed them by 83%, but workers organized against them, including Lindsay Hinshelwood, who says: The rank and file are seeing that the leadership has no intention of fighting back. The CAW leadership had an opportunity for solidarity with UAW members but rejected it. They have the false belief that they can influence what Ford produces and where. We need to build international solidarity. The fight is not over. After the vote here, some co-workers told me they'd like to reunite with the UAW.