

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statement on the Chrysler Ratification Despite Skilled Trades' Rejection.

Contact:

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Statement:

The contract between Chrysler and the United Auto Workers is being imposed on the entire membership by the International Executive Board of the UAW. A majority of skilled trades workers and a substantial minority of production workers voted against this agreement. Skilled trades workers on the shop floor have been denied a voice in this decision, made less than 24 hours after the last vote was cast at Warren Truck. Trades workers had been adamant in their opposition to the brutal restructuring of their work, misnamed skilled trades “rationalization”. The skilled workforce at Chrysler has seen their numbers cut from 12,000 to 5000 since reductions began under the 2003-2007 agreement. If our union would have opposed this program, skilled trades workers would have applauded their efforts.

We now wonder how many skilled workers will be left in the plants at the end of this contract. Over thirty skill sets will be reduced to five; there will be three working groups where it is up to trades workers to give each other on the job training. Under the expanded “autonomous maintenance” program, production workers are forced to take over many of our daily tasks. Outsourcing will bcontinue. Building maintenance will now be done exclusively by outside contractors. Tradespeople whose classifications are being eliminated will have to transfer to a “related trade” where they will be at the bottom of the seniority list for three years. Brick masons, carpenters, painters and other building tradespeople will have to exit skilled trades or find their way back through another apprenticeship.

Eventually there will be too few of us to keep up with the variety of unfamiliar tasks we will be asked to perform, and safety will suffer.

The company and our union leadership are refusing to address our legitimate concerns, with the rationale being that our biggest complaints were just about “economics.” This is not true. As skilled trades workers we are extremely concerned about the integrity of our respective trades, work rules, safety, training, maintaining lines of demarcation, and prohibiting the outsourcing of our work.

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While we have our particular complaints, UAW-represented skilled trades workers at Chrysler do stand in solidarity with the production workers on the shop floor. We share their hopes and aspirations for fair and equal compensation for our labor. We hope that by rejecting this agreement we can further the fight for a more equitable society.

This imposed “ratification” by the UAW leadership is yet another example of the union’s failure to confront the greed of Fiat/Chrysler CEO Sergio Marchionne. We feel that the massive propaganda effort to win ratification through the fear of arbitration by the administration was wrong and the implied threat to move new work to locals that approved the contract was unconscionable. Without this fear factor, we are sure the contract would have been shot down by the entire membership.

We call on President King and Vice President Holiefield to reverse their hastily-arrived-at decision and prepare to reopen the contract provisions pertaining to skilled trades. They should hold meetings at every local to allow the tradespeople on the floor to explain why they voted no. The next step would be to go back to the table and inform Mr. Marchionne of the changes needed for a ratified agreement.

Now that Chrysler has released its third quarter results, the UAW needs no further proof that the company can afford to treat its workers fairly.

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