

# No sell-out at Magna

Letter to the Editor

Re: The Magna Sell-Out, Wayne Fraser et al., Nov. 23

The Ontario leaders of six unions affiliated to the Ontario Federation of Labour have staked out new ground in labour militance, heading bravely for the ramparts — not against employers, but against the CAW.

Contrary to the false claims of these leaders, the language in our recently ratified collective agreement with Magna confirms that company managers play no role whatsoever in the selection of worker representatives (either the secret-ballot election of worker reps from each area and shift of the factory, or the selection and secret-ballot confirmation of full-time “employee advocates,” who service the whole plant). The language also confirms that the terms of the contract are subject to full, binding arbitration by a neutral, mutually selected arbitrator.

The system will work differently from traditional bargaining units, that’s for sure, reflecting Magna’s existing practices in some areas. But the collective agreement makes it absolutely clear that all decisions related to joining the union, selecting workplace representatives, and endorsing negotiated changes to the contract will be made independently and democratically by CAW members.

The CAW has represented workers at three Magna facilities in Ontario for several years now. At those workplaces, we have proven without a doubt that we can incorporate certain features of Magna’s existing policies, while still building an independent, democratic union that makes concrete progress for its members. We now have the chance to extend that progress to as many as 18,000 new union members.

As for the right to strike, any first-year industrial relations student can confirm that dozens of unions in Canada — including several OFL affiliates — voluntarily use or have used binding arbitration instead of strikes and lockouts to settle contract disputes.

Even though the CAW is no longer affiliated to the OFL, I humbly suggest that the OFL leadership spend less time criticizing the efforts of other unions, and focus more on boosting their own efforts to recruit union members in these difficult times.

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