

# Vote “no” on UAW-Nexteer sellout

## Build a rank-and-file factory committee to fight the auto companies!

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5 December 2015

The WSWs *Autoworker Newsletter* calls on workers at Nexteer Automotive in Saginaw, Michigan to vote “no” on the tentative contract agreement that the United Auto Workers is seeking to ram through this weekend.

UAW Local 699 has called a snap vote Sunday after posting the full contract late on Friday. Workers are being given as little time as possible to study the deal before deciding on a contract that will determine their working conditions, wages and benefits for the next four years. This fact alone is enough to warrant rejection.

The UAW is trying to rush a vote because the deal, like the contracts at the Big Three before it, is rotten to the core. The hated multi-tier wage and benefits system is being retained, with the UAW agreeing to at least nine separate tiers. Minuscule wage raises will be more than eaten up by increases in premiums and copays on health insurance that will be raised through the contract. Cost of living is not being restored and the Alternative Work Schedule is retained.

This is under conditions in which Nexteer is boasting booming sales and profits. The contract is in line with the policy of the Big Three, which for decades have worked with the UAW to ensure a low cost regime in the supplier factories.

Workers know this is a rotten deal. The question is: What must be done? Rejection of the contract is not enough. Workers need truly representative and democratic forms of organization. The UAW operates as company policemen in the auto factories, carrying out the dictates of management and running roughshod over the rights of workers to drive up productivity and profits.

The *Autoworker Newsletter* urges Nexteer workers to move immediately to build a rank-and-file factory committee as the true representative voice of workers in opposition to both management and their UAW stooges. This committee must base itself on a program of uncompromising struggle for the interests of workers, linking the fight of Nexteer workers with workers at the

Big Three, throughout the country and internationally.

Nexteer workers should take heed from the experience at General Motors, Ford and Fiat Chrysler. The deals rammed through in the face of mass opposition were presented by the UAW as the “richest contracts ever negotiated.” Within days of the UAW’s declaration that the final contract had been ratified, however, Ford executives were gloating that they kept labor cost increases at below the rate of inflation!

The UAW only managed to gain approval of these contracts by means of threats, lies and outright fraud. First there was the rejection of the contract at Fiat Chrysler, the first time in 32 years that workers shot down a national agreement backed by the UAW. The UAW responded by presenting the same contract slightly reworded for a second vote, pushing it through with a combination of threats and lies. Then there was the close vote at General Motors and the rejection of the contract by skilled trades workers. The UAW simply overrode this rejection and bypassed its own constitutional bylaws requiring ratification by both production and skilled trades workers.

Finally, there was the vote at Ford, where the UAW secured a miraculous turnaround and claimed a 51 percent ratification after the contract was heading for defeat. At the Rouge complex, the last to vote, workers reported that UAW officials spread out through the plant to round up “yes” votes. They even went around to workers on the line. Unnumbered ballots marked in pencil were dumped in buckets, making vote manipulation easy.

In the midst of these contracts, the UAW rammed through another agreement—at John Deere—with workers given only a few hours to study the “highlights” of the deal, without having access to the full contract. Demands for a recount or revote have been ignored by the UAW.

These are the actions of a corporate syndicate, not a workers organization. All experience demonstrates that the UAW is not in any way accountable to the democratic will of the workers.

Rather than seeking to unite workers, the UAW divides workers, separating the fight of parts workers from workers at the auto manufacturers. When the UAW is forced to call a strike, as at Kohler in Wisconsin, the workers are left to rot for months or weeks on the picket line until a sellout deal can be imposed.

The building of a rank-and-file factory committee is only the first step. Even such a basic question as the fight for a decent contract raises much bigger political issues. By challenging the attempt by the auto companies to impose a low-wage regime, Nexteer workers find themselves on a collision course with the entire economic and political setup in the US.

Nothing can be gained by turning to the Obama administration or the political establishment. In fact, the auto contracts are in line with the policy of the White House of so-called in-sourcing, that is, the reduction of US manufacturing wages to near poverty levels in order to undercut low cost producers in countries such as Mexico and China.

The entire political deck is stacked against workers, whose interests find no expression in either the Democratic or Republican parties. Our only true allies are other workers around the world, including our brothers and sisters in China, Canada, Mexico and Germany, who confront the same transnational corporations as American autoworkers.

The formation of a rank-and-file factory committee must serve as the first step to a broader mobilization of the working class, including the reopening of the sellout deals at the Big Three. We call on Nexteer workers interested in carrying forward this fight to contact the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*.



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