

“If we as workers were to stand up, what kind of a statement would that make worldwide?”

Nexteer workers’ anger grows as UAW prepares to ram through new sellout deal

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Anger is growing among auto parts workers in Saginaw, Michigan after the United Auto Workers called off its phony 20-hour “strike” Tuesday evening and ordered workers to return to their jobs without a vote on a new tentative deal the UAW claims it reached.

The stunt had nothing to do with mobilizing the strength of autoworkers against the intransigence of Nexteer. On the contrary, it was a cynical maneuver hatched in the UAW’s Solidarity House headquarters and offices of UAW Local 699 to beat down the resistance of workers after their near unanimous rejection of the first concession-laden contract last Sunday.

Workers were allowed to let off steam on the picket lines before the UAW abruptly sent them back to their machines in the steering components complex formerly owned by General Motors. This was done to prevent GM and other automakers from running out of parts for their highly profitable pickup trucks. To add insult to injury, workers are being forced to work an extra Saturday this weekend—at straight time—to make up for lost production.

“The UAW didn’t even allow us to last two days,” one young Nexteer worker told the *World Socialist Web Site*. “They didn’t want us to strike at all. But they saw that 98 percent ‘no’ vote and they realized something had to be done. The whole strike was a ploy to get everybody excited and happy, but the whole thing is a big façade. It was all planned out.”

Over 3,300 workers were cut off their health care when the strike began. Though the UAW claims health

care was restored, the Local 699 Facebook page is covered with statements by workers saying that they were not able to get much needed medication due to the cut-off.

The UAW has not released any details of the supposed contract and there is widespread suspicion that the strike was called off without any real agreement in hand.

“We haven’t heard anything,” said the spouse of a Nexteer worker with 10 years at the plant. “We don’t have any idea what’s going on with the new TA [tentative agreement].”

The young worker said, “If the new deal was good, we would have seen it already. I’ve got a feeling it’s the same piece of crap we got last time with a few things changed. And the UAW local Facebook page posted something saying they were still working on the contract language, which would mean they didn’t have a TA. Then the UAW edited the Facebook post saying it was getting ready to present it. I want to see this agreement! I don’t feel comfortable going back to work until I see it.”

The UAW ordered workers to return to work just as Nexteer and the Big Three auto corporations were beginning to feel its impact. Under the just-in-time delivery system, assembly plants do not stockpile parts and several GM and Chrysler plants were reportedly prepared to cancel production.

“I heard last night that GM Flint and GM Fort Wayne were going to close at the end of their second shifts because they were running out of our parts,” the younger worker said. “It’s interesting that our strike

ended at 7:45 pm when the GM executives were up at Bay City meeting with Nexteer. The further you dig, the worse this looks, and our committeeman said he was going to ask the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* people to leave. That's because they don't want the truth out here.

"If this next TA is what I think it's going to be, we need to find somewhere big enough to hold 800 people and hold some meetings. Everybody is together on this. It's not split. it's everybody saying we're done working for poverty wages."

The Nexteer worker's wife said, "We have talked about holding our own meetings. The UAW is going to try and ram another deal down our throats. They lied to workers about insurance and health care. My husband was going to get a 17-cent raise over four years? It's crazy."

"I read your stuff," she said, referring to the *Autoworker Newsletter*. "It hits every bit true. What you're saying is the truth. The news media are hating on the workers, trying to make us feel like we're bad. It's not like that at all. You've got people with kids and this fight is about the difference between getting a free lunch because you're so poor or being able to pay for a hot lunch."

A third Nexteer worker said, "The UAW is a big business and they're making money off of our backs. We are breaking ground around here but the UAW is trying to suffocate us."

To oppose the UAW's efforts, the *Autoworker Newsletter* urges Nexteer workers to organize themselves independently of the corporate-controlled UAW and to hold their own democratically run meetings to organize a campaign to defeat the new sellout and formulate their demands for a real struggle. An appeal should be made to FCA, GM and Ford workers for a coordinated fight to abolish the multi-tier wage and benefit systems and recoup the losses from decades of UAW-backed concessions.

"What happens here in little bitty Saginaw today will be news in California tomorrow thanks to social media," the Nexteer worker declared. "Workers will say: 'If that desolated town could stand up, we can.' If we as workers were to stand up, what kind of a statement would that make worldwide? Workers in Mexico and China might say: 'We can do that too.'"



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