

Vote “No” on UAW-Nexteer sellout deal!

Build factory committees to mobilize all autoworkers in a common struggle

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The *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* urges Nexteer workers to reject the new tentative agreement the UAW is pushing on behalf of the corporation and the Big Three automakers. The new deal is not a “contract” in any real sense but a slave’s charter, with the UAW imposing management’s demands for poverty wages, relentless speedup, forced overtime and a dictatorship on the shop floor.

As this new sellout proves, the UAW will not respond to another “no” vote by fighting for anything better. That is why rank-and-file workers should organize their own meetings, independently of the UAW company agents, to formulate their own demands and fight to mobilize support from the broadest sections of the working class behind the fight for good-paying and secure jobs, quality health care and pension benefits for all autoworkers. All victimized workers must be given their jobs back and made whole.

After the UAW was stunned by the nearly unanimous “no” vote on the first deal, International and Local 699 officials called a bogus 20-hour strike. They shut it down before cobbling together another deal, which they claim has addressed workers’ demands. This is a lie. The wages and benefits stolen from workers in 2010 have not been restored as promised by the UAW even though the company is making record profits.

The Year 5 wage will rise to \$15.88 or \$17.77, depending on present wages. By 2019, however, this will be worth less than \$14 and \$16 respectively when inflation is taken into account. Moreover, whatever meager wage increases and signing bonuses are included, they will be more than chewed up by higher medical costs and the physical and mental toll exacted from workers due to the continuation of the hated

Alternative Work Schedules and Critical Plant Status schemes.

The deal also sanctions “undercover agents” to spy on workers and grants Nexteer limitless power to move workers to the worst shifts or to suspend and fire them on the flimsiest grounds. Workers who do not accept overtime or are considered outspoken and “troublesome” will be walked out, and the UAW will do nothing to defend them. Freedom of speech will largely be a dead letter with the UAW agreeing to remove from bulletin boards “any material which is libelous, scurrilous, or detrimental to the labor-management relationship.”

Claims that temp workers are being eliminated are a fraud. The company will simply churn new workers over and over again before they reach their 90 days. The low-paid workers will then be used to fill spots vacated by workers whose bodies break down or who have been victimized and suspended. Finally, the contract sanctions the further destruction of skilled trades positions through outsourcing.

Nothing the UAW says about this agreement is the truth. UAW officials told Fiat Chrysler, General Motors and Ford workers that they had won the “richest contracts ever.” No sooner were the contracts rammed through than Ford executives boasted to their wealthy investors that these deals were among the cheapest in history, with all-in labor costs rising by only 1.5 percent, or less than the rate of inflation. Soon after the UAW claimed that health care benefits “wouldn’t be touched,” the *Wall Street Journal* bragged that the contracts opened the door for deductibles and other increases in out-of-pocket costs.

UAW officials claim that this “isn’t GM anymore.”

First of all, the giant automaker is still the largest customer and really calls the shots. Secondly, the savage concessions the UAW has handed over to Delphi, Visteon and Independent Parts Suppliers have always been used as precedents to attack workers in the Big Three plants. If the Nexteer sellout is passed, it is only a matter of time before the UAW demands the same things at GM, Ford and Fiat Chrysler.

Far from opposing the impoverishment of auto and auto parts workers, the UAW is an active partner in this process, and its top executives enjoy an upper middle-class lifestyle of six-digit salaries and other perks. The UAW is not a union in any real sense of the word. It does not protect workers on the shop floor, it does not fight over workers' grievances, it has not called a national strike since 1976 and it does not unify workers—it divides them. The only “solidarity” the UAW demonstrates is with management. It is a multibillion-dollar business with a large ownership stake in GM.

Nexteer workers face not only a fight against the corporations and the UAW, they are in a struggle against the Obama administration and the Democrats, who, no less than the Republicans, are front men for the corporate and financial elite. Obama's 2009 restructuring of GM and Chrysler paved the way for the slashing of wages and benefits throughout the economy and the shifting of health care and pensions costs from the employers to workers.

Since the bailout of the financial criminals who crashed the economy, started by Bush and continued by Obama, the super-rich have gobbled up the vast majority of new income gains. Some 20 billionaires in America now control the same amount as the bottom 152 million Americans. Corporate CEOs and bankers live like kings while the newspapers report stories of homeless auto parts workers living in their cars.

This has to stop! Nexteer workers no doubt face powerful enemies—the companies, the corporate-controlled news media, the big business politicians and the UAW. All are united in defending a social system, capitalism, based on the exploitation of the working class in the interests of private profit and wealth accumulation by the corporate and financial elite.

However, workers have far more powerful allies. Autoworkers in the Big Three car companies want to fight the illegitimate contracts the UAW imposed on

them, and throughout the US and around the world millions refuse to accept a future of industrial slavery, war and dictatorship.

Everything depends, however, on the initiative of workers themselves. The conduct of this struggle must be taken out of the hands of the UAW and put in the hands of the rank-and-file. The defeat of this second sellout should be followed by the election of factory committees, democratically run by workers themselves and committed to the defense of their social rights, not the profits or “competitiveness” of the corporations.

Nexteer workers should draft an appeal to autoworkers and all workers throughout the US and internationally to rally to their defense and oppose any threats to jobs and basic rights. All workers—in the steel, telecom, airline and other industries, as well as teachers and other public sector workers—face the same struggle against the destruction of living standards and working conditions. And what is happening in the US is happening in Canada, Mexico and throughout Latin America, Europe, Asia and Africa.

Rather than competing with our brothers and sisters in a race to the bottom, US workers must unite with workers around the world in a common fight.

By breaking free from the shackles of the pro-company UAW and organizing themselves as a powerful independent force, Nexteer workers can point the way forward for the entire working class. In this fight, the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* will lend all the assistance we can.



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