

“They want this contract shoved down our throats”

UAW claims ratification of Nexteer sellout as lies exposed

Shannon Jones
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Voting concluded Friday night on a sellout agreement between the United Auto Workers and Nexteer Automotive in Saginaw, Michigan amid a barrage of threats and intimidation by the UAW management. Late Friday night the UAW posted vote results claiming a margin of ratification of 61.4 percent to 38.6 percent. No further breakdown was supplied.

Anger mounted during the day Friday as workers became aware of the fact that the contract was not complete, with 13 pages missing from the document distributed by the UAW.

Workers suspected that the UAW-Nexteer deal was still a work in process. Many workers told the *World Socialist Web Site* that they felt they had been duped into voting on the ratification of a document that had not even been finalized.

This was the second ratification vote this month. It followed the 97.5 percent rejection by workers of a concession-ridden tentative agreement that mandated poverty-level wages and crushing out-of-pocket health care costs. That vote had been followed by a December 8 strike, which the UAW called off after just 20 hours. The UAW then called a second vote on a new agreement that largely rehashed the concessions contained in the first contract

The deal continues the two-tier wage system under which more recent hires make substantially less than senior workers. It imposes an inferior health care plan while stipulating a long list of infractions for which workers can face discipline, all while Nexteer is earning record profits.

In order to browbeat workers into ratifying this second sellout, UAW officials went around the plant warning workers that the facility would likely close if

workers again voted down the contract. These scare tactics were backed up by management personnel, who threatened disciplinary action against workers caught discussing the contract on company time.

One Nexteer worker told the WSWS, “People who voted yesterday said they wouldn’t have voted the way they did because the union is adding stuff to the contract. How can we vote when we don’t know what we are voting on?”

“One bargaining committee member wanted to sign a memorandum of understanding to impose the Alternative Work Schedule on the whole worksite.” The AWS allows the company to schedule staggered 10-hour shifts without payment of overtime after eight hours or on Saturdays. “They are trying to write MOUs on a contract that is not ratified! It is like the union is totally throwing us under the bus.”

“There was one young man who got walked out Monday for something he posted on Facebook. They can walk you out for anything.”

Another worker said, “Things have come up that changed people’s minds. They don’t have a complete contract yet. At the last minute they put out a newsletter saying they are bringing apprentices up to the level of skilled trades workers. People are upset. They are saying, ‘how can you change things when people already voted?’”

A veteran Nexteer worker told the WSWS, “A negotiating team member was out on the floor saying ‘don’t blame me if the doors close.’ They want this contract shoved down our throats. The union is a huge business in itself. I wonder what they were paying these committee members to sell this contract? I would be ashamed to go out there.”

“The UAW is sitting on a \$550 million strike fund and no one struck for one day. This is ridiculous. They sent us back to work without first even voting on an agreement. We had them over a barrel. That kind of opportunity may not come back.

“The union is a huge business. They are pitting one against the other. It is every man for himself. There is no solidarity.”

He detailed some of the concessions contained in the contract. “The latest contract sounded good until you started asking questions. The insurance went from 90 percent 10 percent paid by the insurance to 80/20. They get more money out of your pocket quicker.

“The people hired in 2006 got a \$1 an hour raise. But if you add it all up, the company took away three times as much.

“The people with the money don’t want a middle class. They look at an autoworker driving a Cadillac and say, ‘he can’t have that; he’s an autoworker.’

“The union went right along with all these plans. They helped the auto companies drive wages down. They cut wages in half in 2006. But, did you see the price of a car come down?”

“They have turned what started as an effort to improve people’s conditions into a business.”

A worker with six years at Nexteer added, “When I got into Nexteer I thought I was doing well. It has been all downhill since then. At the end of the contract you will be making less than in the previous agreement. You get more to start, but less at the end. They should start everyone at the same rate. Why should I be making \$2 an hour less than someone standing right beside me?”



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