

In run-up to contract vote

UAW intensifies campaign of intimidation against Indiana Lear workers

Marcus Day
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In an effort to suppress opposition among workers to its attempts to force through another pro-company agreement, the United Auto Workers (UAW) union is intensifying its campaign of lies and intimidation in the run-up to the contract vote at Lear Corporation's Hammond and Portage, Indiana, automobile seating plants this coming weekend.

In October, workers decisively rejected a UAW-backed contract proposal by 74 percent, despite attempts by the union to steamroll workers by only releasing details on the agreement on the same day as workers were forced to vote. The agreement would have maintained the multi-tier system and poverty wages, while significantly increasing health care costs. Workers subsequently took to social media to denounce the deal as “BS” and “a joke.” Many shared or spoke out in *World Socialist Web Site* articles about the collusion between the company and union.

In the month since, Local 2335 has worked behind closed doors with Lear management to find some means by which to push through a refurbished sellout deal, announcing a supposedly new tentative agreement on November 9, but refusing to release any details until meetings beginning November 26.

Facing growing anger and suspicion by workers over the information blackout, the union has grown increasingly desperate in its efforts to smother opposition and block a unified struggle, resorting to every reactionary trick at its disposal.

On Friday, a Local 2335 official posted an anti-communist, redbaiting denunciation of the *World Socialist Web Site* on Facebook. Accusing the WSWS of spreading “divisiveness and hatred,” the official dramatically claimed to reveal “the whole truth,” citing several excerpts from the Wikipedia entries for the WSWS, the International Committee of the Fourth International, Leon

Trotsky, and the Bolsheviks.

Turning reality on its head, the union official then claimed that the WSWS was attempting to “mislead and intimidate my membership with your lies,” and demanded that it “stay out of our business.”

On Saturday, Local 2335 further posted several videos purporting to reveal the dangers of “fake news” on social media, seeking to discourage workers from reading or speaking to the WSWS.

Workers should ask themselves: what is the aim of these statements, and whose interests do they serve?

Workers at Lear have turned to the WSWS because they have found in it the primary source of information and truth about the struggle they are engaged in, and a platform through which to voice their opposition to the collusion between the UAW and company.

The UAW, a thoroughly corrupt and discredited outfit, which functions as an enforcer for management, is terrified that it is losing what remains of its grip over its members. Feeling itself under siege by an incipient rebellion by workers, the union is clumsily seeking to rehash the lies it peddled in the last round of contract negotiations in 2014–2015.

In 2014, as is the case now, Lear was used as the testing ground for attempts to maintain and expand the tier system and rock-bottom wages throughout the auto industry. Both Local 2335 and the UAW International falsely claimed to have eliminated the despised tier system in the 2014 Lear contract, while in reality establishing a new category of even lower-paid “sub-assembly” workers at the Portage plant. At the same time, the contract drastically increased healthcare costs and included miniscule raises for first-tier workers, which were effective pay cuts with inflation taken into account.

While UAW Local 2335 President Jamie Luna falsely

trumpeted the contract as a “victory” that would enable workers to “reach the middle class,” its real character was revealed by Tim DiDonato, Lear’s senior vice president for human resources, who described it as “well within our budget.” DiDonato went on to laud the sub-assembly category a “breakthrough” that “makes us economically competitive.”

In 2015, as union executives were in the midst of accepting millions of dollars in bribes from Fiat Chrysler, rank-and-file workers initially rejected the UAW-backed tentative agreement by a two-to-one margin. The UAW and then-President Dennis Williams responded by denouncing “outside groups” that “like to stir people up,” in a reference to the WSWs *Autoworker Newsletter*, which had emerged as the center of workers’ opposition to the pro-corporate deal. The union then spent over \$100,000 to hire a New York City public relations firm, BerlinRosen, to “control the message” and carry out a propaganda campaign to secure passage of its concessions agreement.

Then, as now, denunciations of “outside agitators” meddling in “our business” were a resort by the UAW to the reactionary, timeworn methods previously used by the auto bosses against every attempt by workers to advance their interests, including in the great class battles, which led to the formation of the UAW itself.

In 1936–37, in the explosive sit-down strikes in Flint, Michigan, which resulted in the recognition of the UAW at General Motors, the company denounced the socialist and militant workers who led the strike as “outside agitators” in service of a “vast conspiracy to destroy all for which life is worth living.” Those who participated in the sit-down, in the words of management, had struck a blow “at the very heart of the right of the possession of private property.”

In Indiana itself in 1937, the mayor of Anderson, a GM company lackey, ordered police to escort UAW organizers from Michigan back to the state line to prevent the unionization of 11,000 GM workers, declaring, “Anderson workers did not want outside agitators and organizers to interfere with them.”

The UAW, which in the many decades since its founding has degenerated into an organization deeply hostile to workers’ interests, now deploys the same slanders that were used against the union’s founders. The aim is to delegitimize any opposition by workers to the union’s and companies’ efforts to turn the clock backwards and reduce workers into little more than industrial slaves.

While the UAW has repeatedly alleged that the WSWs posts “lies” on its web site, no UAW official has been able to point to a single inaccuracy and have refused to answer any the criticisms raised by workers who have spoken out in WSWs articles. This only underscores the fraudulent character of the whole campaign against “fake news,” which was developed by the UAW during the 2015 contract negotiations and has been utilized by Trump, the Democrats and other big business politicians. In other words, the accusation of “fake news” has come from all of the people who lie to workers day in and day out. They all want to censor the internet and dictate to workers what they are allowed or not allowed to read.

In the present negotiations at Lear, insofar as the union’s attempts to throw sand in the eyes of workers have thus far failed to find a response, Local 2335 falls back on the last resort of every scoundrel in American politics: anti-communist redbaiting.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has never hidden its politics. We are proud to say that we are socialists and fight to unify workers in the US and around the world in a common fight against capitalism, which impoverishes workers in order to enrich the corporate and financial elite. We urge workers to read the WSWs to learn more about the history of the socialist movement, including the heroic struggle waged by Leon Trotsky against Stalinism.

Workers all over the world are looking for a way to fight back against decades of declining living standards, imposed by the companies with the willing assistance of the pro-capitalist unions. The WSWs has provided Lear workers with a voice and sought to assist them in linking up their struggle with other sections of workers through the formation of rank-and-file factory committees, independent of the UAW. This is what has prompted the desperate and dishonest response of the UAW.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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