

Form rank-and-file committees

Reject the UAW-Lear sellout contract! Unite with GM and other autoworkers in a common fight!

The WSWS Autoworker Newsletter
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The WSWS Autoworker Newsletter is holding an emergency online meeting Wednesday night at 8 p.m. EST/7 p.m. CST to discuss a strategy for Lear, GM, and all other autoworkers to unify their struggle against the companies and the corporate-controlled UAW. To receive information on how to attend, text Autoworker to 555888, or register [here](#).

The World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter calls on Lear auto parts workers in Hammond and Portage, Indiana, to reject the wretched sellout agreement being pushed by the United Auto Workers union in votes from November 29 to December 1.

Workers did not courageously vote down virtually the same contract proposal in October in order to have the UAW attempt to ram it down their throats again. The company-union deal, worked out behind the backs of workers, will:

- Maintain the hated multi-tier system and arbitrary division between “just-in-time” and “sub-assembly” workers,
- Significantly increase healthcare costs, with premiums and deductibles rising by double-digit percentage points over the life of the contract,
- Maintain the punitive “points” absence system, with workers deprived of paid sick days,
- Entail speed-up and greater demands for “productivity” and “efficiency” through the new job rotation scheme, with workers’ employment threatened if they are unable to perform one of the jobs.

In addition, the company is offering severance “incentives” to those with at least eight years at the plant, in an effort to force out older, better-paid workers.

While workers have already rejected the contract once based on what they know about it, they should ask themselves: What is the UAW hiding this time? In the previous contract, the union lied about ending the tier

system, when it in fact expanded it, while forcing through the elimination of cost-of-living increases (COLA) and pensions.

The fight over the contract at Lear is one part of a broader process: the international class struggle, which has sharply intensified in 2018. On the one hand, the corporate owners and financial oligarchs, along with their pliant servants in the trade unions, are seeking to drive workers back to conditions of industrial slavery and daily misery not seen since the 19th century. On the other hand, workers all over the world are looking for a way to take a stand and reverse decades of declining living standards.

On Monday, General Motors announced that it would shutter five plants in the US and Canada in 2019, with another two outside North America yet to be revealed. Over 14,000 hourly and salaried workers are set to be cast aside and deprived of their livelihoods. The ruthless move, expected to be followed by similar job cuts at Ford and Fiat Chrysler, is intended to strong-arm workers into accepting even further concessions in the 2019 contract negotiations, which the UAW will do everything to facilitate.

Meanwhile, in France, Greece, Iran and other countries, hundreds of thousands of workers in transport, steel, oil refining and other industries have carried out militant strikes and demonstrations in recent weeks, seeking to oppose ever-greater demands for austerity.

As in 2014, the contract negotiations at Lear are viewed by the auto companies, the UAW, the two big-business parties and the corporate press as the test case for imposing concessions and slashing costs throughout the auto industry. Lear workers are fighting not just for themselves and their families, but for the entire working class.

Lear, which likes to tout its Fortune 500 status while claiming there’s “no money” to meet workers’ demands, has been raking in record profits based on the sweatshop

conditions imposed with the assistance of the UAW. In 2017, the company's net income was over \$1.3 billion, with over \$20 billion in revenue. The company has lavished millions on executives' salaries and stock options, giving former CEO Matthew J. Simoncini nearly \$15 million in total compensation in 2017. Current CEO Ray Scott took in over \$5 million that year.

Workers who attended the union's "informative" meetings Monday reported widespread disgust after being presented with essentially the same deal they already rejected, with a few added "sweeteners." "It's literally the same contract over again reworded poorly," a worker at the Portage plant told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*.

In the "updated" contract packet given to workers, the union included a multi-page section of "Commonly Asked Questions and Answers," with the "answers" to workers' criticisms presented straight from the mouth of company management.

A worker at the Hammond plant described the anger and desire to fight among workers when they were presented with essentially the same contract, "on thicker paper." "The meeting was a waste of time. We expected as much. We all let them know this was gonna get voted down again and we'd like to strike."

Facing an increasingly outraged and hostile membership, UAW Local 2335 has sought to keep workers in the dark in the weeks leading up to the contract vote. At the same time, it has carried out a campaign of lies and intimidation, seeking to block workers from reading or speaking out in the *WSWS*, and telling workers they have no choice but to accept the company's demands.

The UAW's actions at Lear are entirely in line with its conduct over the last 40 years, in which it has carried out countless betrayals of workers' struggles, while forging increasingly corrupt and incestuous relationships with the auto bosses. In the present situation, it has proven itself yet again as a department of company management, whose purpose is to suppress struggles and enforce the corporate line. Its officials, whose income and perks place them within the top 5 percent of the population, are completely hostile to the interests of the workers they claim to represent.

The *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* urges workers to immediately elect rank-and-file factory committees, independent of the corporate-run UAW, to formulate demands which correspond to what workers actually need, not what the union and company management claim Lear can afford.

Such demands should include:

- Abolition of the tier system, with all workers brought up to top pay
- Immediate 40 percent wage increase and restoration of

COLA

- Restoration of all concessions negotiated away by the corrupt UAW
- Fully funded pensions and employer-paid health care for active and retired workers
- Elimination of the punitive point system and introduction of paid sick days
- No plant closings or layoffs

The UAW would have workers believe that nothing can be done to oppose the company's demands, and that a fight is impossible. These are lies.

Workers at Lear have powerful class allies: autoworkers at GM, Ford and elsewhere, along with steelworkers, UPS workers, Amazon workers, and others, in the US, Canada, Mexico and internationally, who are all facing a similar fight. It is urgent that Lear workers connect with workers at other plants, and initiate preparations for launching a counteroffensive to fight for good-paying jobs and decent living conditions, including the setting of a strike deadline at Lear.

Workers are up against not just one company, but an entire socio-political system, capitalism, which demands that workers submit to ever-greater poverty in order to enrich a tiny minority of oligarchs and social parasites.

In order for any of workers' rights to be secured, industrial action must combined with the construction of a mass political movement to oppose the two-party dictatorship of Wall Street, and to carry out a frontal assault on the wealth and privileges of the super-rich. Gigantic corporations such as Lear and the Detroit Three auto companies should be placed under democratic and collective ownership, so that workers can control the wealth they create. That is the fight for socialism.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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