

Vote “no” on the UAW-Nexteer Saginaw sellout agreement! Form a Nexteer Rank-and-File Committee and broaden the struggle throughout the auto industry!

WSWS Autoworker Newsletter
17 May 2021

We urge all Nexteer workers who want to fight the new sellout agreement to contact the WSWS Autoworker Newsletter for information on forming a rank-and-file committee.

The World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter calls on Nexteer automotive workers to organize an independent rank-and-file committee to organize opposition to the latest sell-out contract that the United Auto Workers is seeking to ram through.

Workers at Nexteer should follow the lead of the workers at Volvo in Dublin, Virginia, who voted Sunday to overwhelmingly reject the attempt by the UAW to ram through a pro-company contract by 91 percent. Workers at the massive truck assembly plant struck for two weeks before the UAW announced a tentative agreement with Volvo on April 30 and immediately ordered workers back to work without a vote on or even seeing the proposed deal.

Nexteer workers already voted down a previous tentative agreement in February, 85 to 15 percent. As of Sunday, workers had not been given any official documentation from the contract negotiations. Rather, a “TA highlights” broadsheet was distributed aimed at concealing the ongoing and new concessions to the company’s cost-cutting drive.

Speaking of the new tentative agreement, a Nexteer worker told the *Autoworker Newsletter*, “They recently came around and gave us a copy of the highlights. It’s just like 2015 all over again. We want to see the whole contract before we vote, or most people will vote no.” Another worker declared: “We’re clear. We want NO concessions in this contract. We’re still suffering from the last deal.”

In 2015, the UAW called a 20-hour show strike after workers overwhelmingly rejected a previous tentative agreement. The union then pushed through a five-year contract that reduced real wages, maintained the hated multi-tier system and increased forced overtime.

All of this is retained in the 2021 contract proposal now being rushed through for a vote. The information that has been released about the new TA includes the following:

A further cut in real wages

The UAW claims that workers will receive wage increases of somewhere between 2.7 and 5.9 percent over the course of the contract, depending on classification. But for even the highest range, this falls significantly behind projected inflation rates of 2.1 percent per year over the course of the contract, with price increases now shooting up much faster.

The UAW is promoting a one-time signing bonus in a cynical attempt to exploit the worsening financial situation of Nexteer workers due to the union’s pro-company’s policies.

An increase in the number of lower-wage and super-exploited workers, and an expansion of the tier system

The language in the “Subcontracting Committee” and “Part Time Production Employees” sections make clear that both the company and the union intend to use part-time and contract labor as leverage against regular, full-time workers. The language applying to part-time workers also makes clear that they will have no rights in the plant, unable to make even a semblance of a living wage while often doing the same jobs as other workers.

The proposed “Subcontracting Committee” will have a “goal” of determining what both the company and the UAW deem to be “more cost effective using internal resources versus outside contractors”—i.e., bringing in super-exploited contract labor to avoid paying full-time workers a decent wage. The hated tier-system not only remains intact, but another lower-wage classification is added under the category of “General Laborers.” The concept of “equal work for equal pay” is totally obliterated.

“There are A Bucket, B Bucket, C Bucket and D Bucket jobs here,” a Nexteer worker told the *Autoworker Newsletter*. “I’m not sure how each one of these tiers pays, but it’s obvious that those categorizations are going to continue with the new contract they’re trying to push.”

Increased health care costs and an “on-site” medical facility

There is no concrete indication that the increased deductibles workers have been forced to pay under previous contracts will be reversed. In fact, workers have reported rumors of an increase from an 80/20 percent employer-employee distribution to a 70/30 contribution scheme, effectively negating the proposed wage increases.

The UAW and Nexteer are also promoting the more restrictive HMO option over PPO and providing additional funds for those who use the forthcoming “on-site clinic,” which has all the makings of a “company town” medical facility, aimed at limiting access to high quality health care.

There is no mention anywhere in the document about the health care costs of those have been forced to work under conditions where the COVID-19 virus has run rampant through the plant. Workers will continue to get sick and potentially die under these conditions, and “long-hauler” illness from the disease will mean additional medical

costs to those who have been infected in the plant.

A sinister union-company “Savings Distribution Program”

The language of this section makes clear that the UAW and Nexteer will conduct an open-ended collaboration to boost productivity and blackmail workers. Workers will be “encouraged”—i.e., forced—to subject themselves to speedup, less break time and closer monitoring in order to “remove the roadblocks they encounter daily” and facilitate “business improvements.”

“Critical Plant Status”

Since the Obama-led restructuring of the auto industry in 2008-2009, the practice of enforced consecutive seven-day work weeks under “critical plant” provisions has become formalized in the two previous contracts. This section ensures that this widely loathed practice will continue unabated, with the UAW collaborating with the company to impose back-breaking and “flexible” schedules that destroy workers’ health and fuel accidents and on-the-job deaths.

If these are the “highlights” the UAW is championing, then it is certain the “lowlights” of the actual contract are even more vicious.

The way forward for Nexteer workers

Last week’s revelation that the UAW Local 699 leadership may have been embezzling dues is indicative of the criminal character of the well-off executives who control the corporatist enterprise that has long since ceased being in any way a workers’ organization. During the course of a years-long corruption investigation, two former UAW International presidents were convicted of embezzling union dues, and other high-level union officials were revealed to have taken bribes in exchange for imposing concessions contracts on autoworkers.

The *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* urges Nexteer workers to advance demands based on what they need rather than what the company, the government and their UAW enforcers claim they can afford.

There is more than enough money generated by the sweat and toil of autoworkers to ensure a high standard of living for all workers. In the past year alone, Nexteer’s biggest client and former owner, GM, has had its stock nearly double, that of Stellantis has risen almost threefold and Ford has seen its share price nearly double.

The *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* encourages all Nexteer workers to discuss and fight for the following demands:

Restore all wages and benefits lost to concessions! A 25 percent increase in wages! End the tier system! Restore the eight-hour day! No forced overtime!

Nexteer workers should demand that all previous wage concessions be fully and immediately restored. New pay increases should exceed projected inflation rates and be tied to accurate reports of current prices of housing, food, auto, and childcare. Full health care benefits must be provided, with the right to choose any provider or physician without pressure or bias.

All temporary and part-time workers and lower-tier workers must be immediately brought up to full-time status, with full pay and benefits.

Workers’ control over health and safety, line speed and protection from COVID-19!

End the company-UAW cover-up! There must be transparent, immediate and consistent reporting of COVID-19 outbreaks. Workers must have the right to halt production in the event of an outbreak of the

pandemic. In such cases, there must be a halt to production for two weeks to fully sanitize the plant. This should be monitored and enforced by an independent safety committee of rank-and-file workers. There should be full compensation for any lost wages due to the pandemic or family care needs.

Rank-and-file monitoring of the vote. No ballot stuffing!

The full contract must be posted and made available to all workers and sufficient time allotted for them to study and discuss the provisions before any ratification vote. Attempts to conduct contract discussions either on the plant floor or by separate departments should be rejected. Rank-and-file workers must be empowered to monitor the vote process and halt any attempt by the UAW officials to rig the vote or stuff the ballot boxes.

Form an independent Nexteer Workers Rank-and-File Committee to defeat the sellout contract!

Auto workers play a tremendously important role in global economy. To discuss and fight for their demands, however, they need an international perspective, strategy and organization of their own—one that is completely independent of the corporatist UAW, the companies and the big business parties.

The *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* urges Nexteer workers form a rank-and-file committee to take contract negotiations out of the hands of the UAW bureaucracy and advance the struggle for the livelihoods of all autoworkers and the working class across the world.

The International Committee of the Fourth International, which publishes the *WSWS*, has issued a call for an International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees in order to unify the emerging struggles of the working class and mobilize workers’ collective strength on the broadest possible basis around the world.

The *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* will do all in its power to assist Nexteer workers their struggle.



To contact the *WSWS* and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact