

“Saginaw unions no holds bar” Facebook group censors WSWS articles on Nexteer and Volvo workers

Jesse Thomas
18 May 2021

With opposition among 2,500 Nexteer auto parts workers in Saginaw, Michigan growing on the eve of Friday’s vote on a new five-year labor agreement at the former General Motors plant, the United Auto Workers and its cronies are desperately trying to cut off workers from the information they need to defeat the sellout deal. This has been centered on efforts to censor the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter*, which has provided a voice for workers to oppose the deal and organize independently of the UAW to fight for the demands they need.

Beginning last week, members of the Socialist Equality Party and Nexteer workers who oppose the agreement shared *Autoworker Newsletter* articles with the Facebook group “saginaw unions no holds bar,” a private group of approximately 2,200 unionized workers in the Saginaw, Michigan area. The material shared, which included a report on the most recent “no” vote by Volvo Truck workers in Virginia, as well as a call for Nexteer workers to vote “no” on the proposed deal, was removed within minutes of their respective posting. Several subsequent attempts to share these articles were also taken down by the administrators. WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* editor Jerry White, who had been a member of “saginaw unions no holds bar” since 2016, was removed from the group after making an appeal to the administrators to restore the posts.

Nexteer workers comprise a large portion of the membership of the online group. The forum’s organizers attempt to present the group as an environment where workers disillusioned with the UAW can vent their frustrations and organize rank-and-file opposition. “No holds bar” is a play on the wrestling term “no holds barred,” meaning all-out

combat not limited by any rules or restrictions. However, the group is tightly controlled by current and aspiring local union officials who are always looking over their shoulders to make sure nothing too radical is said, which could burn their bridges with the UAW and Democratic Party.

The new agreement, known as “TA2,” is widely hated by workers and is seen as a continuation of the UAW’s previous concessionary contracts. The 233-page contract was leaked to the membership through unofficial channels, including the Facebook group, this weekend. Only on Tuesday was the Friday vote announced by Local 699, giving workers just a week to review. In its current form, the agreement continues poverty wages of barely \$15 an hour for new hires and gives the company free range to expand its relentless assault on the livelihoods of workers through the continuation of tier systems, the hiring of part-time workers and subcontracted labor.

The WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* has increasingly become the organizing center and voice of opposition, with growing numbers of workers inquiring about building a rank-and-file committee at the plant, independent of the UAW.

The “saginaw unions no holds bar” group regularly posts articles from the *Wall Street Journal*, the two Detroit newspaper mouthpieces of the auto industry, and other corporate-controlled media. It also posts campaign material for candidates running for positions at UAW Local 699 and other unions.

In a message opposing the censorship, White told the administrators, “Is your page going to be policed to prevent any dissident voices from being heard or is it a forum for workers to discuss the most pressing issues

they confront? If you ban our articles, while posting one article after another from the corporate media, then you are practicing censorship and that only helps the auto bosses. This page should not be run like a UAW meeting where union execs pull the plug on your mic or physically threaten you because you oppose their collusion with the corporations. I am sure that Nexteer workers will protest being denied access to information that they need.”

After initially feigning concern, then attempting to shift the responsibility for the removal onto the other members of the three-person moderator team, one admin replied smugly, “Thanks for telling me how my page should be ran?” Shortly afterward, White was removed from the group.

A Saginaw Nexteer worker of 11 years denounced the "saginaw unions no holds bar" group for its censorship of WSWS material and voiced his opposition to the TA2 contract. “My vote is a hard ‘NO’ for this contract. We don’t have a career anymore ... this is just a job. ... The things described in articles by the WSWS are what I’ve been grilling the union about. But they just get pissed off and walk away because their own story doesn’t add up. I’m trying to spread the word around to get people to vote ‘no’ ... Thanks to the *Autoworker Newsletter* for letting me know that I’m not alone in feeling this way.”

He added, “I’m not a member of 'saginaw unions no holds bar' because I wasn’t admitted. There are way too many union reps in there who are in bed with the company. They have a clique and they bully people into their beliefs. If you don’t comply you get harassed at work bad, and you can even get fired over it. I have a colleague who was victimized over a post he made in the group. But you’re good with them as long as you vote how they tell you to.”

By censoring the WSWS, the Facebook group is doing the dirty work of Nexteer and the UAW, and demonstrating where it really stands regarding this sellout contract. Nexteer and other workers should demand that "saginaw unions no holds bar" ends its ban on WSWS articles and restores membership to those it has removed.

The WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* urges Nexteer employees to reject the sellout agreement and form a rank-and-file committee to take the conduct of the struggle out of the hands of the UAW and mobilize

workers to fight for the demands they need, including substantial pay raises and the abolition of the two-tier wage system. To join the fight contact us at autoworker@wsws.org or visit our page on building rank-and-file committees.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact