

# “Saginaw unions no holds bar” Facebook group bans SEP National Secretary Joseph Kishore, suppresses articles on Volvo strike

Jesse Thomas  
25 June 2021

Last Saturday, June 19, WSWs reporters noted that Joseph Kishore, national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (US) had been banned from the Facebook group “Saginaw unions no holds bar” (NHB). NHB is comprised of 2,000 workers in the Saginaw area, most of whom are employed at Nexteer Automotive.

The forum was used by employees to discuss and organize opposition to the rotten tentative agreement (TA2) which was negotiated last month by the UAW Local 699 leadership and the company. The agreement was passed 52–48 percent on May 21 under suspicious circumstances, following the 85–15 percent rejection of a similar deal in February.

Nexteer workers must oppose the ban, which is an attack not only on the WSWs but on workers’ own right to free speech and to know about conditions throughout the auto industry. A day before his banning, Kishore had posted an article in the group which called for the widespread support for striking Volvo Trucks workers at the New River Valley (NRV) plant in Virginia to be mobilised, as well as an article on Nexteer employees voicing their solidarity with the stoppage. Two of the group’s moderators resigned from their positions after an alleged uproar from its membership.

Nearly 3,000 Volvo Trucks workers are on strike against the company, in defiance of two unsuccessful attempts by the United Auto Workers to ram through a sellout contract. As with workers at Nexteer, Volvo Trucks workers were forced to vote a second time on virtually the same agreement after voting it down by an overwhelming margin. In response, a group of Volvo Trucks workers formed the Volvo Workers Rank-and-

File Committee (VWRFC) to oppose the betrayals of the UAW and fight to reach to other autoworkers around the United States and the world.

The decision to ban Kishore after posting these articles is all the more significant given that the UAW and the corporate media are enforcing a total information blackout on the strike. The UAW has not even acknowledged the strike’s existence on its website or any of its social media pages, nor have any reports been carried by any of the major national newspapers. The *World Socialist Web Site* is the only news publication in the world regularly reporting on the strike and fighting to make other autoworkers aware of it. By banning Kishore, the group’s moderators are working to enforce the UAW blackout.

Earlier this month, the VWRFC issued an open letter to the UAW’s top leadership demanding to know what its strategy for the strike is and laying out what workers would be willing to accept. “[W]e are demanding that a line be drawn in the sand, that this strike result in a clear victory for workers,” the statement reads. “If they are informed about our struggle, workers throughout the country and indeed around the world will understand that it is in the interests of all workers. They will understand that this is a strike not only for us, but for the future. A successful struggle here at Volvo will strengthen every autoworker, and in fact the entire working class.”

Over the past several weeks, many workers in the NHB group have voiced opposition to the page’s frequent censorship of its own members’ posts and the banning of WSWs Labor Editor Jerry White. A worker reported to the WSWs last Tuesday that an administrator of the page posted a conversation in

which a user, whose identity had been redacted, made a complaint against the WSWs. The message stated, “why is a person who is not even a union member but from a socialist party allowed to be a member of (this group)? Is this a socialism page?”

The admin posted its reply to the user: “sorry if I don’t do a background check on all 1000 people each month who request to join this page... If there is something you don’t like, report it like the rest of the people.”

While the user and the moderator paint the WSWs in the colors of “outside agitators,” a label once used by the companies against trade union militants who built the UAW, the WSWs has had a significant presence among Nexteer workers since the last contract vote in 2015. During and after the latest contract negotiations and two ratification votes, dozens of workers contacted the WSWs to voice their opposition to the deal.

The local bargaining committee conducted the contract “negotiations” in complete secrecy, neglecting to give any significant information to the membership before the vote. Meanwhile, the WSWs published accounts from workers that contract rollout meetings were being conducted in the direct presence of management, as well as colleagues being harassed and intimidated by the Local 699 leadership simply for asking questions. Given reports that as many as 1,000 out of the 2,500 workers in the bargaining unit did not vote, less than 30 percent of the workforce voted in favor of the agreement, assuming the margin reported by the union is correct.

After the ratification, workers took to the WSWs to demand an independent audit of the bargaining committee’s procedures.

Kishore has protested the decision to the sole remaining moderator of the group, to whom he sent the following statement:

What is the reason for this action? It came after I shared two articles from the WSWs on the strike at Volvo NRV, including one with interviews of workers at Nexteer. The other article was an open letter drafted by the Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee to the UAW, demanding that it inform workers about what is happening at NRV and mobilize broader

support for the strike. The articles were liked by many members of the page who want to support the strikers at Volvo and are angered at the fact that the UAW is telling workers nothing about what is happening. Your decision to ban me from the page has the effect of further enforcing this blackout of the struggle at Volvo. It assists the UAW in isolating and defeating the strike. This undermines the interests not only of the workers at Volvo but all auto workers. I am requesting that you reverse this decision.

To stay updated with information about the Volvo strike, please visit [www.wsws.org/volvo](http://www.wsws.org/volvo). To learn more about forming a rank-and-file committee at Nexteer or at your workplace, sign up today at [wsws.org/autoworkers](http://wsws.org/autoworkers).



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**