

Ventra workers deserve a \$10 raise! Throw out the bargaining committee and elect a new one from the shop floor!

Ventra Evart Workers Rank-and-File Committee
28 June 2022

The following is the founding statement of a rank-and-file committee of auto parts workers at the Ventra Evart plant in central Michigan. Roughly 1,000 workers make plastic moldings and other auto components at the plant, which is a subsidiary of the global parts maker Flex-N-Gate.

On Monday, Ventra workers rejected a United Auto Workers-endorsed concessions contract nearly unanimously, voting “no” by 94.5 percent. The deal contained below-inflation raises over the life of the contract and would have raised workers’ health care costs.

A pdf version of the statement to download and distribute is available [here](#).

To contact the committee and discuss getting involved, text 231-335-7049 or email ventrarfc@gmail.com.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Yesterday, when we voted down that sellout contract, we stood together and said with one voice: **No more concessions!** Today, we are launching this rank-and-file committee in order to fight for what we rightfully deserve: a livable wage, a safe workplace, time with our families, better health care and more.

The agreement “negotiated” by the UAW was a slap in the face. The wage increases would not have kept up with the rising cost of food and gas, let alone the higher health care and dental costs they were trying to force on us.

The deal did nothing to address our exhausting working hours, 10- to 12-hour days, forced overtime on weekends, or the company jerking us around and changing our schedules without notice. It would have

done nothing to fix the safety violations all over the plant, the filthy, neglected and dangerous conditions.

The UAW thinks we’re slaves, that we have no rights, and that we should be grateful we have a job, no matter how degrading or low-paying it is.

At the meeting last week, the local pulled the mic from our brother while he was exercising his right to free speech, because he was speaking out against their deal. UAW International rep Dan Kosheba (who makes over \$130,000 a year) had the gall to tell us that we would not get any higher wages because we’re “not the Big Three.” The bargaining committee sat there and didn’t say a thing.

Now, the UAW is stalling, saying there won’t be a strike vote until next week, after the contract expires. These delaying tactics only benefit the company, allowing it time to prepare and stock up on parts.

The reality is that a strike is the last thing the UAW bureaucrats want, since it would disrupt production throughout the Big Three and encourage workers there to walk out themselves.

Things have to change. But for that to happen, we need a plan of action and a rank-and-file organization to fight for what we need.

The Ventra Workers Rank-and-File Committee puts forward the following demands:

1. The current bargaining committee has got to go and a new one elected from the ranks! Anyone who could give their blessing to that garbage contract has already demonstrated whose side they’re on. They’re not going to go back and suddenly start fighting for us. Recent history has shown what the UAW bureaucrats will do: Continue conspiring with the company, keeping us in the dark on what they’re discussing, and

then announce a “new” agreement which is just or nearly as bad as the first.

We call for a new bargaining committee of the rank-and-file workers, elected from the shop floor, which should include workers who have the full trust and confidence of the ranks.

2. Stop the stall tactics! Hold a strike vote this week. There should’ve been a strike vote weeks ago. Enough with the stalling! We demand a strike vote be held this week, before the contract expires. We already showed with our “no” vote that we’re ready to fight for what we deserve. Preparations for a real strike should begin immediately. We demand full pay from the UAW’s massive \$826 million strike fund, with strike checks starting the first week after we walk out.

3. No more secret contract negotiations! The lack of transparency around the contract talks puts us at a disadvantage. All Ventra workers have a right to know what’s being negotiated. Future contract talks must be overseen by representatives from the rank and file and livestreamed so that every worker can stay informed and provide their input on what’s being discussed.

Ventra workers are in a potentially powerful position. There is still a labor shortage, and the auto companies remain desperate for parts and have low inventories. We must strike while the iron is hot.

The bureaucrats running the UAW claim that we’re “not like the Big Three” and will never get the pay and benefits they do. These claims don’t hold water and are aimed at dividing and weakening us. The UAW has helped the parts companies *and* the Big Three lower wages and reduce benefits. They worked with the companies to pit workers against each other, using the tier system and other methods.

The race to the bottom has to end. While the UAW officials say, “This is what the company is willing to offer, you have to accept it,” we say, **this is what workers need and are worth:**

- An immediate \$10-an-hour wage increase in addition to cost-of-living raises (COLA) to make up for skyrocketing inflation and years of pay stagnation
- Substantially lower health and dental costs, not higher ones
- No more forced overtime! Regular schedules that allow us to spend time with our families
- Adequate and regular heat breaks during the summer

- Workers’ control over line speed and safety

There is more than enough money to meet the needs of workers. Our labor is critical for the auto industry. Not only Ventra and Flex-N-Gate, but all the major automakers make huge profits off our backs.

The UAW executives try to poison us and say that workers in other countries are to blame. But the companies are exploiting workers not only here but everywhere. We get parts from all over the world, and without workers in Mexico or workers in China, we couldn’t build what we do. Our committee appeals for international support from Flex-N-Gate and other workers all around the world and is fighting as part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).

To our brothers and sisters at the Big Three and other final assembly plants, we say: Join us! We’re all part of one relationship. You can’t work without us, and we can’t work without you. We all need each other. And we’ve all got to stick together for solidarity and to make sure we win a better life for ourselves and the whole working class.

Brothers and sisters at Ventra: If you agree with these demands and want to fight for them, join our committee!

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To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact