

Ventra Evert workers: Vote NO on the second sellout agreement! Throw out the UAW bargaining committee! Prepare for immediate strike action!

Ventra Evert Workers Rank-and-File Committee
26 July 2022

The following is a statement of the rank-and-file committee of auto parts workers at the Ventra Evert 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.

To contact the committee and discuss getting involved, text 231-335-7049 or email ventrarfc@gmail.com, or fill out the form at the bottom of this article.

Brothers and Sisters,

The Ventra Evert Workers Rank-and-File Committee urges you to vote down the second sellout contract brought by the United Auto Workers at the Evert, Michigan, plant by the widest possible margin. Send this contract straight into the garbage where it belongs! We urge our coworkers to organize to push for immediate strike action once the contract is rejected.

A month has passed since we rejected the first union-backed contract by 95 percent. After that, we voted to authorize a strike by 98 percent. We were not just letting off steam: When we authorized a strike, we meant it. We know the only way to secure better working conditions and living standards is to fight for it.

The Ventra Evert Workers Rank-and-File Committee warned two weeks ago before our strike vote, “that the UAW executives will do everything they can to avoid calling a strike.” The union proved us correct. Instead of calling a strike, the UAW bargaining committee went back into negotiations with Ventra. Behind closed doors, they worked out a second deal which is just as

bad as the first. Any contract which comes out of secret backroom talks between Ventra and the UAW can only be a deliberate sellout. Why else would they keep us in the dark?

What is the offer on the table? A paltry \$2.50 increase over three years (\$1.25 in the first six months) with a \$1,300 signing bonus. We will plunge deeper into poverty, while Ventra continues to reap record profits. Inflation is skyrocketing, and health care co-pays will double over the life of the contract. The company is increasing our co-pays, so they don’t lose any money from the pittance that’s offered in a wage increase. The company gains an incentive to fire and hire because new hires get no increase in pay.

There is more than enough money to meet our demands. Flex-N-Gate, Ventra’s parent company, made \$6.8 billion in revenue last year. The CEO Shahid Khan has become a billionaire since the start of the pandemic. His pockets have been filled by our slaving away during the pandemic, and now, COVID is once again raging inside of the plant.

The UAW, meanwhile, is attempting to scare workers into accepting the deal by claiming that if we don’t, we will lose back pay and the \$1,300 bonus. This is the language of company stooges not workers’ representatives.

The UAW did nothing to prepare us for a fight against Ventra. Throughout the “negotiations” we never heard anything. Instead, UAW local reps like Gary Hartsock clumsily attempted to threaten the rank-and-file committee. Dan Kosheba told us that we had no right to expect decent wages because we are not the

Big Three. They made us wait and wait just to get the contract information they already had. They should have hand delivered that miserable offer to every one of us on the shop floor. The union treats us worse than dirt.

The UAW apparatus is proving by its own actions that it stands on the other side. To fight back, we need to wrest control back into the hands of the rank-and-file. We also need to join forces with the workers at Tenneco and build a movement across Michigan and beyond.

This contract is only the latest in a series of betrayals by pro-company union bureaucracies. Our brothers and sisters at Kroger, Dana, Deere, Volvo, Detroit Diesel, CNH, Tenneco and many others have also seen nothing but sellout contracts.

Just down the road from us, our brothers and sisters at Tenneco Inc., in Greenville, Michigan, have been working without a contract since 2020. After they voted down two UAW-sponsored TA's, the local union president simply declared, "I want this to be done with." Just like us, they voted overwhelmingly for strike action only to be stalled and blocked by the UAW.

How can they lead a fight against Ventra or anybody else? Earlier this month we wrote, "If we're to win, we must prepare and approach what lies ahead with open eyes. Above all, we have to have a strategy to expand our fight and the resources to sustain it."

Here is the strategy we propose to Ventra workers:

- **Demand a contract containing substantial wage increases, cost-of-living adjustments to keep pace with inflation and high-quality health care.** The UAW is attempting to browbeat us into accepting this contract with a signing bonus and a measly pay raise. If we are to live decent lives, we need pay raises for all workers above inflation and high-quality health care.

- **Throw out the local bargaining committee and the UAW! Put the rank-and-file workers in charge. Prepare for a strike.** The UAW has stalled us and brought back essentially the same contract. What is the alternative to the UAW? We must prepare for a strike by electing representatives from the rank and file, not by those who are looking to get a seat with the union or management. Throw out the bargaining committee and elect a strike committee to fight for our demands. To the UAW: If you are not preparing a fight for workers,

then get out! As the saying goes: Lead, follow or get out of the way.

- **Unite with workers at Flex-N-Gate, Tenneco and the Big Three.** Our fight cannot be won in Ewart alone. If we do strike, we cannot allow our strike to remain isolated. Rank-and-file strike committees should be formed in order to fan out and call on our Ventra, Tenneco and Flex-N-Gate brothers and sisters in Ionia, Detroit, Sandusky, Greenville and other locations to join our struggle. An appeal should also be made to workers at GM, Ford and Stellantis/Chrysler not to handle any scab parts in the event of a strike.

Brothers and sisters, now is the time to follow through. Put this one in the trash alongside the previous TA. Contact the rank-and-file committee to prepare for a serious fight.



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