

AdvanSix workers vote “No” on third contract offer

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Workers at chemical manufacturer AdvanSix in Hopewell, Virginia are continuing their strike after rejecting the company’s third contract offer on Thursday afternoon by a margin of 166 to 125. As of this writing, 341 workers from the International Chemical Workers Union Local 591C, UA Local 851, IBEW Local 666 and IAM Local 10 have been on strike for 23 days demanding better pay and working conditions.

The latest contract did not offer additional monetary remuneration but gave workers the option to recognize Juneteenth as a holiday, according to the Hopewell facility’s plant manager. On April 21, workers voted “No” on the second proposal from AdvanSix which would have given 58 percent of workers a 6 percent raise in the first year while the remaining workers would get a 3.5 percent increase in the first year. Everyone would receive a 2.5 percent general wage increase in year two and 2 percent general wage increase in years three through five.

Of the April 21st contract, workers had this to say: “They are claiming that the 6 percent raise, that 51 percent of the people are receiving, is to bring them up to market value. What that means is that they know that they have been underpaying you for at least the past 5 years.” Another worker posted: “Look at the inflation rate and the price of gas and groceries, even the people getting the 6 percent raise [are] losing money, while the company raised their prices to match the market. They make more profit while they want to keep their ‘losses’ (our wages) the same.”

Calls for solidarity followed the rejection of the second proposal: “By voting ‘NO’ two times, we actually started a movement. Over 75 percent of us agreed we deserve better pay and benefits for ALL of us, not just a select few,” one worker posted on

Facebook. Another worker implored: “Please everyone this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to show that blue-collar workers are sick and tired of being [taken] advantage of and stepped on!!! Let’s stand up and stand strong to stop corporate greed from using blue-collar workers to become millionaires!”

These workers articulate the sentiments of workers around the world who are increasingly in struggle against rising inflation, price gouging, and austerity imposed by the ruling elite seeking to shore up their profits. Workers in France, Sri Lanka, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States are striking in record numbers across sectors from education and health care to oil drilling and public service. Workers are demanding wages and working conditions commensurate with the tremendous profits they are generating.

AdvanSix is a nylon and chemical manufacturer that produces caprolactam, a material used in carpet fibers, films and plastics, and fertilizer. It is one of the largest producers of ammonium sulfate, an ingredient used in fertilizer, in the world.

According to the website Macrotrends, AdvanSix saw a 68 percent increase in revenue between December 31, 2020 and December 31, 2022. The company’s profits are keeping up with the growth trajectory of the specialty chemical industry as a whole, which is projected to continue to see a rise in profitability due to booming growth of construction in the Asia-Pacific, Middle East, and Africa.

Continuing high turnover due to substandard wages at AdvanSix is causing the remaining employees to work 18-hour shifts to cover for the shortage of workers. Referring to the latest contract one worker said, “(W)hat does it matter if you can choose which holiday to take, when ~70 percent of us are going to be

working both of them anyway?...we just get to 'choose' which one we get to be paid for and spend time away from our family anyway."

Many workers are reporting that they have yet to receive their COBRA paperwork since AdvanSix cut off their medical insurance within hours of the strike vote on April 6, as reported previously by the *World Socialist Web Site*, "Families are posting on Facebook about having to rely on the good graces of medical providers to continue medical treatment until resources can be found to pay. One post in a family group on Facebook read: "They (a medical practice) are working with me to continue much needed care instead of canceling my appointments like so many other physicians, specialists, and testing facilities."

AdvanSix is using salaried employees and contingency workers to maintain operations during the strike. According to striking workers posting on Facebook, these scabs have been paid \$1,000 bonuses for their efforts. Additionally, AdvanSix allegedly paid a local company a \$250,000 retainer for contract workers in anticipation of the strike at the beginning of April. As one post observed: "That's \$250,000 that could have been reallocated to get a ratified contract. It's also a deep insult to those employees and the negotiations team. AdvanSix having contractors on standby was not negotiating in good faith."

This is a developing story as workers continue to react to the latest rejection of AdvanSix's proposed contract.

Are you an AdvanSix worker? Contact us on the form below to discuss your struggle and building a rank-and-file committee of workers to fight for what workers need.



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