

Vote NO on the UAW-Clarios sellout contract! Reject corporate slavery and launch a workers' counteroffensive throughout the auto industry!

WSWS Autoworker Newsletter
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To discuss joining the Clarios Workers Rank-and-File Committee or forming a rank-and-file strike support committee, fill out the form below.

On Friday, striking workers at the Clarios automotive battery plant in Holland, Ohio are scheduled to vote on a third tentative agreement announced Tuesday between the company and the United Auto Workers union. Over 500 workers have been on strike at the plant for more than five weeks.

It is already clear that the deal is nothing more than a repackaging of the first two pro-company agreements brought back by the UAW bureaucracy, which workers courageously voted down by overwhelming margins.

The contract reportedly contains only a 3 percent annual wage increase and a \$3,500 signing bonus, unchanged from the last deal. The insulting wage offer would entail a massive real wage *cut* with inflation taken into account, after workers have already suffered years of lost income because of changes to the company's piece rate system. Moreover, as veteran workers know, the bigger the (heavily taxed) signing bonus, the bigger the sellout.

On the issue that has provoked the most anger by workers—the 2-2-3 schedule—the agreement appears to be unchanged from the last proposal. The grueling schedule of rotating 12-hour shifts (two days on, two days off, etc.) would even further impoverish workers, with overtime no longer accrued after eight hours.

UAW officials initially claimed that the company had promised not to expand the TBS line, where the schedule is to be implemented, for the duration of the contract. However, the contract summary makes no reference to such promises, and in fact includes numerous loopholes for the expansion of the schedule. Under the heading “Limitations on 12-hour schedule,” it states, “Other areas, departments, by mutual agreement,” giving the company essentially free

reign to impose the schedule.

If these are the UAW's contracts “highlights,” then what are the “lowlights”?

Clarios has made clear that this is the deal it wants. The company's communication director stated Tuesday: “We've reached a fully endorsed third tentative agreement that's good for our employees and the company. We appreciate the efforts and hard work of everyone involved and we're hopeful our employees will vote to approve what we see as a fair and reasonable approach.”

The World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter urges workers to vote “no” in the largest possible numbers on this latest UAW sellout. To accept the deal would not only mean industrial slavery for Clarios workers and the next generation. The Big Three automakers and the parts companies would seek to use these attacks as a precedent to carry out a sweeping assault on the jobs and wages of all autoworkers in the upcoming contract talks this year.

A rejection of the deal, on the other hand, would send a powerful signal that Clarios workers will not submit to corporate blackmail and are ready to fight for their just demands. It would vastly encourage the mood of rebellion brewing among autoworkers, making clear that now is the time to take a stand for the rights of the working class.

The rejection of the contract, while necessary, must be connected to the adoption of a new strategy by workers if they are to prevail in this fight. Such a strategy must be based on the sober understanding that the UAW apparatus is determined to carry out a betrayal and will do everything in its power to force through Clarios' demands.

There is a real danger that the company and the UAW will respond to a rejection of the deal by declaring it the “last, best and final” offer and hold an antidemocratic “re-vote,” as was done at Volvo Trucks and John Deere in 2021, to

ensure workers vote the “right” way.

To prevent this outcome or a similar one, workers must take the direction of the strike out of the hands of the unaccountable UAW bureaucrats and into their own. The Clarios Workers Rank-and-File Committee, which has outlined a set of demands based on what workers actually need, must be expanded in Holland and throughout Clarios’ operations, so that workers can effectively communicate across the chain and unleash their collective strength.

The strike cannot be won at the Holland plant alone, or by simply holding out “one day longer.” **Clarios workers must make a direct and urgent appeal to workers at the Big Three to put their solidarity into action by refusing to handle scab-made batteries.** To countermand the UAW bureaucracy’s strikebreaking and illegitimate orders to use scab batteries, workers at the Big Three should organize their own rank-and-file strike support committees to enforce such a ban.

The five-week-long struggle at Clarios has already revealed important lessons for the working class.

Throughout, Clarios has waged war on workers, cutting off strikers’ health insurance and using scabs and court injunctions. The UAW, far from carrying out a fight against this strikebreaking, has colluded with it.

Union officials, as they did during the first two votes, are once again seeking to keep workers in the dark as to the details of the full contract, making a complete mockery of the claims of new UAW President Shawn Fain and his supporters to be restoring “transparency,” let alone “democracy.”

As long and bitter experience has shown at Clarios and elsewhere, the devil is in the contract’s details. If the agreement is as wonderful as UAW Region 2B Director Dave Green and other officials claim, then why haven’t they distributed the full language to all members?

At Thursday’s so-called “informational” meetings, workers should demand the release of the full contract and all letters of understanding. The rank and file have a right to this information, which is necessary to make a truly informed decision about a contract which will govern the next three years of their lives.

The withholding of the full contract and the use of self-serving highlights is but one prong in what is increasingly a full-court press by the UAW apparatus to impose the company’s demands.

Workers have been starved on just \$500 a week in strike pay, despite the UAW sitting on a strike fund of over \$825 million.

The UAW’s communications department and top officials have deliberately chosen to all but black out the strike, hoping to isolate the strikers and also fearing that their

repeated defiance of UAW-endorsed deals will encourage a wider rebellion if workers learn about it.

Most damningly, Fain and the UAW leadership have ordered members at the Big Three automakers to continue handling scab-made batteries, despite growing demands by workers to institute a ban on them so that the strike can be won. The UAW has also not lifted a finger to appeal to workers at the St. Joseph, Missouri Clarios plant to refuse the company’s attempts to increase production there.

The UAW’s underhanded methods on behalf of management are by no means limited to Clarios. In recent days, the WSWs has been contacted by multiple workers at the Tenneco auto parts plant in Cambridge, Ohio, who say that they are also fighting “miserable” contract offers and being lied to by the UAW International. “Some of us at our plant have been saying all UAW members need to go on strike,” one Tenneco worker said. “We are getting screwed.”

The battle at Clarios is itself part of an international blitzkrieg being initiated by the auto corporations against the jobs and wages of workers. Last week, global auto supplier Autoliv, the largest maker of seatbelts and airbags, announced it was slashing 8,000 jobs, primarily in Europe. All the auto corporations are seeking to vastly reduce costs to fund the transition to electric vehicles and maintain their bloated profits. This new restructuring of the auto industry is intersecting with brutal efforts by the US ruling class to impose the costs of the war against Russia, and preparations for war against China, onto the working class.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC)—a global network of militant workers’ organizations—has fought along with the WSWs to break through the blackout and isolation of the Clarios strike imposed by the UAW bureaucracy, explain the issues common to all autoworkers, and put forth an international strategy and program to harness and unleash the colossal strength of the global working class.

The strike can and must be won, but everything depends on what workers decide to do. Vote no to UAW-corporate blackmail! Organize committees of trusted workers to oversee the counting of ballots! Build rank-and-file committees to fight for higher wages and better working conditions! Organize a counteroffensive of all autoworkers!



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