

Clarios workers challenge UAW officials at “informational” meetings on third sellout deal

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Striking workers at the Clarios battery plant in Holland, Ohio challenged United Auto Workers officials about the content of their proposed three-year agreement during informational meetings held today at the UAW Local 12 hall in Toledo. The mood at the meetings was one of “dissatisfaction,” according to workers who spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site*, with the UAW bureaucrats counting on the economic pressures of a long strike to wear down the resistance to the sellout deal.

On Tuesday evening, UAW Local 12 officials suddenly announced that a deal had been reached. This was supposedly agreed during the first set of negotiations after Clarios management canceled talks three weeks ago when workers overwhelmingly rejected the last UAW-endorsed deal on May 22.

On Wednesday, UAW officials passed out what they claimed were the “highlights” of the proposal. The 24-page document is filled with incomplete and incomprehensible sentences that are an insult to the intelligence of workers. It is clear that Clarios management gave the UAW its marching orders to push through the same contract, and union officials slapped the “highlights” together in haste.

The more that workers learn about the deal, the more obvious it is that the “new” agreement is simply a rehash of the two deals workers previously rejected, first by 98 percent on April 27 and second by 76 percent on May 22. Even the claims that the UAW has secured “promises” from the company not to expand the one department where the union has agreed to 12-hour days, with no overtime payments, have proven to be a lie.

There is no language in the contract proposal to prohibit

the expansion of the TBS line, where workers operate new battery manufacturing machinery built by UK-based TBS Engineering. Instead, the contract summary includes various loopholes by which the company can expand the brutal schedule, including to other areas of the plant.

Under the section “limitations on 12 hour schedule,” the proposal says that the schedule can be expanded to “other areas, departments, with mutual agreement.”

Under the section, “Implementation of the 12 hour schedule,” the proposal states, “It is the right of the Company to implement continuous operations and by such implementation to change appropriate provisions in the contract as may be necessary.” It then continues, “For ‘8 hour’ shift Continuous operations employees will be compensated, in addition ...” before the sentence ends abruptly.

During the meetings, union officials did not even mention the worthless “promise” not to expand the 12-hour schedule. Several workers challenged UAW officials, saying various loopholes would be used to expand the 2-2-3 schedule (two days on, two days off, three days on, etc.) that includes the 12-hour workday with no overtime.

A worker told the WSWWS, “One worker read the provision on continuous production and said this would allow the company to change the schedules for the whole plant to whatever they want.”

UAW Region 2B Director David Green and Local 12 Chairman Aaron Shinaul claimed this was not a loophole but just contract language that management “reserves the right to have.” Right afterward, another worker spoke out in an “agitated, upset way” and “Aaron told him that he could leave if he wanted to.”

Another worker said, “The union is telling us, ‘This contract is as close as we can get to having our demands met. After this, we start losing stuff we already have.’ I keep telling people, this company is making billions of

dollars while we're making pennies on the dime."

Less than a third of the striking workers attended the informational meetings, which the UAW divided according to the first letter of workers' last names, fearing a large turnout of angry workers. With the UAW paying out poverty-level strike benefits from its \$825 million strike fund, most workers are working second and third jobs to survive.

"I think a lot of workers might vote 'yes' because after five weeks they can't hold out any longer on \$500 a week, even the ones who get side jobs," one worker said. "People have mortgages to pay."

"The meeting was divided between a hardcore 'no' and a hardcore 'yes,' and I'm a hardcore 'no,'" said another young worker. "This is BS. We should stay out," another worker said.

"I'm voting 'no.' Nothing changed," said another worker outside the union hall. "People voting 'yes' are only doing it because they're getting broke. The strike is hurting their pockets. But I tell them if this contract gets through, it's going to hurt your pockets more. The union officials are preying on us not being able to afford staying out. It's an insult.

"What happens to us is going to affect Jeep and the other autoworkers," he added. "This is where it starts.

"It's disappointing to see the workers in the plants using scab batteries from our plant, but I hear the UAW International is ordering them to do it. How can you help scabs do our work?

"The vote might be 50-50 because we've been out so long, but the contract is all BS," he concluded.

"Five weeks on strike, and it's the same contract. It doesn't make any sense," another worker said. "I don't agree with this," a young worker with five years at the plant added. "This is a slap in the face. They have one department with the 2-2-3, and they want to put us all in it."

Other workers complained about the miserable 3 percent raise that will immediately be eaten up by inflation. "I'm voting 'no.' We need more money." Another said, "This is crap. It didn't change much at all."

Another worker said, "The union is not working for us, for the employees. They are a scam and a bunch of thieves. The company and the union are banking on us going back because we're running out of money. It is great that workers at GM, Ford and Stellantis are supporting our cause, but it is counterproductive when the UAW is sabotaging the cause," he said, referring to the

UAW International's deliberate isolation of the strike and sanctioning of the automakers' use of scab batteries.

"I read your articles on the strike, how nobody is being informed about what's going on here," another worker said about the *World Socialist Web Site*. "But when German Clarios workers found out from the WSWS, they support us," he said.

Supporters of the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* distributed a statement to workers at the informational meetings calling on them to vote "no" on the contract during the ratification vote scheduled for Friday. Committees of trusted workers should also oversee the casting and counting of ballots to prevent vote rigging by the UAW bureaucracy, which is desperate to shut down a strike that has provided a powerful example for autoworkers facing their own battle this September.

The statement says 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." This includes taking the conduct of the struggle out of the hands of the UAW bureaucracy through expanding the Clarios Workers Rank-and-File Committee and appealing 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."

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