

American Axle workers strike major GM supplier in Three Rivers, Michigan

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Are you an American Axle worker? Fill out the form at the end of this article for information on building rank-and-file committees to transfer power from the UAW apparatus to workers on the shop floor.

Approximately 1,000 members of United Auto Workers Local 2093 walked out Monday morning at the American Axle & Manufacturing (AAM) plant in Three Rivers, Michigan — now rebranded by the company as Dauch Corporation — after their previous contract expired at 11:59 pm on May 31. The strike, backed by a 98 percent authorization vote, opens a new front in a wave of rebellion throughout the auto parts industry, alongside ongoing contract battles by 1,300 workers at Nexteer Automotive in Saginaw and thousands more at Dana, Magna International and Bridgewater Interiors.

American Axle workers are fighting to reverse nearly two decades of stolen wages and benefits. In 2008, the UAW bureaucracy isolated an 87-day strike at American Axle and imposed a devastating concessions agreement that slashed wages from \$27–\$28 an hour to as low as \$10, wiped out the jobs of roughly half the company's 3,700 workers in Michigan and New York, and gutted pensions and retiree healthcare.

Eighteen years later, wages top out at only \$22 an hour after a five-year progression — meaning that, adjusted for inflation, workers are earning roughly half of what they made before the sellout. Meanwhile, American Axle's CEO has collected \$111 million in personal compensation, its top five executives nearly \$231 million combined, and the company has generated \$8.4 billion in profits built on the labor of workers who were told sacrifice was necessary for survival.

Workers speak: “We want our wages brought up to the pay of Big Three workers”

“We want our wages brought up to the pay of Big Three workers” who make as much as \$39 an hour, a striking worker told the WSWS. Many American Axle workers are forced to take second or third jobs or rely on food stamps to make ends meet.

In addition to wages, workers told WSWS reporters that job security is a central concern. “The union already knows how the company is going to use automation” to cut jobs, the worker said.

Another worker told the WSWS, “They’ve brought in fencing and security trailers for the strike, and now there’s more than a dozen guards watching over entrances,” the worker said.

WSWS reporters who spoke to American Axle workers in the months leading up to the strike found a workforce seething with anger — not only against the company, but also the UAW apparatus that sold them out in 2008 and is preparing to do so again.

One worker explained in March that management had been accelerating production and stockpiling parts in anticipation of a walkout: “When we

came back from layoff, we weren’t building for demand — we were filling warehouses. They’re preparing for a strike, and they’re pushing us harder because of it.”

Workers described a relentless pace that has taken a physical toll: “They want you to run nonstop. They shorten the cycle times and expect you to rush through every job. Where’s the compensation for the wear and tear on your body? Some of us have back problems or slipped discs, and we’re not even supposed to be walking like this. But nothing changes.”

Workers also reported that the union no longer monitors line speed or enforces basic protections: “We used to not make changes unless the union was there watching cycle times. Now we don’t even make committeeman calls — nothing happens if you do.”

The memories of 2008 remain raw and defining. “You undercut us when we were on strike in ‘08 — it cost a lot of us our jobs,” one worker wrote on social media when the UAW posted a video invoking the strike’s imagery under the title, “We walked the line in solidarity.” Another worker was blunter: “They should have let the companies collapse. Don’t accept less than what was taken from us.”

A worker who had started at \$10 an hour and spent years on food stamps while working 70-hour weeks put it plainly: “We have no faith in our local. We have to fight our own battles. When we hired in, senior workers told us the UAW pressured people into voting for the contract to keep their jobs. That came from the International.”

The Nexteer rebellion: A model and a warning

The American Axle strike erupts in the context of an extraordinary rebellion by workers at Nexteer Automotive in Saginaw, Michigan — less than 200 miles to the north — that has thrown the entire UAW apparatus into crisis. The Nexteer workers, who produce critical steering components for GM, Ford, and Stellantis, have now rejected three consecutive UAW-backed sellout contracts: the first by 96.2 percent on April 2, the second by 73 percent on May 15, and the third by 55 to 45 percent overall — with production workers rejecting it by 59 percent — on May 29. They voted by 86 percent to authorize a strike on May 21.

The terms being offered to Nexteer workers crystallize what is at stake for the entire industry. Production workers are offered a top rate of \$27 an hour by 2030 — the same wage workers earned at the very same plant, then the GM Saginaw Steering Division, back in 2005. Adjusted for inflation, that 2005 wage is worth \$45.65 today. New hires face a 48-month progression to top pay — double the current 24 months — an expansion of the tier system. Automated cycle-time surveillance, used by management to enforce speedup in real time, goes completely unchallenged. The points threshold for automatic discharge has been cut from 18 to 12.

The Nexteer Workers Rank-and-File Committee has issued an explicit call for joint action with American Axle workers and all parts workers facing contract battles at the same critical moment. “We are the leading edge of a wave of opposition from long under-paid and abused parts workers,” the Nexteer RFC wrote. “If we exercise our fundamental right to withhold our labor, our strike would encourage a unified auto parts industry walkout — and the restoration of the parity wages that once existed when parts workers earned 96 cents for every dollar earned by Big Three assembly workers.”

In response to the American Axle strike, a veteran Nexteer worker and member of the rank-and-file committee said, “It seems like a sham that the International treats one IPS unit different than it treats another. If American Axle is on strike, they are going to stop production and GM is not going to get axles. For Nexteer, we’ll probably have layoffs because if the truck can’t roll, it doesn’t need to be steered. One of the issues could be that Solidarity House doesn’t want an extra 1,700 people drawing from the strike fund.

“If we were both striking, it puts more pressure on the corporations to come to a settlement. If only one of us is out on strike and they settle it will only weaken us. You get the idea that everybody is in collusion with each other. Not only the International with American Axle and Nexteer but the Big Three executives who benefit from our low scale of pay.

“Back in 2015, we were all energized to go out and make a statement by striking, and after they gave us the right to strike, the UAW International pulled the rug out from underneath of us, and sent us back to work after 20 hours without even having a complete contract. They called it a ‘victory’ but it was a victory for General Motors and Nexteer. I’d say to the American Axle workers don’t let the union officials do that to you. The rank and file has to have the authority and come together with us at Nexteer.”

Will Lehman: “Take this fight into your own hands”

Will Lehman, the Pennsylvania Mack Trucks worker and UAW presidential candidate who has campaigned at the American Axle plant throughout 2026, has issued a statement of solidarity with the Local 2093 strikers that is at the same time a sharp warning against the sabotage being prepared by the very apparatus claiming to back the strike. Referring to nexteer and other parts workers, Lehman wrote:

The conditions for a unified, industrywide uprising of parts workers have never been more ripe. But precisely because the stakes are so high, I must issue a warning: the UAW bureaucracy will attempt to do to you what it has done to every struggle for the past four decades — isolate it, wear it down, and impose a terms-of-surrender agreement dressed up as a victory.

Lehman pointed to the hypocritical comments of UAW Region 1D Director Steve Dawes, who declared before the strike that “parts workers have been treated as second class cousins for too long.” Lehman responded, “Workers should ask, by whom, Mr. Dawes? Who treated us that way?”

As a top officer in UAW Local 651 in Flint, Dawes played a direct role in the betrayal of the 1998 GM strike — a 54-day walkout by 9,200 workers that paralyzed 95 percent of GM’s North American production. The UAW reached a settlement leaving workers’ core demands unmet, and less than a week later, GM announced the spin-off of Delphi

Automotive. Ford followed with Visteon. By 2003 the UAW had blessed a two-tier wage structure at both. In 2005, Delphi went into bankruptcy and imposed 60 percent wage cuts. The plant that became Nexteer — where workers earned \$27 an hour in 2005 — went through that entire process of destruction, emerging twenty years later with \$27 an hour as a top rate offered for 2030.

“Steve Dawes helped build the chain of betrayals that produced the ‘second class cousins’ he now purports to decry,” Lehman wrote. “He did not treat parts workers as second-class cousins — he helped manufacture their second-class status, contract by sellout contract.”

Lehman was equally withering toward Shawn Fain’s declaration that “Your International union has your back.” The UAW’s own track record in parts strikes tells the real story: when Clarios battery workers struck in 2023, the UAW International ordered GM’s Flint plant to unload and process scab batteries. When Dakkota auto parts workers in Chicago struck in 2024 and appealed for a ban on scab parts, Fain’s apparatus again sanctioned their handling.

“These are not oversights,” Lehman wrote. “They are the deliberate policy of an apparatus that functions not as the representative of workers, but as an instrument of corporate management.” And the lesson of Nexteer is plain: “Fain has even acknowledged that Nexteer workers voted down three contracts and authorized a strike. But every one of those contracts was drafted and pushed by the UAW bureaucracy. The 86 percent strike mandate has been defied, not honored. And Fain’s International has done nothing — nothing — to enforce the democratic will of those members.”

Against this record, Lehman called for the members of Local 2093 to immediately form a rank-and-file strike committee to insist on full transparency in negotiations — “every company proposal and every counter-offer reported to the membership in real time” — and demand \$1,000 per week in strike pay from the UAW’s \$840 million strike fund.

Lehman placed the Three Rivers strike in its full historical and industrial context. Under the just-in-time production system, a unified parts workers’ strike has the power to halt assembly across General Motors, Ford, and Stellantis within days. “That is precisely what the UAW bureaucracy—tied to those corporations by a million threads of labor-management collaboration and institutional self-interest—is desperate to prevent. It is precisely why you must do it.”

And he closed with a historical parallel that goes to the roots of the labor movement: “The workers who built the UAW in the great sit-down struggles of the 1930s did not win by appealing to the union bureaucrats or corporate-controlled politicians. They won by acting in defiance of them, led by socialist militants organized from the shop floor. Local 2093 members, your moment has come. Take this fight into your own hands, unite with Nexteer workers and your brothers and sisters across the industry, and fight to win.”



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