

American Axle workers defy strikebreaking as workers press for broader walkout across auto industry

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The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) is hosting an online meeting Sunday, June 7 at 4pm (EDT): “Break the isolation of the American Axle strike! Unite with Nexteer and all auto workers!” To attend the meeting register at this link.

Workers on the picket lines at American Axle Manufacturing in Three Rivers, Michigan report that they are facing a strikebreaking operation with attempts by the multibillion dollar corporation to move components in and out of the facility.

One worker reported to the *World Socialist Web Site*, “It’s like middle management and some non-union white collar workers that are on the line. They were watching the lines prior to Sunday. Workers are being physically harassed and assaulted.”

Other reports describe provocations involving security guards allegedly telling truck drivers to run over pickets, underscoring the hostility of management’s response to the strike. As one supporter posted on Facebook, “Apparently, when you’re on strike at American Axle, the security guards tell trucks to run you over.” She encouraged workers to record these incidents and wrote, “who paid for these rent-a-cops?”

In the face of this, strikers have expressed support for a common strike with 1,700 workers at Nexteer Automotive plant, less than 200 miles away in Saginaw, Michigan. When reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* visited the picket line in Three Rivers on Monday morning, one worker responded to a question about the Nexteer workers by saying, “They should be out too.”

This sentiment has been echoed by Nexteer workers themselves. A veteran worker and a member of the Nexteer Workers Rank-and-File Committee said, “We should be out with them. If we struck with the American axle workers, we would not only squeeze our two companies but also the Big Three. But the UAW International is keeping us from striking.”

UAW President Shawn Fain and the union apparatus have ignored the 86 percent strike vote by Nexteer workers and have repeatedly attempted to ram through a pro-company agreement at the former GM Steering Gear plant. Over the last two months, workers have rejected three UAW-backed agreements, and there is mounting opposition to a fourth deal being pushed by Fain and UAW Region 1D Director Steve Dawes.

Opposed to a broader mobilization of the working class against big business and the two corporate-controlled parties, Fain is

attempted to use the American Axle strike to boost his credentials at the upcoming UAW 39th Constitutional Convention. At the same time, union officials are using striking workers as props for Democratic Party politicians, including Governor Gretchen Whitmer, gubernatorial candidate Genesee County Sheriff Chris Swanson and US Senate candidate Mallory McMorrow, who have posed for photo-ops on the picket line.

The UAW bureaucracy promotes the Democrats, while also aligning with Donald Trump’s economic nationalism. In truth, both parties backed the restructuring of the auto industry in 2008 that gutted wages across the supplier sector.

“Workers at GM Flint Assembly and Nexteer should stop production and join the strike of American Axle workers”

The former American Axle (now Dauch) plant is a critical supplier of axles for heavy-duty Silverado and Sierra trucks built at the Flint GM Truck Plant—one of GM’s most profitable facilities. GM has only a limited inventory buffer of these axle assemblies. A worker at the plant expressed her solidarity with the striking workers:

Workers at Flint Assembly and Nexteer should stop production and join the strike of American Axle workers. United we are in a more powerful position. As fellow autoworkers we can bring the power back to the shop floor and get paid a good wage, work at a sustainable healthy pace, and stop the decades of concessions and layoffs. My mother is a retired GM worker. Her hourly pay in 2010 was \$32 and that wasn’t enough!

If we don’t fight now, we will have to go another four years, hanging by our fingertips to survive, paycheck to paycheck, if we even have a job.

At the Flint GM Truck Plant, the line has been running so fast I was told by my fellow workers that the chain that pulls the line broke today and we did not run for nearly two hours. We have been running nonstop six days a week

building 380+ trucks a shift to build up inventory.

If the UAW bureaucracy stood with the workers it says it represents, they would call a strike so that we would stop producing trucks using American axles and Nexteer steering components! Instead of uniting Nexteer workers, American Axle workers, GM truck workers and other autoworkers to join in on united strike action, we continue to run harder and faster than ever before!

Workers are striking and struggling hard to get the pay and benefits we deserve. The UAW apparatus basically stands against us and then is going to come out and take all of the credit for the strike at American Axle and the voting down of three tentative agreements which they backed at Nexteer, while they are trying to push through yet another rotten contract and keep us all divided.

American Axle & Manufacturing Holdings is a major global driveline and drivetrain supplier, publicly traded on the NYSE under AXL, with roughly 18,000 employees globally. The company generated \$1.41 billion in revenue in the first quarter of 2025. The WSWS has previously reported \$8.4 billion in profits over the past decade, along with \$111 million in compensation for CEO David C. Dauch and nearly \$231 million for the top five executives combined.

In January 2025, American Axle acquired Dowlais Group PLC—including GKN Automotive and GKN Powder Metallurgy—in a cash-and-stock deal valued at approximately \$1.44 billion. The company has said the transaction was expected to generate roughly \$300 million in returns by its third year. In practical terms, the company can buy major global assets while insisting that production workers in Michigan remain on poverty wages with extended pay progressions.

American Axle has 29 plants in the United States, at least nine with UAW representation. The UAW bureaucracy has called none of those workers out in support of the 1,000 Three Rivers strikers.

The UAW's "contract campaign" at Three Rivers—public relations messaging, restricting the strike to one company and holding rallies for video and social media purposes—is not a strategy to win but to defeat the strike.

It is a continuation of the corporatist program of the UAW bureaucracy, which has produced a disaster for auto and auto parts workers. In 2008, the UAW bureaucracy betrayed the 87-day strike by 3,600 American Axle workers in Michigan and New York, and agreed to a 50 percent wage cut from \$29 to \$14.50 per hour.

The strike took place soon after the UAW first imposed a two-tier structure at Ford, GM and Chrysler in late 2007, and one year before an expanded two-tier wage, set at 50 percent of standard base pay, was imposed for all new hires in the Obama administration's forced bankruptcy and restructuring of Chrysler and General Motors in 2009.

While Fain talks about workers "getting their fair share" today, it was the union bureaucracy, of which he was a part in 2008, that enabled the poverty wages in the first place. Today, top pay at American Axle sits at around \$22 an hour after a five-year

progression—roughly half the pre-2008 level in real terms after inflation.

The role of the UAW in the lead-up to this strike is also exposed by a telling detail: American Axle workers were working extended hours, helping the company build up product inventories in advance of the walkout. The union apparatus was aware of this and did nothing to stop it.

The way forward

The only viable path forward for the American Axle strikers is to broaden the fight. The strike cannot be won as a pressure campaign managed by the UAW bureaucracy, which intends to shut the strike down before it impacts GM.

This means following the initiative of the Nexteer workers and forming a rank-and-file committee to transfer power and decision-making from the UAW apparatus to workers on the shopfloor. Such a committee can build direct ties with workers at Nexteer, Dana, Bridgewater, Ford, Stellantis, GM and other companies facing the same conditions. Such a committee would allow workers to share information, coordinate action, and fight for demands based on what they actually need—not what management and the bureaucracy are willing to concede.

The strike is already revealing the real alignments in the auto industry: workers on one side, and the company, the bureaucracy, and the political establishment on the other. The way forward is genuine solidarity, rejection of any rushed sellout agreement, and transforming this walkout into a broader fight across the supplier sector and beyond.

To get more information about building a rank-and-file committee, fill out the form below.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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