

# “Round up all the new hires and tell them to vote yes”: UAW holds shotgun vote at Nexteer as opposition mounts to fourth sellout deal

Jerry White  
25 June 2026

Voting began Thursday at the Nexteer Automotive plant in Saginaw, Michigan, where the United Auto Workers is trying to intimidate 1,700 workers into ratifying a fourth pro-company tentative agreement (TA4). There is widespread opposition to the deal—which differs little from the three previous ones workers voted down—and deep anger over the way the UAW bureaucracy has repeatedly defied the will of the membership and employed underhanded methods to impose management’s dictates.

Instead of holding the vote at the UAW Local 699 union hall where workers openly campaigned to defeat the three TAs, union officials are holding the vote at three separate locations inside of the Nexteer factory, under the threat of management retaliation against any opposition. Earlier this month, Antwiane Sanders, a worker with more than 10 years at Nexteer, was terminated after criticizing a UAW International rep during an in-plant contract rollout meeting.

From the moment voting opened Thursday workers witnessed scenes that made the bureaucracy’s intent unmistakable. A woman who walked into one of the polling locations was told to “round up all the new hires and tell them to vote yes.” The new hires, according to a worker who reported the incident to the WSWS, “looked bewildered and not understanding what was happening.”

Rather than achieving its intended effect, the worker said, “The way the vote is being conducted is making workers more angry and causing them to vote no.” On social media pages, many workers have posted photos of their ballots with an X mark in the “no” box.

Another worker posted on a social media:

The thing I don’t like is all the deceit. I asked in my meeting if the new hires they just brought in could vote. I was told by Carl, Chris ( my shop committee person), Ramiro, and Jeremy that no they wouldn’t be voting. Lies!!!! That should be a red

flag to all. If you have to lie to get a contract to pass what’s hidden in there? Can’t even fight fair.

The in-plant vote is the product of a three-month conspiracy by the UAW bureaucracy and Nexteer management to wear down, intimidate and coerce workers into accepting terms they have repeatedly and decisively rejected. Any contract that is “ratified” under the conditions must be considered illegitimate and non-binding.

That conspiracy has unfolded in stages. Each time workers voted down a tentative agreement—by 96 percent in April, by 73 percent in May, and again on May 29—UAW officials extended the contract behind their backs rather than authorize a strike. They told workers that striking would be “illegal” under the terms of the extended agreement, using their own backroom maneuvers to strip workers of their most powerful weapon.

When workers pushed back and demanded a strike vote, the bureaucracy was forced to hold one on May 21—and workers responded with an 86 percent mandate to walk out. The UAW defied that mandate. International Servicing Rep Jason Tuck and other officials have since repeatedly threatened workers with the consequences of continued resistance: mass layoffs, plant closure, or the intervention of an arbitrator, which they claim could impose an even worse contract than the current one.

The manipulation of new hires is particularly cynical. A veteran worker and member of the Nexteer Workers Rank-and-File Committee noted that “new hires are not supposed to vote until they get their 60 days in.” He pointed to a coworker whose circumstances illustrate exactly what is at stake for these young workers: “I saw one new worker who has to ride his bicycle to work every day because he cannot afford to have his car fixed. He’s only going to get a dollar more than what he’s making now, so hopefully he’ll think that’s not enough.”

The current deal includes starting pay of \$19.50 an hour and raises the top pay to only \$27 an hour by 2030, far below what workers at the former GM Steering Gear plant in Saginaw were earning in real terms back in 2005. It includes a bogus cost of living allowance of 2 percent, which only goes into effect if year-over-year inflation is 7.5 percent—something that has only occurred once in the last 25 years.

The vote started after a detailed WSWS exposé published Thursday revealing how Local 699 bargaining committee officials seized control of the vote oversight process by replacing legitimately elected Election Committee members with hand-picked loyalists—workers excused from their jobs and paid by the company for their time. Workers who volunteered for poll oversight and were known opponents of the contract found themselves blocked.

Will Lehman, the rank-and-file Mack Trucks worker nominated at last week’s UAW Constitutional Convention to run for UAW president, condemned the entire proceeding in an open letter to Nexteer workers. Lehman, who ran for UAW president in 2022 on a platform of transferring power from the bureaucracy to the rank and file, called the in-plant vote “a shotgun affair designed to silence opposition to a pro-company deal and get the contract passed by whatever means necessary.”

Invoking historical parallels to poll taxes and literacy tests to deny African Americans the right to vote in the southern US during segregation, Lehman said, “What the UAW and management are doing at Nexteer belongs in the same category.” He named the architects of the scheme—Fain, Dawes and Tuck— and placed the Nexteer struggle within “a growing revolt across the auto parts sector and the broader working class.”

A 20-year veteran and a member of the Nexteer Workers Rank-and-File Committee the WSWS spoke with explained why the UAW International has been determined to block workers from striking. “Nexteer has a bigger footprint on the auto industry than American Axle,” he explained. “We would possibly shut down factories that could employ up to 10,000 people in Ft. Wayne, Flint Truck, Oshawa and Toledo.” A Nexteer strike would halt production of the most profitable vehicles in the Big Three lineup—full-size trucks and SUVs—vehicles, he noted, that “very few people here at Nexteer can buy” unless they work seven days a week. “Because that’s what it takes them to make the monthly note.”

Summing up nearly three months of struggle, he said, “I still put on my red shirt yesterday to show solidarity, but that’s not what the union stands for today. I think it’s what it stood for 40, 50 years ago.” Referring to dictatorial methods being employed against workers, he said, “The way

the UAW bureaucracy has treated us is right on par with Mr. Trump. They are trying to protect their people, their position, their fiefdom.” He said UAW President Shawn Fain, Region ID Director Steve Dawes and Tuck “have been treating us as second-class union members, denying us the right to strike and pushing this garbage contract. Everybody I talked to wants the bargaining committee out the door.”

Alluding to the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the worker compared the UAW bureaucracy to British troops quartered in the towns and villages of the American colonies. “They’re like the king’s governors embedded in the workplace, appointees of the crown who never set foot on the shop floor. These people have become so entrenched in their positions. They do what they’re told. They don’t think for themselves, they don’t think about the population that works there. They look at their ability to come to work, sit in a nice air-conditioned office, and not have to worry about heat exhaustion when the outside temperature is 90 degrees and inside the plant it’s well over 100.”

He concluded: “We have to clear them out like them out like they did in 1776.”

The underlying reality does not change regardless of this week’s outcome: a contract imposed through coercion, threats and a rigged election process has no moral or political legitimacy. Workers would be entirely justified in treating it as such.

The fight that began in April—when workers rejected the first contract by 96 percent—will continue. Workers at Nexteer, American Axle, Dana, Bridgewater Interiors and across the auto parts sector face the same corporate assault, the same bureaucratic betrayal, and the same need for an independent, democratically controlled organization answerable to the rank and file alone. That organization is the rank-and-file committee, and expanding it is now the central task.

Workers interested in joining the Nexteer Workers Rank-and-File Committee can contact the committee at [nexteerworkersrfc@gmail.com](mailto:nexteerworkersrfc@gmail.com), text (947) 622-2198, or visit [tinyurl.com/nexteerrfc](http://tinyurl.com/nexteerrfc). Workers at other plants who want to contact the WSWS can write to [wsws.org/contact](mailto:wsws.org/contact).



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