

“It’s hard to save for a car with the wages we’re getting”: Widespread opposition to UAW-backed deal at Bridgewater Interiors in suburban Detroit

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Are you a Bridgewater Interiors, Dana or Magna International worker? Fill out the form at the end of this article for information on building a rank-and-file committee.

Workers at Bridgewater Interiors in Warren, Michigan, members of UAW Local 400, voted Tuesday on a four-year contract that the United Auto Workers bureaucracy has sought to rush through without giving workers the chance to see the full agreement or study its details. Despite a concerted UAW effort to exploit the severe economic distress that it has foisted upon the plant’s low-paid workforce—dangling a \$2,000 signing bonus and front-loaded pay increases to secure a “yes” vote—workers expressed enormous opposition to the contract in discussions with *World Socialist Web Site* reporters Tuesday.

In May, the same workers voted down a tentative agreement by a crushing 95 percent margin. Rather than call a strike, the UAW ignored the result, extended the existing contract behind workers’ backs and brought back a slightly modified version with poverty starting wages of \$20 an hour, topping out at \$29 in four years.

The vote comes just days after Fain and the UAW narrowly rammed through a fourth tentative agreement covering 1,700 workers at Nexteer Automotive in Saginaw, Michigan, where workers had already voted down three previous UAW-backed contracts. Some 3,000 Dana workers at plants in the Midwest and South decisively rejected a tentative agreement last month. The opposition at Nexteer, Dana and Bridgewater is part of a growing rebellion against the UAW bureaucracy by auto parts workers, long the lowest paid union members in the industry.

Supporters distributed hundreds of copies of a WSWS article on the snap vote at the factory gate Tuesday and spoke with workers about the contract. The plant’s workers, who produce seats and interiors for some of the Big Three’s most profitable vehicles, are a highly exploited workforce, many hired through temp agencies and paid so little they cannot afford a car, forced to take buses or Ubers to reach the plant.

One worker walking into the plant told the WSWS, “They’ve got this signing bonus, but they are going to take half of it away with taxes and union dues. It’s hard to save for a car with the wages we’re getting and the other bills we have. That’s why I had to catch a bus in this heat to come to work. I don’t talk to the union, because they don’t do anything to help.”

A worker with three years said of the contract, “I don’t like it. They are taking away our emergency vacation days, and we need them to take care of our families. We want \$35 an hour now, not in five or six years.” Another added, “We’re living paycheck to paycheck now, and this contract doesn’t benefit anyone, especially the ones who have been working here six or seven years. We haven’t gotten a raise in years.”

A veteran with 23 years said, “I’m just making \$26 an hour. I was here when it was owned by Johnson Controls.” He said the company always brings in new hires right before a contract vote then lays them off after they vote yes.

A worker with 16 years said she was voting “no” because there is no COLA (Cost-of-Living Allowance), no retro pay back to the contract’s expiration, no protection from unjust suspensions and the loss of three personal days. Another noted that using FMLA (Family

Medical Leave Act) days would now come out of vacation time or paid days off.

Many workers said they should be making the same as Big Three workers, since they build seats and interiors for the highly profitable Stellantis Ram and Ford F-150. “If we were to strike now, it would shut down a lot of the auto industry,” one said. Another denounced the snap vote: “I got my first glance of the offer yesterday, and they want us to vote on it today.”

The UAW bureaucracy is desperate to prevent a strike that would disrupt the Big Three’s production and profits. Fain is in a de facto alliance with the Trump administration’s trade war policies and increase in military production, both requiring suppression of opposition to skyrocketing living costs, automation-driven job cuts and speedup.

In a livestream Saturday, Fain pushed the new agreement, declaring, “The days of allowing IPS (Independents, Parts and Suppliers) to be treated like second-class citizens has to end.” He did not acknowledge that it is the UAW bureaucracy itself that built the poverty-wage tier system to protect Big Three profits—the same system that, by Fain’s own admission, keeps most of the plant’s 1,000 workers making around \$21 an hour. Fain is set to make nearly \$300,000 a year following a pay raise for the International Executive Board approved at the UAW convention, roughly seven times what a Bridgewater worker earns.

Under the proposed deal, top pay would not reach \$35 an hour until 2033—long after the contract expires. With inflation running at 4.2 percent annually, much of any raise will be wiped out.

Bridgewater, spun off from Johnson Controls in 2016, generates an estimated \$2 billion in annual revenue; CEO Ronald E. Hall Jr. has taken home a reported \$50 million over the past three years.

After the UAW betrayal at Nexteer, Will Lehman, a Pennsylvania Mack Trucks worker and socialist candidate for UAW president, issued a statement calling for the building of rank-and-file committees in every factory to oppose the sabotage of the UAW bureaucracy and to unite auto and auto parts workers to put an end to poverty wages and sweatshop conditions.

Dana workers face same tier system after rejecting first sellout deal

The same pattern is unfolding at Dana Incorporated, where contract talks for roughly 3,000 workers under a UAW master wage agreement resume July 7 in Cincinnati, Ohio. Dana workers across the Midwest and South voted down the first contract in June, led by massive “no” votes of 90 percent or more at Toledo Driveline, Warren Axle, Paris, Tennessee and Columbia, Missouri. Ignoring a decisive strike mandate, the UAW refused to grant strike authorization and instead extended the contract. Separate United Steelworkers talks over the Fort Wayne, Indiana plant continue; those workers rejected their contract by 158–15.

Under the rejected agreement, the hated tier system was preserved and expanded: New-hire pay is frozen at \$20 an hour, rising to just \$25 after four years, with senior pay capped at \$28. Given Dana’s high turnover, this incentivizes management’s continued victimization of senior workers and a poverty-wage workforce. The contract offered no relief from rotating 12-hour shifts or mandatory weekend work.

Workers at Dana constantly face the danger of injury or death. Kamara Bond, who worked at the Warren, Michigan facility, was fired twice for reporting unsafe conditions—chemical exposures, high temperatures, poor ventilation—which she believes contributed to the death of coworker Anthony King last October.

Dana reported \$102 million in net income in 2025 on \$7.5 billion in global sales. CEO R. Bruce McDonald took home \$5.61 million in compensation, while the company spent \$650 million on stock buybacks—about 23 percent of outstanding stock—financed largely by the sale of its Off-Highway division.

Workers at the Paris, Tennessee plant, which voted to reject the first contract, posted their anger on Facebook. “I’m so tired of the bottom carrying the top for the top to exceed in life and we’re left at the bottom trying to figure out how to even eat,” one wrote. Another said, “We voted yes to authorize a strike and have since voted down the disappointing TA... they won’t authorize it because we don’t matter to them in my opinion.” A Toledo Driveline worker put it bluntly: “It’s TRASH! We can’t believe the UAW even allowed them to bring this back to us to vote on! ... WE DESERVE SO MUCH MORE.”



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