Bradford White workers: Reject the company-UAW “final offer!” Take the conduct of the strike into our own hands!

Bradford White Rank-and-File Committee
29 October 2026

More than 1,200 workers at the Bradford White water heater manufacturing plant in Middleville, Michigan have been on strike since September 16. After failing to ram through a pro-company contract on October 23, the United Auto Workers bureaucracy is forcing workers to revote on the company’s “last, best and final” this weekend. The following is a statement from the newly formed Bradford White Rank-and-File Committee opposing the company-union blackmail. To contact the committee, fill out the form at the end of the statement.

To our fellow workers at Bradford White:

We have been on strike for more than six weeks. We have rejected three sellout contracts: the first two by 96 percent, the third by 62 percent. We have held the line against strikebreakers, the sheriff’s deputies protecting them, and threats from our own union. The question now is not whether we will fight. The question is who controls the fight.

The company calls its new offer “last, best and final.” That is not a fact. It is a threat. An offer is only final if we accept it as final. The company and the union officials have agreed to treat it as final, but we have the final say on what we accept.

By the bargaining chairman’s own admission, this offer is “essentially unchanged” from the one we rejected by 62 percent last week. The only difference is a bigger ratification bonus, a transparent effort to exploit our economic difficulties and buy a “yes.” But workers have learned: the bigger the bonus, the more rotten the contract.

The wage increase is still under $2 an hour for most of us, topping out at $25.25 after five years. Starting wages as low as $18.25 will still leave us in poverty. The company is paying for the first-year raise by cutting our 401(k) match from 4.5 percent to 3 percent. That is stealing from our retirement to hand us a raise that doesn’t keep up with inflation.

We are told the company cannot afford more because of falling sales and a slowing economy. But we did not cause the downturn, and we will not pay for it. Our wages have been eaten by inflation while this company, one of the largest water heater manufacturers in the world, has profited. The proof of what it can afford is on the picket line, where it pays temp agencies and motels for out-of-state strikebreakers at rates higher than it pays us. The company can find money to break this strike. It can find money to pay the workers who built it.

What the union bureaucracy can live with is not what we can live with. The apparatus does not work for our wages, our retirement or our safety. It can sign anything. We cannot.

Any organization that actually defended workers would tell management what it could do with its “final offer.” It would mobilize thousands of UAW members to defend these picket lines and use the strike fund, our money approaching $1 billion, to hold the line.

The UAW is doing the opposite. It is bringing back essentially the same agreement we rejected, and it is helping management stick a gun to our heads by making clear it will do nothing to stop management from replacing us. That is not representation. That is labor police work for management.

UAW President Shawn Fain used it during the 2023 Mack Trucks strike, when the UAW brought back a “last, best and final offer” virtually identical to the contract workers had voted down by 73 percent, and

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scheduled another vote rather than rejecting the provocation out of hand.

From the beginning, the UAW apparatus has proven to be the biggest obstacle to winning this strike. Local officials signed the tentative agreement. They threatened that rejecting it would mean a “wildcat” strike with no strike pay and lost jobs. Now they are bringing back a contract they know we rejected, because they want to shut down this militant strike.

The UAW International has left 1,200 of us to fight this battle alone while the company imports strikebreakers and the Barry County Sheriff’s Office protects them. The apparatus pays us $550 a week, using starvation as a weapon to force a “yes” vote.

The strike cannot continue under the control of an apparatus that is working to end it. The answer is to take the strike out of the hands of the bureaucracy.

We urge workers to join our rank-and-file committee, which is accountable only to the workers on the shop floor, so we can take control of this strike. All negotiations must be livestreamed and overseen by the rank and file. The committee’s power comes from the shop floor and the picket line, not the union hall. We must become the authority over our own struggle, as the Nexteer workers in Saginaw did after rejecting three UAW-backed sellout contracts.

Our demands

• Vote NO on the “final offer.” Refuse any ratification vote unless the full contract text is released and we have adequate time to read and debate it.

• An immediate raise to $35 an hour, not $1.96.

• Abolish the tier system and the open-ended use of temporary workers, a weapon to divide us and drive down our pay.

• Rank-and-file control over safety. We work in high heat around heavy metal on machines from our grandparents’ time. A tank fell on a worker in this plant and he died. We will not let the company or the union bureaucrats decide what is safe for us.

• Full healthcare, including spousal coverage, and a real retirement, not a 401(k) match the company is cutting.

• $1,000 weekly strike pay, backdated from day one, paid out of the strike fund that belongs to us.

The UAW has left us isolated, and we must break that isolation ourselves. The committee must reach out to workers at Bradford White’s other plants, at the Big Three, to the workers who have fought this same apparatus at Nexteer, American Axle and Dana, and to workers internationally. This strike can only be won by expanding it, not by waiting for the apparatus to “back” us. They never will.

The UAW apparatus is tied to the Democrats and Republicans alike, to economic nationalism and militarism. Its allegiance is to American corporations in the global struggle for profit, not to us. Our fight cannot be won through either capitalist party or the union bureaucracy. It requires the independent political mobilization of the working class, in the United States and internationally.

We have shown we will fight. What we have lacked so far is an organization of our own. The rank-and-file committee is the instrument to build it.

Vote NO. Build the rank-and-file committee. Take the strike out of the hands of the bureaucracy.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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