

Reject UAW sellout at American Axle!

Mobilize auto workers against attacks on jobs and wages!

Statement of the World Socialist Web Site and Socialist Equality Party
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American Axle workers should reject the sell-out agreement reached by the United Auto Workers union and fight to mobilize auto workers and the working class as a whole against the corporate attack on wages and jobs.

Under the tentative deal reached on Friday, wages will be cut from \$28 an hour to \$18.50, with so-called “non-core” workers receiving \$14.55 an hour. Workers at the Three Rivers, Michigan plant will earn even less, under a separate agreement breaking up the national contract.

These near-poverty wages will be used as a new benchmark by the Big Three automakers and other corporations, which are intent on making auto workers pay for a slumping economy and falling car sales.

The UAW has also agreed to the closure of the Detroit and Tonawanda, New York forges, and it has given a green light for further plant closings and layoffs.

This betrayal confirms what the *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Party have said since the beginning of the struggle: workers are confronting two enemies. On the one hand there is the company’s multi-millionaire CEO, Richard Dauch, who is backed by General Motors and Wall Street. Then there is the UAW itself.

From the beginning of the struggle, the chief concern of President Ron Gettelfinger and the UAW bureaucracy was not the jobs and livelihoods of UAW members. They were driven by two things: first, how to overcome the opposition of the rank-and-file to wage cuts, and second, what the UAW bureaucracy would get in return for accepting major concessions.

A real struggle against the corporation is only possible if workers break from this pro-company organization and develop a new form of struggle. American Axle workers should elect rank-and-file committees, led by trusted militants, to take the conduct of the strike and negotiations out of the hands of the UAW bureaucracy.

An appeal should be made to workers at GM, Ford, Chrysler, Delphi and other companies to carry out an industry-wide strike to overturn the pattern of wage-cutting agreements signed by the UAW. A special appeal should also be made to Canadian auto workers facing similar attacks on jobs and living standards and the treachery of the Canadian Auto Workers leadership.

Mass picketing must be organized to oppose Dauch’s threats to bring in strikebreakers, and demonstrations should be called to rally the widest support in the working class for this fight.

This industrial mobilization must be combined with a new political strategy. The fight at American Axle is part of a struggle that the entire working class confronts against the capitalist profit system. After producing vast fortunes for corporate CEOs, hedge fund managers and other financial speculators, the capitalist system is in the midst of an economic crisis, which threatens to produce another depression.

The crisis of American capitalism is making the working population much poorer through declining wages, skyrocketing prices for basic necessities, home foreclosures, cuts in social programs and the destruction of decent-paying jobs. Workers in the US are confronting the same basic issues as workers around the world, including growing inequality and the explosion of militarism and war.

To fight against these conditions, the working class needs its own political party—independent of the corporate-backed Democrats and Republicans—that aims to reorganize the economy to meet the needs of working people, not the wealthy elite. The auto industry and all the basic levers of the economy should be put under public ownership and the democratic control of working people.

The destruction of decent-paying jobs in the United States and the shifting of production to low-wage regions in Mexico, China and elsewhere must be answered through a fight to unify the working class internationally against the globally-organized auto giants. Workers everywhere have a common interest in securing decent jobs and living conditions.

The betrayal of the UAW is not just a question of the individual corruption and cowardice of the Solidarity House leadership. It stems from the bankrupt political program of the UAW and the other unions, which is based on its undying defense of the capitalist system, economic nationalism and the subordination of the working class to the Democratic Party.

Its support for the profit system has now led to the transformation of the UAW into a big business itself, with control of a multi-billion VEBA retiree health care trust fund and tens of millions of shares in GM and Ford stock.

American Axle workers have not fought for nearly three months in order to accept this contract. There is enormous support among auto workers and throughout the working class for a stand in defense of jobs and living standards.

The rejection of this sell-out should be the beginning of a counter-offensive by the working class. The key question, however, is leadership and political strategy. We urge workers to study the history and program of the Socialist Equality Party and build the SEP as the new revolutionary leadership of the working class.