

Reject sellout contract with Daimler! For an independent political struggle of the working class!

Statement of the Socialist Equality Party • 22 July 2013

The Socialist Equality Party calls on machinists and painters to reject the sellout contract negotiated by the International Association of Machinists and the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades.

After keeping workers in the dark about the deal, the IAM released some details late Sunday precluding any possibility of workers to study the fine print. A net increase in pay of \$1.34 per hour over a 40-month, previously three-year, contract does nothing to keep up with the rising cost of living.

Nothing of any significance can be won without the most determined struggle by workers—not only in Portland but throughout Daimler's empire. But the unions have deliberately blocked any such struggle. Instead they have isolated the strike and worked behind the scenes to wear down strikers and ram through management's demands.

Local 1005's web site states: The "Negotiation Committee believes we will not be able to make any further improvements or changes."

What an admission of bankruptcy!

If the IAM and IUPAT will not fight for workers—and they won't—then workers will have to take the conduct of this struggle out of their hands. The Socialist Equality Party calls on Daimler workers to elect a rank-and-file strike committee made up of the most militant and trusted workers to organize a real fight.

The rejection of the contract must be the starting point of a struggle to unite all Daimler workers in the US, Germany and throughout the world to expand the strike. Such a counteroffensive requires

a new political strategy aimed at mobilizing the whole working class against the attacks on jobs and wages by the multi-national corporations and the Obama administration. What is needed is a fight not just against one employer but the entire capitalist economic and political system that is impoverishing working people around the world to enrich the multimillionaires and billionaires.

From the very beginning of the strike, both the IAM and IUPAT have sought to contain and isolate the struggle. Even though the contract for workers at Daimler's Gastonia, Mt. Holly and Cleveland plants in North Carolina expired last April trucks continue to be built with the approval of the United Auto Workers. A wildcat strike in 2007 at the Cleveland plant against concession demands resulted in the victimization and firing of five of the strike's leaders by Daimler, with the collaboration and support of the UAW.

The current strike was only launched because workers rebelled against the unions' recommendation to accept yet another rotten contract. The last eleven years have seen nothing but pay givebacks, wage freezes, and increased health care contributions to the gutting of retirement benefits.

In Joliet, Illinois a strike by IAM-organized Caterpillar workers last August provides a textbook example of the pro-corporate orientation of the union. After a bitter 15-week strike by nearly 800 workers, a new contract laden with all the concessions originally rejected by the workers was narrowly pushed through. The IAM kept the strike isolated and, along with the pressure of Democratic Party politicians, forced the workers back into the plant. Despite record profits by Caterpillar

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the contract imposed a six-year pay freeze for workers hired before 2005, and the elimination of any cost-of-living increases. Workers hired after 2005 at the new-hire poverty-level wage of \$13 an hour were to receive a 3 percent wage increase over six years.

The determination and militancy of Daimler workers to end more than a decade of concessions is an implicit challenge to the Obama administration's policy of "in-sourcing:" luring companies to bring back production from China, Mexico and other low-wage countries by offering up American workers at cheap labor. This began with the White House forcing Chrysler and General Motors workers, with the full backing of the UAW, to accept a new-hire wage of \$15 an hour, half of what workers traditionally make.

Reporting profits of €8.6 billion (\$11 billion) for 2012 and that Daimler Trucks have "once again" increased unit sales and revenue, Daimler-Benz AG chairman Dieter Zetsche asserted, "To ensure that our future growth is even more profitable, we have implemented detailed measures in all divisions that will further increase our efficiency." In other words, workers in Germany, America, Mexico and worldwide will face continuing attacks on wages and working conditions regardless of how profitable the company is.

The big-business Democratic and Republican parties agree the American working class must pay for the economic crisis caused by the Wall Street banks by

accepting Depression-level wages and working conditions. The "competitiveness" of corporate America is to be restored through a vastly impoverished work force. Now entire cities like Detroit are being thrown into the bankruptcy courts so Wall Street can rob workers' pensions.

The ability to implement this program has rested entirely on the suppression of any opposition from the working class by the trade unions. The unions have a vested interest in creating a super-exploited low-wage workforce. The top five officials of the AFL-CIO rake in over a million dollars in compensation. AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka is paid over \$300,000 with a similar amount paid to IAM president Robert Buffenbarger.

This is the political and economic reality of the Daimler strike. A new road and leadership are needed to take the struggle forward. The fight to defend jobs, wages and working conditions—as well as education, housing, health care—must begin not with the profit needs of the rich, but the interests of the vast majority of the population—the working class, which produces society's wealth. The banks and major corporations such as Daimler must be nationalized and placed under the democratic control of workers and run for human need, not private profit. We invite all Daimler workers who see the need for such a fight to study the history and program of the Socialist Equality Party and to join and build our party as the new revolutionary leadership of the working class.

For more information, contact sep@socialistequality.com or visit socialequality.com

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