

Clinton calls for end to GM strike

Jerry White
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President Clinton on Friday called for a quick end to the strikes at two General Motors parts plants in Flint, Michigan that have brought the auto maker's North American operations to a virtual halt. Clinton told reporters, "I would like to encourage the parties to work it out.... I hope they'll do it in a timely fashion."

Clinton began by saying that he had no intention of intervening in the strike, and he tailored his remarks to appear neutral. But his call for an early termination of the walkout clearly favors the company, whose losses will now mount rapidly with each additional day of canceled production. On Friday GM's largest factory, the Lordstown, Ohio assembly plant with 6,400 workers, was added to the list of 22 assembly plants and 88 parts plants in the US, Canada and Mexico idled by the strike. Analysts estimate the strike will cost GM as much as \$500 million a week. As a result, the US Gross Domestic Product would drop \$2 billion by the end of June.

US concerns over the impact of the strike have been intensified by the deteriorating economic situation in Asia and its growing effect on American corporate profits.

A factor in the timing of Clinton's announcement is the fear that if the strike goes beyond this weekend it will be very difficult to get a settlement before mid-July. United Auto Workers negotiators will be attending the union's national convention in Las Vegas next week. The following week GM's two-week shutdown for model changeover is scheduled to begin.

Clinton's statements were aimed at putting pressure on UAW officials, who have been in close contact with Labor Secretary Alexis Herman. The White House comments indicate that behind the scenes the administration's efforts to squelch the strike are accelerating.

The intervention by Clinton underscores the fact that the auto workers' struggle for jobs pits them not only

against General Motors, but against the entire policy of corporate America and its political representatives. That is why it cannot be successfully waged on the basis of the UAW leadership's policy of class collaboration and support for Clinton and the Democratic Party. The UAW rules out any action by workers which asserts the primacy of jobs and living standards over the profit needs of the auto bosses.

Scores of strikes have been waged over the last decade to stop the downsizing of the auto industry. But none of these walkouts have held back the corporate attack on jobs. If these struggles are to advance the battle in defense of jobs and living standards, they must take forward the fight for the building of a mass political party of the working class based on a socialist program.



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