

Letters on the American Axle strike

17 March 2008

The following is a selection of letters sent to the World Socialist Web Site on the American Axle strike.

On “Bitter strike by American Axle workers enters third week”

I wouldn’t cross the picket line at the Three Rivers off-site warehouse. My employer insisted that I cross, so I quit. UAW helped me gather my gear from my truck and gave me a 250-mile ride back to my home in Ohio. I was locked out for a very long time at a previous job at AK Steel in Middletown, Ohio, so I know what the workers at American Axle are going through. Kind of ironic that someone who is not a UAW member is willing to give up his job and be blackballed in the industry in solidarity, while the UAW allowed its non-American Axle plants to operate with parts until they ran out. I imagine that the plants now shut down due to lack of parts will resume operation when they begin receiving sufficient parts from elsewhere. What kind of a union eats its own? One need look no further than the mess involving a UAW-organized Accuride facility in Kentucky a few years back. While they were on strike, then locked out, parts from their plant continued to be assembled by UAW workers at a Louisville plant. Go figure. Evidently, an injury to one is not an injury to all in the UAW.

TC

12 March 2008

On “American Axle workers in Detroit discuss political issues in strike”

I’ve been retired for seven years now from GM. In my last couple years, while walking in the assembly plant, I had a boss drive up to me and tell me, “There aren’t too many like you around anymore.” What he meant was that almost all of the workers believed in the “get-along” system. Not only that, but the workers also believed in two-party boss politics and many were now conservative Republicans. It more than once occurred to me and a few like me that the only way the workers

will realize what side they are on is to get attacked by the companies. Maybe now they will start remembering what their fathers and grandfathers told them about the companies.

DS

Perry, Michigan, USA

14 March 2008

I commend the form as well as the content of Jerry White’s article of March 14 on a conversation between a SEP reporting team and striking Detroit Axle workers. Instead of a regular interview, the author presented a clear, more informal description, assessment and summary of the meaning of an important dialogue with these workers who are awakening to the class and political independence issues that labor faces internationally. He provided essential background with the context and history of their struggle, and elucidated the workers changing views of ownership and especially the symbiotic corporate-government-union relationship. Greater numbers of workers will become aware that the two-party corporate system is alien to our independent class interests and that the unions serve as loyal, nationalist tools of the corporations and government.

Some of the most important of the author’s comments were: “Appeals to the Democrats—like Clinton and Obama—or the Republicans are fruitless because they answer to the same corporations attacking the working class. Workers have no political voice through these two big business parties. Did we have a chance to vote on going to war in Iraq? Do workers get to vote on the destruction of their jobs?” Regarding the type of political movement needed, he writes, “That is the most important question. You have to unite working people on the basis of a common program that defends their interests. The aim of such a movement must be to fight for political power—so the priorities of society are set by working people, instead of by the wealthy elite.” And on the issue of ownership of the social wealth that

is produced by labor: “We posed this to workers on the picket line: Why should these vast industrial assets—built up by generations of workers—be the personal property of Dauch [who makes \$179,000 a week] and others who are only concerned with enriching themselves? The auto industry should be put under public ownership and be run for the common good, not private profit.”

The immediacy of White’s representation made me feel as if I were there on the picket line with him as part of the discussion, as well as engaged in a later post-intervention meeting to evaluate the significance of the learning experience. Well done!

BL

14 March 2008



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