

Detroit auto workers denounce Obama's concession demands

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Auto workers responded angrily on Tuesday to the concessions demanded by President Barack Obama in exchange for providing loans to the auto industry. The open contempt for the working class and unflinching subordination to finance capital that permeated Obama's remarks caught many by surprise.

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to workers at Chrysler's truck assembly plant in Warren, Michigan. Some admitted that they had put stock in Obama's campaign promises before he was elected, but promise and reality ended up being opposites.

"I feel betrayed," said one worker. "That's the best way to sum it up," she concluded.

A coworker added, "My opinion of him, at first, was that he's going to stick up for us." She went on to acknowledge the abrupt change in the president's attitude toward workers since taking office. "He's only been in three months. What he was saying then and what he is saying now seems to me like a total contradiction."

She compared the Obama administration with the United Auto Workers (UAW) bureaucracy which pushed so vociferously for his election. "Just like the UAW reps in here, The UAW is not representing us. They're representing themselves. The UAW officials are going to collect two pensions," she said, while rank and file auto workers would lose theirs.

Many were outraged by the sharp contrast between the treatment of Wall Street companies, which were given trillions of dollars with no strings attached, and the treatment of auto workers, who are asked to give up everything they have in order for the auto companies to receive a few billion dollars in assistance.

"Why do we have to cut, cut, cut when they get millions in bonuses?" asked another. "Our Christmas

bonus was \$600 but with taxes taken out; it was half that. Why don't they attack AIG? What the auto companies are asking for is a drop in the bucket compared to what they got."

"I don't think that's fair," said James. "In the auto industry, we have to be accountable for every dime. Obama says that he's holding the banks accountable. But nobody sees it. The banks don't have to give up anything."

Recently, the Warren Assembly Plant has been shut down for as long as six weeks at a time. Many employees are stretched financially and anxious about the threat to their jobs. "We don't know when we're going to be off, or when we're going to work," said James. "We might be laid off next week. We won't know until Thursday or Friday."

"People are losing their houses and their cars because of the irregular schedules. You don't know when you're off and when you're on. Everybody's on pins and needles. They tell you when you're working and when you're not. The factory might close for a week, but bills don't take a week off."

Phil had this to say: "So Obama wants to cut my pay, but when does he plan to cut the interest rate on my house? You can just add me to the foreclosure list. They want more concessions, but what more can we give? Who is going to be able to afford these cars?"

"You can see a big change in the plant. Everybody's worried about their job," commented Brianne. "My benefits have gone down. My co-pays have gone up. What are we supposed to do?"

Desmond, who had transferred to the Warren plant from one in Syracuse, New York that recently shut down, said, "I'm not going to be able to retire from the

job that I thought I was going to retire from. And even if I were to be able to hang around, it is going to be so drastically changed. When the president comes out and says, 'Well you have given back, but you haven't given back enough,' you know what that means to me. If they have their way, we will be down to \$14 an hour."

"There are either going to be very, very wealthy people, or there are going to be people who have absolutely nothing," another auto worker, Ann, said. "We are probably going to be part of the group that has nothing very soon."

"Obama was a Trojan horse," she added. "I tried and tried to find something about that man that I liked, but I couldn't. I felt like saying to him, 'I am looking at you, but there is something else underneath. You are not what you appear to be. You are saying one thing, and something else will happen.' And sure enough here we are."

"This is all scripted," Ann added. "The elections are scripted. That's why nothing has been said to the banking institutions. And the union is not going to do anything to help us."



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