

The way forward for Indianapolis GM workers

Socialist Equality Party
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The overwhelming vote by Indianapolis GM workers against the wage-cutting demands of the auto bosses is a courageous stand that deserves the support of the entire working class. It was a powerful show of solidarity and determination by rank-and-file workers against the dirty tricks, lies and intimidation that GM, JD Norman and the UAW have used to blackmail workers into accepting poverty wages.

The Indy workers' principled fight is being followed and supported by workers across the country and throughout the world. It is one of many signs of a growing rebellion by workers against the corporations and their lackeys in the trade union bureaucracy.

Wednesday's vote was a blow against UAW International President Bob King, Region 3 Director Maurice Davison and all the other high-paid union executives. However, they are not going to drop their efforts to ram through a wage cut.

The corporations are committed to driving down the wages of all auto workers to \$14 an hour or less. Now that the UAW is a part-owner of GM, King & Co. have a direct financial interest in cutting wages in order to boost the value of their corporate shares. A defeat for their wage-cutting drive in Indianapolis would inspire auto workers at GM, Ford and Chrysler to rebel against the further concessions being planned.

The vital question now is: What strategy is necessary to take forward the fight?

First: The fight against the wage cut must be combined with a fight against the closure of the plant. The shutdown of the factory and destruction of 600 jobs will further devastate the city and lead to the impoverishment of more workers. Plant closures have been used since the end of the 1970s to blackmail workers into accepting wage cuts and concessions, and the closure of the Indy stamping plant will be used to intimidate other auto workers and push through even deeper cuts.

Bitter history has shown that senior workers cannot protect their jobs, wages and benefits by sacrificing the next generation of workers. A stand must be taken here and now!

If the leadership of Local 23 is really serious about defending the rank-and-file, it will prepare for industrial action to defend the plant and halt any layoffs. It will immediately mobilize other auto workers in the fight against layoffs and concessions, sending informational pickets to Marion, Flint, Parma and other factories.

But it is the workers themselves that must take the initiative. Wages and jobs at this or any other plant will not be defended by appealing to the NLRB or any other government agency. The role of the Obama administration is already clear from its insistence on wage cuts and other concessions as part of the bailout of the auto companies.

The workers must mobilize their strength and appeal for joint action with other auto workers in the US, Canada and beyond by organizing and fighting independently of the UAW and in opposition to the entire union bureaucracy.

The groundwork must begin now for strike action and other forms of industrial struggle to defend jobs and wages.

In recent weeks, workers have set up an independent rank-and-file committee, which announced as its motto "No concessions! No pay cuts! No plant closure!" This is an important step. This committee should be developed to organize the fight here and set an example for the building of similar committees in auto plants across the country.

The whole rotten framework of betrayal worked out between the UAW, the auto bosses and the Obama administration should be rejected and overturned. The wage cut for new-hires and all of the other attacks on workers and retirees should be rescinded.

Break with the UAW

Workers should have no illusions: the UAW cannot and will not be reformed. It can't be pressured by the workers to defend them, because it has become nothing but an extension of the companies.

This was made clear by the interview Bob King gave to the *Detroit Free Press*, published last Thursday. “This is a different UAW. This is a UAW that understands the importance of global competitiveness,” he said. Asked if the union would fight to recover the lost wages and benefits, he said, “There is a pretty broad understanding that we can’t bargain agreements that make the companies long-term uncompetitive. We don’t want to get back into the spiral that we just got out of.”

These are the words of a company stooge, not a representative of the workers. And he speaks for the entire UAW as an institution. The UAW today is precisely the type of company union auto workers rebelled against 85 years ago.

Those who insist that workers have to remain loyal to the UAW, intentionally or not, are condemning them to defeat.

In the 1930s, auto workers had to break with the old AFL. Today it is no less necessary to break with the UAW and build new organizations of struggle, democratically controlled by the ranks, and fighting to unite all workers to defend their jobs and living standards.

For a political struggle against capitalism

Indianapolis workers are not only fighting GM, Norman and the UAW. They are in a struggle against the entire capitalist economic and political setup that enables the super-rich to amass vast fortunes at the expense of working people.

All over the world, working people are facing the consequences of the failure of the capitalist system. Mass unemployment, wage-cutting, poverty, hunger, homelessness—all of the scourges of the 1930s are returning. Meanwhile, the bankers and corporate CEOs gorge themselves on multimillion-dollar bonuses, made possible by trillions in taxpayer bailouts. The criminals are being rewarded for their crimes, and the working class is being made to pay the cost!

Many workers thought the election of Obama and a Democratic Congress would end the policies of Bush and the Republicans. Far from changing these policies, Obama has escalated them.

His first act was to back the multitrillion-dollar bailout of the banks. Then, the White House and the Wall Street investors it appointed to the Auto Task Force drove GM and Chrysler into bankruptcy, eliminating tens of thousands of jobs, ravaging communities with plant and dealership closings, and imposing the \$14-an-hour wage for all new-hires. While demanding that workers live in poverty, the

president’s “pay czar” has just approved a \$9 million pay package for Dan Akerson, the private equity investor chosen by the White House to head GM.

As the corporations and investors prosper, the “new normal” for workers is mass unemployment and poverty wages. The Obama administration plans to help big business double US exports within five years. This is to be accomplished by closing the wage gap between manufacturing workers in the US and the most brutally exploited workers in Mexico, China and other Third World countries. The government’s partner in this plan is the UAW, which has been given a major ownership stake in the auto companies in exchange for its services in impoverishing the workers.

Society must no longer be held hostage to the insane profit drive of the corporate and financial elite.

The only way that workers can secure their social rights—to a good-paying job, health care for their families, quality housing and education—is to break with the two big business parties and build a mass political party to reorganize the economy to meet the needs of the majority.

Capitalism enriches the few at the expense of the many. Socialism means reorganizing the economy to meet the needs of the vast majority—the working class.

The auto industry must be transformed into a public utility under the democratic control of the working class. The banks must be nationalized under workers’ control in order to break the grip of the financial aristocracy and allocate trillions to rehire the unemployed and rebuild industry, urban and rural areas, and the country’s infrastructure.

The *World Socialist Web Site* is committed to publicizing the struggle of workers in Indianapolis and becoming a tool in the organization of the next stage of the fight. We urge workers to read the WSWS, including its analysis and letters of solidarity from workers all over the world, and to write in with your comments.

We also urge all workers who agree with this fight to study the program of the Socialist Equality Party and make the decision to join and build our party.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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