

More letters to the Indianapolis rank-and-file committee

30 September 2010

These letters were sent to workers in Indianapolis who have formed the Indianapolis GM Stamping Rank-and file Committee to fight against attempts by General Motors, JD Norman, and the UAW to force through a 50 percent wage cut. Previous letters were published September 23, September 25, and September 28. We encourage workers to send letters of solidarity to indygmworkers@gmail.com, and to send copies to the World Socialist Web Site. (See, "Support the Indianapolis GM workers!")

Dear Colleagues,

Your struggle in Indianapolis is for me a light in the tunnel of the international class struggle. I am a bus driver for the Berlin city-state and we had to accept a wage cut of nearly 20 percent seven years ago and all new young workers who join the company now get only an minimum wage of 8 Euro an hour. The old drivers get 14,60 Euro an hour.

The bus drivers being forced by the Public Trade Union Verdi to accept the deal and the vote on it was a fraud. Verdi never published a ballot sheet of the vote. The new generation of bus drivers are now cheap labor and being used against the older workers. This we have to fight.

But we have two enemies in one—the unions and the state, organized by social democrats and the left party.

There is a long and difficult fight for us ahead. So when I heard of your struggle through the WSWS, against GM and the UAW, we recognized that this is the same long fight we have to do.

All over the world you have the same attack on the working class. And everywhere it takes the same form of struggle. The company cut wages and conditions and they rely on the old worker organizations like the unions and the left around them, and here in Germany, the Stalinist Left party and social democrats.

The old nation-state-system and the organizations who agree with this system are finished. They are our enemy and we have to defeat them in building new working class organizations under a new political orientation toward international unity to abolish the old system and create a new socialist society.

I support your struggle and I follow up the events taking place in Indianapolis.

Fraternally yours,

Andy N
Berlin, Germany

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As a former automotive engineering worker, employed by a US transnational for nearly four decades, I salute your principled stand. You are revealing to the workers of the world the necessary steps to break free of the straightjacket that is the official trade union leadership. Also their cronies and fake socialists who conceal from workers the world over the role of the official trade unions. I have experienced over the years the speedups, no talking rules, no leaving work stations, no proper first aid facility, short-term contract new hires being whipped into submission in order to retain a paltry wage. Seeing how the official engineering union in the UK, now called Unite, has complied with every twist and turn of the capitalist bosses to preserve their profits with the excuse of protecting jobs, only for the boss to push more workers out of the door later on, introduce more crippling speed ups and make a larger percentage of the work force short-term contract hires.

I have had to retire early from these crippling conditions due to back trouble. Many of my former work colleagues having worked under these circumstances have now passed away. I salute their memory. The conditions that you are fighting to resist that is the halving of wages if imposed will set the standard for the rest of capitalism. The implications to our pensions healthcare and modest lives and that of our descendants I am sure all workers understand. With help from your local communities, the informed workers of the world and a socialist programme, I am confident we will prevail. I look forward to supporting your struggle through the WSWS.

Yours,

Steve W
Cambridgeshire, England

I am a 63-year-old worker who has worked at various industries in the UK including the automobile industry for Ford and Vauxhall. I have always fought inside unions for a better working life for myself and fellow workers, experiencing many betrayals by union officials, too many to list here. I admit at times in the past I questioned the will of individuals to resist what was being done to them on the shop floor. I feared that the working class might never be able to break from their traditional leadership. So your struggle to keep your jobs, wages and conditions has reinforced my belief in the capacity of workers to independently organise and fight from the grass roots. It is rightly being seen as an inspiration for all workers.

The crisis in capitalism has created an enormous crisis of leadership within the working class; the most decisive question facing workers internationally is this one of leadership. Those in your plant who took the initial step forward in forming a rank-and-file committee have to be

congratulated for their bravery and strength of mind. They and the workers who now stand side by side with them will be supported by millions of workers not just in the USA but across the globe. The WSWS will be an massive weapon for you. If doubts and concerns do cross your minds you must understand you are not alone. The letters of support you get are just a small expression of how important your struggle is to working people. Expressing in words that support is the minimum you can expect.

Although the UAW now stands naked before the working class, in Europe GM and the unions have placed groups of workers against each other at plant and national level. Opel-Vauxhall workers are being used as pawns by the company, backed up by the national unions and the European Works Council. Workers are told the same story by both, “we have to be better than the rest to survive.” For them it’s dog-eat-dog in the quest to ensure that their own futures are protected, but as you Indianapolis workers recognize, being top dog, the best, doesn’t guarantee anything.

In Strasbourg France workers were forced by GM and the unions into accepting a 10 percent wage cut on the fear of their factory closing. There was no leadership capable of leading a struggle against these measures at that time. I am convinced your stand will help to create different outcomes to future wage cutting exercises. The Strasbourg workers found out that once wage cuts are accepted it becomes a green light for the company. They come back for more, you increase the working day, they want more, they claim your pensions are causing problems for the company, they cut the pension entitlement. It doesn’t end, each hour you work you create profit, but it is always the owners who decide how much profit they take.

All across Europe millions of workers are coming out to fight against the attacks on their jobs and living standards only to be headed off from the struggle by trade unions, who like the Grand Old Duke of York in the nursery rhyme march the workers up the hill and down again, never gaining an inch but hoping to diminish their fighting capacity.

Those who put forward the idea that by protest the unions can be turned around to face up to a fight are telling calculated lies, neither is it about the removal of a few bad individuals who once removed a fight would take shape. These are tactics to create false illusions about the nature of your struggle and the conditions in the world economy. The UAW has, by taking shares in GM and places on the board, come full circle, from being created by workers in the struggle for wages and conditions; they are now in the profit business. That is your present relationship to that organisation, for the UAW to organise a fight it would need for them to give up its positions on the board of GM and hand back the shares. That will never happen. The Rank and File Committee is your leadership now—defend it like you would your family.

Danny D
Merseyside

Dear colleagues,

I am a teacher in a vocational school in Germany. I read in the *World Socialist Web Site* of your fight to save your jobs against the betrayal of the automotive trade union and I wish you much success.

In Germany, Greece and throughout Europe operate organizations claiming to represent workers’ interests in reality organizing sell-outs

such as yours. They push the workers to be nationalistic and claim the workers in other countries to be the cause of our problems. In fact, they betray our interests and they try to gather us behind the capitalists of our countries.

This is the reason why the vast wealth of the world is in the hands of a small elite and the cost of the international economic crisis is to be unloaded on the backs of the workers. Job cuts, lower wages and an extension of working hours anywhere, hunger, environmental destruction and wars are the result.

Responsible in the first place, the unions, but also the social-democratic parties—in the US, Obama’s Democratic Party—and the many small parties that provide these organizations backing.

I hope you to create many workers committees in the automotive industry, and elsewhere to support your fight, because we have common interests and they can ultimately prevail only by working together internationally.

Yours sincerely,

H.

A teacher from Germany

I want every one in the world to know how proud I am of Indianapolis, Indiana. To stand up and fight the way you have is great. I was at the rally at Local 23 in Indianapolis Indiana Saturday, September 25. I’m from a plant just up the road an hour or so north and I know deep down this affects us as well as every other working man or woman in the world. It is way past time to stand up for our rights. UAW brothers Rondo and Clark have done a good job at leading in my opinion.

I would like to send a message for all to see and that is: Hey Mr. King and Mr. Davison, you are taking the workers of the United Auto that is supposed to be the United Auto Workers. We hired and voted for you to protect us. You have failed. Get out. We don’t want or need you anymore. And for the raise you stole from us and gave to yourself and got your vacation time back, you should be in prison for theft. How about you do the right thing and either step down or you take a half of pay cut and then come talk to the workers of the United Auto Workers. If the international leaders took a pay cut they would still be making more the the average worker on the floor and never have to get dirty or skip a lunch or be pressured about a Saturday.

I encourage every worker in the world to stand up now and take a stand for workers’ rights. no matter what your age, race or sex we are all in this together. Let’s make a stand and make sure Indianapolis, Indiana is remembered for starting this to save us all. Thank you for your time.

Mike C

GM Stamping Rank-and-File Committee Members,

I want to express my support and solidarity with your brave and vital struggle. This is an extremely important decision you have taken, and it will be a hard fight. Unfortunately, determination and willingness to sacrifice by themselves are not enough. People like JD Norman (and the UAW bureaucrats and the Republican and Democratic politicians) will not

hesitate long to shut down one plant and “move on.” This struggle has to be seen as it is—a struggle by the entire working class against a system that cannot pay the workers a living wage or guarantee even a job for everyone needing one or properly educate the youth or provide health care to people. This system itself is bankrupt, and that is why your struggle for job security and to maintain your wages is really a struggle against this very system.

I live in northern Indiana, in the “Rust Belt.” Many manufacturing plants in the area have been shut down. My husband works at Honeywell (formerly AlliedSignal and Bendix) where jobs have been decimated. He has basically not received any wage increase for the past 10 years (but some say he is lucky to still have a job). Your struggle is every worker’s struggle. I wish you courage and steadfastness going forward.

Fraternally,

Jacqui P
New Carlisle, Indiana

Fellow workers of the Indianapolis GM Stamping Rank-and-file Committee,

We are writing you today as students, faculty and, above all, members of the working class. Your struggle against the ruthless demand by GM, JD Norman, and the bankrupt UAW to “accept” a 50 percent wage cut is being carefully watched by us all. What you are facing is part of a broader attack on the living standards of the workers everywhere. The same profiteers and speculators who have thrown the world economy into a terrible crisis are now trying now to place the burden of it entirely on the backs of working people. We extend the utmost fraternal support in this necessary struggle to defend all previous gains of autoworkers to have a decent standard of living. Your decision to form an independent rank-and-file committee to oppose this wage cut is the only way forward and gives us great hope. You will not be alone in this struggle, as you have a whole class behind you!

In solidarity,

The International Students for Social Equality at San Diego State University
Cody, Ricardo, Kurt, Ilgin, Brandy, Reem, Emanuele, Jake, Sean, Serge, James, Alfonso, Breanna, Julian, Lenora, Matthew, Tory, Patricia, Renee

Solidarity Forever. I am forwarding this to Local 675. My dad is in this union and they recently voted to disaffiliate from the United Steel Workers. Like the UAW is doing to you, the USW tried to sell us down the river.

Northwest Airline employees are with you. Hang in there, we need for you to win. Workers everywhere need for you to win. Delta is trying to break our union, we vote next month. Show the world that the workers still have a voice.

John M
IAM

Dear Brothers and Sisters, of the GM Stamping Rank-and-file Committee,

Congratulations on the stand you have taken to defend your rights, and living standards, and those of future generations of car workers, and all workers.

Your brave and essential stand is a real milestone, and has earned my highest esteem and is an inspiration to me and all workers internationally.

Best regards, and heartfelt support,

Kate S.
Sydney, Australia

It is very uplifting to see union brothers and sisters fight back. Today’s unions seem to bow down too frequently to corporate America. It is easy to hide behind the current economic situations, the unemployment rate etc. However union leaders and corporate CEOs don’t seem to be hurting too much. The rank and file membership is asked time and time again to bear the burden, to accept the cuts. Stand tall brothers and sisters. There are a lot of people watching! I know in my local a lot of folks have said enough is enough. Our reform caucos is building momentum and we look to great members like you to light the way.

John W

Hang in there folks, you’re worth it! We all are.

Russell

Warmest regards from a supporter down in Houston, Texas.

I have been following with great interest the stories in the WSWS about the General Motors employees’ struggle against GM, the UAW, and JD Norman, but I had somehow missed the news that you have now formed the Indianapolis GM Stamping Rank-and-file Committee.

Congratulations! I think this is an enormous step forward for GM workers and for workers around the world.

It will not be news to anyone who works for anyone else that the working class is under intense and sustained attack from every section of the ruling elite around the world: corporations, unions, all existing political parties, all branches of government, all the “agenda-setting” media, and all of the supposedly “left-liberal” protest groups. The only hope for the working class is, as Marx correctly pointed out, their self-emancipation. Nobody but the workers can or will emancipate them from the conditions of their servitude.

The good news is that the world working class is the most powerful force on the planet—if and when they attain the necessary class consciousness. Your Rank-and-file committee is a very important step in this process.

Because capitalism is a world economic system, workers around the world must join hands if they are to successfully advance their own interests against the corporate system that governs—so very badly—our planet. I have no doubt that the Rank-and-file committee you have formed will put a bolt of electricity into the efforts of the working class to organize itself on a world basis.

I am sure you are reaching out to your comrades in other factories around the country. Show them the way!

Sincerely,
CH

Dear All,

Thank you.

You are a shining light, a beacon we all must follow.

They try to take away our rights, to transfer our incomes to the already overwealthy.

We all face the same threat as yourselves, the austerity measures introduced in most countries are to pay for the banking and finance industries fraud and theft.

Wishing you all well.

Brian
Australia

To all my Indianapolis Brothers and Sisters,

I read of your fight and wanted to express my whole and total support!

I think it's wonderful that brave workers like you are finally denouncing the very unions that have sold you out. The world is indeed watching, Indianapolis, and hopefully through your example many other brothers and sisters will follow!

Solidarity,
Suzanne S
Formerly IBEW local 134

To the Indianapolis GM Stamping Rank-and-file Committee:

As a youth I grew idolizing the heroes of class struggle in the United States. I poured over books about Teamster rebellions, factory occupations and wildcat strikes. I drew portraits of working class leaders and hung them on my wall. As an adult, I became more cynical, hoping for the day that workers would stand up to the bosses and the misleaders of labor. My teenage self thanks you for bringing his dreams to fruition. My adult self thanks you for reminding me of those dreams.

But more importantly—and this fact cannot be overstated—all of labor has its eyes on you right now. For the last 30 years, to say nothing of the last two, we have sat and watched everything work against the working class.

I sincerely believe that we are in a moment where the working class is waiting for a sign, any sign, that the momentum has started to turn. You are providing that sign by breaking with the UAW and fighting the battle on your terms.

Not only can your fight be won, it must be.

In support and solidarity,
Nick P

I support your principled fight to safeguard the very basic benefits that have historically been wrested from capital by unprecedented struggle. The importance of staying away from the UAW cannot be over-emphasized. I want to learn from your experiences and hopefully see how I can apply it in my community as it relates to public schools.

When I started understanding the deliberate decay they were causing in Bellevue public schools, I approached the local PTA (Parents and Teachers Association) of my daughter's school. My daughter attends a high poverty school. The president and other of the PTA are regular middle income people, decent people. The president was initially supportive of sharing the information I had researched with parents.

But the next day, she wanted me to "vet" my ideas with some other individuals of Bellevue who represent a considerably more affluent neighborhood in Bellevue (Medina). In talking to one such gentleman and a high-up official of the PTSA (this holds all PTAs of Bellevue hostage), it was clear that they were not supportive of sharing this research with parents. And the local PTA felt strong-armed into agreeing with them.

So the lesson I learned was that it is impossible to even have a discourse, let alone mount a struggle with the help of traditional organizations. We need to make our own. I suffer a great deal emotionally as I find solid teachers being marginalized and our students fed into the prisons by this system of injustice and I lack the skill to form a local organization. So I look towards your struggle and hope I can learn from it.

Thushara



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact