

For a united movement of the working class to oppose concessions and job cuts!

An open letter from the Indianapolis GM Stamping Rank-and-File Committee

11 October 2010

The following appeal from the Indianapolis GM Stamping Rank-and-File Committee was sent to the World Socialist Web Site. Auto workers at the General Motors metal stamping plant in Indianapolis formed the committee last month to mobilize workers independently of and in opposition to the United Auto Workers, which was seeking to push through a 50 percent wage cut over the resistance of the plant's 650 workers. Workers now face a fight against the threatened closure of their factory next year.

There is a growing rebellion against the UAW, which informed workers at GM's Lake Orion plant in suburban Detroit last week that they accepted 50 percent wage cuts for nearly half of the workforce. The committee is urging workers to distribute their open letter and form their own rank-and-file organizations to unite auto workers to defend their jobs and living standards.

During a distribution of the statement, workers at Chrysler's Warren Truck plant in Detroit denounced the UAW as a "company union" and eagerly took copies of the Indy workers' letter. In Marion, Indiana, a worker who received the letter said, "The UAW is bought out. Why should we pay union dues when we have no representation? GM runs the plants the way they want and we have no say. What is happening in Indy is the writing on the wall for all of us. I'm not going to work in a GM plant for \$14 an hour. That's the way we all feel. It's nothing but corporate greed. They don't care about our families. As for the UAW, they don't want us to know about the history of how the union was built because the UAW is doing everything that workers had to fight against back then."

The WSWs encourages all auto workers to download this statement and distribute it at your plant.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Indianapolis GM Stamping Rank-and-File Committee is issuing an urgent appeal to all auto workers, and to the working class as a whole, to join our struggle against concessions, job cuts, and poverty level wages.

We formed our committee last month to oppose demands from General Motors and JD Norman—the company that wanted to buy our plant—that we accept a 50 percent pay cut.

We decided that a new rank-and-file committee had to be built because the UAW is doing everything it can to force concessions through, as it has done for auto workers throughout the country. First, we voted overwhelmingly to prohibit the UAW from negotiating with JD Norman. When they did so behind our backs, we shouted International representatives down and threw them out of our local union hall. When they came back with a mail-in vote, claiming that only a "vocal minority" opposed the contract, we voted overwhelmingly to reject it once again.

However, the battle is not over. Now, GM is planning on closing the plant, and the UAW will do nothing to stop it. Indeed, this supposed "union" wants to see the plant close as a lesson to all workers who dare resist their collaboration with corporate management in impoverishing us.

The Rank-and-File Committee insists that the closure of the plant is NOT an option. Not only will it leave workers here in limbo, it will also further devastate the

economy of the region. Just last month Ford said it would lay off 249 workers at the English Avenue Ford plant in Indianapolis, and more job cuts are to come.

We took up this fight because we believe that workers have basic rights. We have the right to a job. We have the right to make enough to live on. We have the right not to work ourselves to the bone to scrape by, only to be cast away after we finish, like so many used rags.

It is time for us to stand up and fight for these rights! We must fight not only for ourselves, but for all workers. We must fight for our children and our grandchildren. If the corporations succeed in Indianapolis, they will do the same thing in Marion, Flint, Parma and other stamping plants. They will use a victory here to further drive down wages throughout the auto industry.

Indeed, the UAW has just announced that it is accepting \$14 an hour for 40 percent of the workforce at the plant in Lake Orion—everyone with less than 11 years seniority! And the workers don't even have a chance to vote.

To carry out a fight, we must acknowledge some basic truths:

First, we face in the UAW an enemy no less determined than the auto companies. The UAW is a business, with a major ownership share in the auto companies and an interest in increasing our exploitation. It long ago betrayed the principles on which it was founded. It consists of well-paid officials whose main task is to preach resignation, convincing us to give up without a fight. It keeps us isolated from each other, preventing a united struggle.

To all those who say that we must work to reform the UAW because it is "our organization," we say—if it was our organization, it would not be stabbing us in the back! Those who argue this way also forget the history of the UAW itself, which was formed by workers through a rebellion against the old AFL.

Second, the politicians of both the Democrats and Republicans are against us. Republican Governor Mitch Daniels and Democratic Congressman André Carson joined hands to support GM. As for Obama, the candidate of "change," he demanded concessions as part of the bankruptcy of GM and Chrysler, which were used as a precedent to slash wages and benefits of workers throughout private industry and the public sector.

Brothers and sisters, we face the same struggle. We all face corporations bent on reducing our wages to increase their profits. We all face the destruction of our hard-won health care and retirement benefits. We face the terrible prospect of unemployment, home foreclosures, and bankruptcy.

Since forming the committee we have received letters from all over the US and many countries around the world. After being told for years that our enemies were workers of other countries, we found out that workers everywhere confront the same struggle and the same enemies. They too are being sold out by their unions. They too are losing their jobs while the corporations and the governments take care of the rich.

By rejecting concessions, we have shown that it is possible to fight. However, we must rely on our own independent initiative. Workers throughout the country, and in every industry, should form rank-and-file committees of their own. These committees can unite in a common struggle to overturn the contract imposed by the Obama administration and the UAW, abolish two-tier wages and stop the closing of all plants.

No concessions! No job cuts! Reverse past concessions!

Support the Indianapolis Rank-and-File Committee! Form rank-and-file committees at your plant!

For a united struggle of all workers!

Signed,

The Indianapolis GM Stamping Rank-and-File Committee

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