

A letter from an auto worker to Verizon workers

25 August 2011

Brother and Sisters,

I was an auto worker at the GM Stamping Plant in Indianapolis. On behalf of all auto workers, both working and who have lost their jobs, I wish to offer my solidarity and support to you in your fight against concessions at Verizon.

But my solidarity with your struggle means that I have to warn you about the role of the AFL-CIO, and in particular the CWA and IBEW. In order to defeat the attacks of the companies, workers must be unified. We need our own organizations of struggle. The existing unions are not such organizations. I won't mince words: By shutting down the strike, your union has already betrayed your struggle and is now getting ready to accept all the main concessions demanded by Verizon.

Auto workers can speak from experience; we have been through this before. The CWA and the IBEW are about to do at Verizon the same thing the UAW has done countless times to us, and the same thing that the teachers' and steel workers' unions did to them.

The UAW has agreed to one concession after another, promising we would be getting everything back, saying it was for the good of the company. Our wages were cut, our health care was cut, our rights were chopped into pieces, and now, with this latest contract, they want to permanently get rid of wage increases.

At the Indianapolis stamping plant where I used to work, the union and GM were demanding last year that we take a 50 percent cut in pay. We voted three times against it. Each time they came back, wanting us to "get it right." But when we wouldn't budge, the UAW let the company close the plant and did nothing to fight it. It was during this struggle that we formed the Indianapolis Stamping Rank-and-file Committee, campaigning among auto workers to reject the concessions, oppose the closure of the plant, and unite

with all workers in a common struggle.

The rank-and-file committee made an appeal for support to all auto workers and the whole working class. The UAW sought to isolate us, just as the AFL-CIO has done in relation to your strike. We got dozens of letters of support from all of around the world. Teachers, bus drivers, and steel workers wrote in to support us. It's only by uniting the struggles of all workers in every industry and every country that we can hope to fight back.

There are workers from the Indianapolis Stamping Plant right now on unemployment, families who have lost their homes, some on welfare, families separated due to the stress. These workers had as many as 15 years plus at the company.

Now the auto companies have the audacity to brag in the media about how well they are doing. It is not due to sales or quality; it is due to all the cuts the employees were forced to take. The workers are the backbone to any company; the workers make the profits. Without the workers, they would have nothing.

The unions were created to fight against exactly the kinds of conditions that they now want to impose. These organizations don't represent workers any more.

But it's not just the union that's against you and with the corporations, it's the government too, both Democrats and Republicans. In the auto bailout, Obama said that GM and Chrysler would have to impose concessions on workers if they were going to get any bailout money. Their program is to increase profits by making the United States a low-wage country. What is happening at Verizon is happening everywhere.

You are fighting not just for your own families, but for the whole working class. Every thinking worker stands behind and supports you. If you carry forward your struggle, you will win the gratitude and support of millions of workers throughout the country, union and

non-union alike.

Sincerely,

Jennifer

Indianapolis Rank-and-File Committee

The original statement of the Indianapolis Rank-and-file Committee can be found here and full coverage of the struggle here.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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