

St Helens, UK: A message to car workers from SEP candidate Danny Dickinson

Danny Dickinson
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My name is Danny Dickinson and I am the candidate for the Socialist Equality Party in the St Helens Town Centre ward. I have worked in several industries, including the car industry, and was previously employed at the Ford Halewood plant in the early 1970s.

Central to the SEP's campaign is the building of international unity against the drive by the global financial oligarchy to destroy workers' jobs, pay and conditions.

Nowhere is this more urgent than amongst car workers.

The threat to jobs, wages and working conditions at the two main car plants in Merseyside—Jaguar Land Rover at Halewood and Vauxhall's at Ellesmere Port—is faced by car workers at other plants in Britain, Europe and internationally.

Japanese auto maker Mitsubishi has announced it will close its only factory in Europe, in Born, the Netherlands, by the end of 2012.

The French car builder PSA, which is in a strategic alliance with GM, has announced the elimination of 6,000 jobs in Europe, including 5,000 in France.

GM, which owns the Ellesmere Port Vauxhall's plant, is carrying out a global restructuring project that threatens the closure of the Merseyside plant, as well as the Opel plant in Bochum, Germany.

These cuts are being made in order to satiate the profit lust of GM, which last year reported a global profit of US\$7.6 billion.

In 2009, GM was bailed out by the government of US president Barack Obama. GM's return to profitability has come at the cost of the slashing thousands of jobs, and cutting the wages and benefits of auto workers. The

bailout's main feature was the imposition of a 50 percent wage cut on new hires.

This year, our sister party in the United States, the Socialist Equality Party, is standing Jerry White as its candidate in the US presidential elections. In an article on the *World Socialist Web Site*, White explained: "Having attained historic wage and benefit cuts during Obama's restructuring of the US auto industry, GM management is anxious to extract similar concessions from German and British workers."

Car manufacturers throughout Europe and internationally are seeking to pit worker against worker and factory against factory, in order to compete for contracts for the construction of new models and win a larger share of the car market.

Auto workers must oppose all attempts to divide them across company and national grounds. Only an unconditional defence of all jobs, wages and working conditions, based on a united offensive by workers, can defeat this assault.

Such a struggle must be waged in defiance of the trade unions, which act as industrial policemen for the car bosses. The United Auto Workers union in the US has played the key role in enabling GM to push through its attacks on American workers. Its nationalist campaign, "Buy American", is aimed at driving up GM's competitiveness against its major rivals at the expense of auto workers wages and conditions.

In Europe, the trade unions play the same role—celebrating the imposition of record productivity levels, such as at Ellesmere Port, on the basis that it "proves" one factory should stay open at the expense of car workers elsewhere.

The Socialist Equality Party calls for the formation of rank-and-file committees of action, independent of the trade unions, in every workplace and community.

These must be directed to the fight for a workers' government that will nationalise the banks and major industries under the democratic control and public ownership of the working class, as part of the socialist reorganisation of economic life.

I urge car workers at Vauxhall's and Jaguar Land Rover to support my election campaign, read the Socialist Equality Party manifesto and the *World Socialist Web Site*, and attend our meetings each Wednesday in St Helens. This Wednesday, I will be speaking about the election campaign of Jerry White and its importance to workers internationally.

For more information about the meeting, click here.



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