

Support the Dundee, Michigan Chrysler workers

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The Socialist Equality Party and the *World Socialist Web Site* urge auto workers across the United States and internationally to support the stand taken by workers at Chrysler's engine plant in Dundee, Michigan. The workers earlier this month overwhelmingly voted down a sellout local contract negotiated by the United Auto Workers (UAW) and are resisting efforts by the union to push through the agreement.

The deal ignored all of the concerns of the workers, who are being forced to work 12-hour shifts, seven days a week. Half of the members of UAW Local 723 are new-hires. Under the wage-cutting terms imposed by the Obama administration with the support of the UAW in the 2009 bailout of Chrysler and General Motors, they start at the near-poverty wage of \$14.65 an hour.

The UAW has gone even further than this two-tier wage structure. It has allowed Chrysler to exploit a separate category of contract workers at the Dundee plant who start at \$9 an hour and receive virtually no benefits. They too must join the UAW and have their paltry pay checks further drained through the automatic diversion of dues into the coffers of the union apparatus.

The Dundee workers' repudiation of the contract is part of a growing national and international movement of workers against the old trade union organizations. The official unions decades ago ceased to defend workers' interests and have ever more directly aligned themselves with the corporations and the capitalist state, collaborating in the assault on workers' jobs, wages, benefits and working conditions.

In response to the global crisis sparked by the Wall Street crash of September 2008, the financial-corporate elite of every country is carrying out a social

counterrevolution aimed at reversing all the gains won by workers in the 20th century. The growing resistance of workers to this assault is coming into headlong collision with the right-wing, anti-working class organizations that purport to represent them. Workers are increasingly coming to see the official unions such as the UAW as their enemies, alongside the corporations.

This conflict has thus far found its sharpest expression in this month's events in South Africa, where the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), which is allied with the capitalist African National Congress (ANC) government, directly collaborated with the police in a massacre of striking platinum miners organized by a breakaway union. The NUM is not only defending the government murder of 34 workers, it is calling for a witch-hunt to destroy the rival union and jail militant strike leaders.

This event has exposed the irreconcilable conflict between the interests of the workers and those of the official unions. It has also exposed the claims that these organizations can be reformed. Their transformation into business entities (the UAW owns 55 percent of Chrysler stock) is the result of a historical process, not simply the subjective corruption of individual union bureaucrats. The universal embrace by the unions of corporatist labor-management partnerships is the outcome of their national character and program under conditions of the globalization of capitalist production.

The greatest fear of the ruling class is that workers will free themselves from the grip of these organizations and undertake an independent struggle in defense of their basic social rights. Such a struggle will rapidly pose the need for the international unity of the working class and a political and revolutionary offensive against the capitalist system.

In the US, auto workers have increasingly come into struggle against the UAW. Two years ago, workers at a GM stamping plant in Indianapolis rejected the UAW's demand that they accept a 50 percent wage cut. A section of workers established a rank-and-file committee independent of the UAW to fight the union's attempts to impose the pay cut.

Shortly thereafter, workers at GM's Lake Orion plant in suburban Detroit rebelled against the UAW's imposition of a 50 percent wage cut without even the formality of a vote.

The SEP and the WSWs fully support the movement of workers against the UAW. We call on workers to break with this agency of the corporations and the government and build new, democratic organs of struggle. Rank-and-file committees of struggle should be established, excluding the UAW and its officials, which are committed to the defense of jobs, wages, benefits and working conditions and implacably opposed to the subordination of the needs of auto workers to the profit demands of the corporations. The committees should broaden the fight to auto workers across the US, including at the transplants, and internationally.

The fight for this perspective requires a struggle against an array of middle-class pseudo-left organizations, such as the International Socialist Organization in the US, which defend the official unions and demand that workers subordinate themselves to the union apparatus. The social and political standpoint that underlies this position is summed up in a stark form in a recent article by Jean Damu published in the "left" journal *Counterpunch*. The article defends the ANC government and the NUM and promotes their witch-hunt against the striking platinum miners.

In a blanket defense of the official unions, Damu claims that "dual unionism" is and always has been a tool of the bosses. The history of the American labor movement refutes this claim.

The UAW would never have come into existence had not workers in auto, steel and other mass production industries broken from the old craft union-dominated American Federation of Labor (AFL) in the 1930s and formed a new movement, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), to organize workers in basic industry.

The establishment of the UAW and the CIO required quasi-insurrectionary struggles, which were led by socialist-minded workers. The movement, however, was aborted by the union bureaucracy, which subordinated it to the Democratic Party and the domestic and foreign interests of the American ruling class. The CIO and AFL carried out anticommunist witch-hunts after World War II to purge the unions of the militant and socialist forces who had spearheaded the battles of the previous decade.

The overcoming of "dual unionism" in the 1955 merger of the AFL and CIO, on the basis of class collaboration at home and Cold War anticommunism abroad, set the course that led in the ensuing years to the collapse of the labor movement and the transformation of the unions into instruments for the suppression and impoverishment of the workers.

The building of new organizations of industrial struggle must be linked to a new political strategy. The demise of the UAW as a workers' organization is inseparably connected to its rejection of socialism and its defense of the profit system. This is politically expressed in its alliance with the Democratic Party and its current campaign to reelect Obama.

The fundamental task facing the working class is the building of its own mass political party fighting for a socialist program, including the expropriation of the fortunes of the bankers and CEOs and the nationalization of the corporations and major banks under the democratic control of the working class.

The Socialist Equality Party is intervening in the 2012 elections to fight for this program, in opposition to the Democrats and Republicans, and build a new socialist leadership in the working class. For more information and to get involved, visit socialequality.com.

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