

# Workers at French auto plant speak out against job cuts

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Workers at auto maker PSA Peugeot-Citroën's Aulnay-sous-Bois plant are fighting attacks on jobs by the newly-elected Socialist Party (PS) government of President François Hollande.

Last week, Hollande met the Aulnay plant's General Confederation of Labor (CGT) union delegate, Jean-Pierre Mercier, and confirmed that he would not try to force PSA to suspend its restructuring plan. The plan, which calls for 8,000 job cuts including the closure of the Aulnay plant, would devastate the hard-hit Seine-Saint-Denis area in the north Paris suburbs where Aulnay is located.

There has been some discussion of perhaps up to half of Aulnay workers being transferred to other PSA sites, with the remainder being forced to take "voluntary" redundancy packages. This is being promoted by the union bureaucracy, which supports the incoming Hollande administration.

Such a deal would contribute with yet another social disaster to the downward spiral of the economy. As for redundancy money, it will be no solution for workers trying to find jobs in the Seine-Saint-Denis district, where unemployment rates are above the national average of 10 percent for adults and over 20 percent for youth. Local employers such as Air France and L'Oréal have already announced large-scale job cuts.

The WSWS spoke to several PSA workers at the factory gate on Friday.

Youssef commented, "Nothing is clear. PSA has always lied, promises that workers will transfer to new jobs are lies. We have our families and our homes here, workers cannot go elsewhere. We hope to have redundancy payments—everyone is trying to manage his problems. The unions are not defending us."

Michel said, "There is no going back, PSA has taken

its decision. They won't go back. Before the [August] vacation, PSA handed out brochures with proposals for job transfers and severance packages. There was no discussion. The trade unions did not discuss the proposals PSA was making in the brochure.

"Hollande, he's the same as Sarkozy, he defends the capitalists and supports the closure. The tripartite discussions [between the government, unions and PSA management] are only to discuss severance packages. There is no work. They have talked about re-industrializing the site, but there is no company that wants to acquire it.

"If the government wanted to save the plant, it would already have done it. Hollande is not on the side of the workers.

"The union leaders are above us. They are separated from the workers. They are ready to sign anything. They eat with the big bosses, it's everywhere the same thing. I agree we will need organizations of struggle independent of the unions."

Thugs supporting CGT official Mercier threatened *World Socialist Web Site* supporters distributing leaflets at the plant. The leaflet attacked Hollande's policies and the CGT's collaboration with his administration.

As WSWS supporters distributed the leaflets at the factory gate at the 2-3 p.m. shift change, four thugs approached them and accused them of "insulting our union delegate Jean-Pierre Mercier." They demanded that the WSWS supporters leave immediately.

One of them took a knife from his bag and started waving it at the WSWS supporters, threatening to use it if they did not get out.

Another shouted, "Why don't you fight against Hollande instead of insulting our union delegate?" When told that Mercier was working with Hollande, he got angrier, saying: "Do you work here? You have no

right to be here, this is company property.”

When they were told that no workers would have a right to be there if the factory shut down, and that only the mobilization of the entire working class could halt Hollande’s and PSA’s plans, they shouted: “We can take care of that, we don’t need other workers, we’ll do it ourselves. We don’t need you. Get out!”

The thug again took out his knife, and the WSWS supporters decided to leave.

All the while, members of the petty-bourgeois “left” New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) handed out their leaflets, unmolested by the CGT thugs. The NPA’s statement endorsed CGT talks with Hollande and PSA management, presenting them as the basis for a viable struggle against job cuts: “On Thursday September 20, with workers in the streets, Hollande, who was receiving the Aulnay trade unions, had to accept a tripartite unions-State-employers meeting for mid-October. This is the chance to make [PSA CEO Philippe] Varin swallow his fake ‘plan for revitalizing the Aulnay site.’”

Political responsibility for the threats against the WSWS supporters lies with the CGT and the petty-bourgeois “left” group Lutte Ouvrière (Workers Struggle, LO), of which Mercier is a leading member. This spring he served as LO presidential candidate Nathalie Arthaud’s campaign manager.

These organizations are responding with thuggery to WSWS supporters fighting to mobilize the working class in struggle against the Hollande administration’s attacks on auto workers because they support Hollande and are complicit in his anti-worker policies. Unable to deny that the CGT is negotiating a massive attack on the workers, they seek to limit opposition to the CGT’s plans by suppressing democratic discussion among the Aulnay workers.

These plans expose the anti-working class character of the CGT’s and LO’s effective support for Hollande during the presidential elections. The CGT endorsed Left Front candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who called for unconditional support for Hollande in the run-off vote. As for LO, Arthaud made clear that she viewed a vote for Hollande in the run-off as a reasonable choice for voters who had selected her on the first round.

These organizations even sought to use the Aulnay workers’ struggle to further their electoral aims, getting publicity during the presidential campaign by attending

demonstrations at Aulnay in April.

Supporters of the WSWS will not be deterred by CGT-LO thuggery from explaining to the workers the need for a political struggle against Hollande’s layoffs, organized independently of unions and petty-bourgeois parties that are trying to impose them on the workers.



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