

# Auto workers speak out in support of oil strike

Our reporters  
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The ongoing strike by oil refinery employees expanded Saturday to workers at the Motiva Enterprises refinery in Port Arthur, Texas, making the strike the largest refinery job action in 30 years. Yet the USW has called out only 6,550 of the 30,000 oil workers it organizes. The union has likewise sought to limit the strike by blocking any appeal to workers in other industries.

Over the weekend, the *World Socialist Web Site* sent reporting teams to auto plants in Chicago and Detroit to speak to auto workers about the ongoing oil strike. They expressed warm support for the strike and declared that auto workers were subject to the same unsafe and exploitative conditions as the refinery employees.

Colleen, a worker at the Ford Assembly Plant in Chicago, Illinois declared, “This should be a nationwide strike and they should expand the struggle to teachers, autoworkers and more.”

She added that the oil refinery strike “affects everyone.” Adding, “It is all interconnected. It will have a domino effect.”

Speaking about conditions at her plant, she said, “We’re just a number. We haven’t gotten a raise in 15 years.” During the hot Chicago summer the plant has no air conditioning, causing the factory to get “extremely hot.” This has a negative impact on safety conditions and it “makes the work very hard.”

Colleen also spoke with hostility towards the United Auto Workers Union (UAW). “The UAW is worthless,” she said, referring to it as a “puppet on strings.” In 2009, the UAW worked with the Obama administration to pass a 50 percent wage cut to all new hires at GM and Chrysler. Colleen asked bluntly, “We’re paying these dues and for what? The UAW management is getting paid by the company.”

Craig, her coworker, said that the oil strike should immediately be expanded, declaring, “Every USW plant should go on strike.” Craig saw the struggle of the oil workers as being one and the same as that of the auto workers. “We’re both fighting for the same thing: higher wages and safety. The rich keep getting richer and the middle class is now the lower class.”

Many oil refinery workers the WSWS spoke to reported working 12-hour shifts for nearly two weeks at a time. When we reported this information to auto workers, they said that they face similar conditions.

“At this point, the 10-hour shift is taken for granted,” said Shane, a 19-year-old auto worker at Chrysler’s Warren Truck assembly plant outside Detroit, Michigan. “Working in there, you have a real feeling that you are some kind of slave, and they are trying to squeeze every drop of life they can get from you.”



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