

Detroit Chrysler workers express support for May Day rally against war

Our reporting team
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Supporters of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) campaigned at the Fiat-Chrysler Warren Truck factory in suburban Detroit on Thursday, urging workers to take part in the International May Day 2015 Online Rally on May 3.

Many workers stopped and spoke with campaigners, expressing great concern over the dangers of war and a serious interest in the fight to unite the international working class against war, social inequality and dictatorship. The warm response was a sign of the deep anti-war sentiments of American workers, despite the non-stop promotion of nationalism and militarism by the corporate news media, both big business parties and trade unions like the United Auto Workers (UAW).

The campaigners, which included a contingent of IYSSE members from Wayne State University, handed out hundreds of leaflets for the rally, sponsored by the International Committee of the Fourth International.

Common refrains from workers as they rushed by were “I don’t see any good coming out of war” and “All the wars are about is money or oil!” Many stopped and had extended discussions, and several workers registered on the spot for the May Day rally.

As hundreds of workers went in and out of the factory, a SEP supporter on a bullhorn said, “Our enemies are not the workers of Russia, China or anywhere else in the world, but the corporations, the big banks and the bought-and-paid for politicians and trade unions that support them. They want us to compete against each other to see who will work for the lowest wages and then kill each other for the profits of the imperialist powers. We say no! The May Day rally is fighting for the international unity of the working class to overthrow this system and fight for world socialism.”

Roosevelt, a worker with 17 years in the plant, said, “I don’t like war and all that killing. These wars are about getting a stronghold over someone else’s country for the government’s interests, whether it’s oil, money or gold. Yes, I will take part in the May Day rally.

“This is our contract year, and we have to get an agreement that is better for the working class. But everything is going against us. The Wall Street bankers and the police can get away with anything, including murder, and nothing happens to them. But if workers commit the smallest infraction like the Atlanta teachers they are thrown in prison.”

Speaking about the recent bankruptcy of Detroit, Roosevelt continued, “It’s a travesty to take away pensions. After 30 years you retire and think you’re set and all of a sudden they take it away from you.”

Lillian, a veteran worker said, “I don’t like war.” Speaking on the impact on the cuts workers are facing in the United States, she added, “Everything is going up, and we haven’t had a raise in ten years. Chrysler made a profit every month, and all we got was \$2,700 profit sharing. Meanwhile [Fiat-Chrysler CEO] Sergio Marchionne got \$72 million.”

SEP campaigners explained that war was being prepared to defend the profit interests of the rich. Lillian responded, “It doesn’t matter who is in office, the rich are going to control it—the Bushes, the Rockefellers. And look at the UAW, they are crooked too!” Lillian also expressed dismay at the ongoing wave of police violence in the United States. “What is happening with the cops? This thing is out of hand.”

Danny, a younger worker, expressed strong agreement with the fight for the international unity of the working class, declaring, “Yes, I am coming to the May Day rally.”

Jimmy, a worker with an Iraqi-Christian background

said, “It doesn’t matter what color or religion you are, all workers have the same interests. I’m appalled by what is going on in the Middle East with the wars and the attempt to divide people along religious lines. It’s like British imperialism in the 1800s and 1900s, when they used divide and conquer tactics to take over the Middle East.

“In the US they try to keep everyone worried about stupid issues, like what some singer or football player said or did, instead of issues like war. I like the idea of uniting workers around the world, and I’ll take part in your May Day rally.”

Crystal, a young, second-tier worker, said, “Politics is a game of money and power. The corporations and their lobbyists control all the politicians, Democrats and Republicans. I’m afraid there is going to be another war because there is no one like Martin Luther King willing to stand up and die to fight against it and the rest of the oppression. The NAACP is part of the system. The UAW is in bed with the corporations. None of these organizations are what they used to be.”

SEP campaigners said there was powerful opposition to war and social inequality among workers, but no means to express this outside of the development of an independent political movement of the working class fighting on an internationalist and socialist program. All of those organizations that defend capitalism, including the UAW and the official civil rights movements, are only seeking to advance the interests of an upper middle class social layer on the basis of identity politics.

“Yeah, Obama’s race doesn’t prove anything,” Crystal said. “I know I don’t trust Jesse Jackson, or Al Sharpton. And you could buy [former Detroit mayor] Dave Bing for a dollar. No Child Left Behind collapsed the whole school system, and the Obama administration has continued the same policies. As for Hillary Clinton, I don’t trust her either.”

Crystal then asked, “I don’t like war, but isn’t this one about fighting ISIS?” After SEP members noted that ISIS was in fact funded and armed by the CIA and the US military to overthrow the Assad regime in Syria, she said, “Really? I hadn’t thought about that, but it does make some sense.” Crystal said she would participate in the May Day rally.

Another young two-tier worker stopping to speak to SEP campaigners also expressed interest in rally. “War,

I am against all of it!” Referring to the ongoing campaign of provocations against Russia and China, she added, “There is too much going on. The whole political system is skewed. We need money to be spent for our needs here.”

Another veteran worker shouted, “No to war! No to war!” as he held up a May Day placard. He added, “They are all in this together, Democrats and Republicans. Bring the money home! It is all about the money for Halliburton, the oil companies and the banks.”

Janet, a 22-year-old autoworker, added, “I think war is terrible. I didn’t even know about some of these wars you are speaking about, but I think they are just about more power, and more profits for the few.

“You can’t even get a job at \$16 per hour these days. When it comes to wages, the Republicans and Democrats have no differences whatsoever. And as we’ve known here in Detroit, they are both ready to take our pensions, just ask my father.”

For more information and to register for the International May Day 2015 rally visit internationalmayday.org



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