

Autoworkers speak out: GM worker in Wentzville, Missouri calls for international unity

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On August 27, 48,500 General Motors workers across the country will vote to authorize strike action. Earlier this month 37,000 Chrysler workers approved a strike by near unanimous votes. Ford workers will be voting next week.

The current four-year agreements covering 140,000 workers at General Motors, Fiat Chrysler and Ford will expire at midnight on September 14. The overwhelming strike votes express the determination of autoworkers to recoup losses from a decade-long wage freeze, and to abolish the hated two-tier wage system.

The United Auto Workers is carrying out negotiations behind the backs of the workers and is collaborating with the companies to block any significant wage improvements and to shift health care costs onto workers. (See: “The corporate-union assault on autoworker health care”)

All three of the companies have seen expanded profits in the last year, with GM pulling in \$2.1 billion in the first two quarters of 2015—on pace to nearly double 2014’s total profit of \$2.8 billion. Since Obama’s 2009 restructuring of the giant automaker—which slashed jobs, wages and retiree benefits—GM has made \$26 billion in profits.

These measures have devastated tens of thousands of workers and their families and left entire towns reeling in their wake. Since 2008-2009 alone, GM has closed 15 US auto plants and cut 25,000 hourly jobs and 8,300 salaried positions.

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to a worker at GM’s van plant in Wentzville, Missouri. The St. Louis auto industry, which was surpassed only by Detroit in the production of cars, once supported 35,000 autoworkers and their families. After the closure of

Ford’s assembly plant in Hazelwood and Chrysler’s shut down of two plants in Fenton, only the Wentzville factory remains.

The WSWs is protecting the identity of the worker to prevent retribution from the company and the UAW.

“You can’t sit there and think that you’re going to be a national organization and change a global problem. It’s just not going to work. I was talking to somebody the other day about something I read on the WSWs, about this guy with GM who said ‘we were able to work with the UAW to find a way to lower the total costs to be able to bring jobs back to the US.’ Yeah, you just happened to figure that out, didn’t you? The cost of bringing lower paying jobs back to the US is screwing your membership over. They ‘worked it out’? Well, it didn’t work for the membership.

“What’s the difference between what the UAW says and what Donald Trump says? Lower wages in the US—it’s the same thing. What makes them any different? The UAW complains about Trump but they’re doing the same thing—hugging management with matching shirts on. That was real cute. They hug each other and we get screwed.

“There are only two options: either a) the UAW leaders are so stupid that they don’t attempt to make a global union instead of pitting workers against one another, or b) they’re fine with the way it works because it works for them and they get rich—they’re making money and they don’t give a damn. The second one is the truth.

“But it’s capitalism and it’s global. You sure can’t sit here and let them play workers in different countries against each other and not be united across the world. It doesn’t make any damn sense.”

Referring to the threats a UAW Local 977 official made against campaigners at GM's Marion stamping plant on Monday, he said, "It's ridiculous they threatened you like that. It shows their desperation that they resort to threatening any opposition. When they see me standing next to you with a leaflet in my hand, now I know what they'll do. They'll denounce me, but then other people will be curious because they know the union is screwing them. We'll say to them, 'this is about the real fight.' What the union claims to be and what the reality of things actually are shows that we have to fight for a real change."

The WSWs is a forum for autoworkers to share their comments about the upcoming contract and the role of the company-UAW conspiracy against the workers. Workers are encouraged to send their comments and to contact the WSWs for interviews so their experiences can be shared with autoworkers and other workers around the world.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact