

Locked-out ATI steelworker injured by van carrying scab workers

Our reporters
29 August 2015

Jim Dietz, a steelworker picketing the lockout by Allegheny Technologies Inc. (ATI) was taken to a local hospital after being hit on the picket line in Brackenridge, Pennsylvania. The van was carrying scab workers and was driven by ATI security.

Dietz, from Springdale, Pennsylvania, was hit around 7:00 pm outside the Brackenridge hot strip mill. He was taken to a local hospital by paramedics. He has more than 30 years experience at the plant and is planning to retire in two years.

Workers identified the van that had struck Dietz by its license plate number, but police did not arrest the driver and simply asked a few questions. Many workers on the picket lines noted that if one of them had hit a scab worker, they would have been arrested or worse.

Kenneth explained the incident to the WSWS, “We were walking like we are now in our picket circle, and the van hit one of our guys.” He added, “I’m glad you guys are supporting our cause.”

Deb, a steelworker at the Brackenridge plant, spoke of the difficulties caused by the inexperienced labor force of replacement workers. “At the hot strip mill, they had an incident where a coil [of steel] goes through and doesn’t work right. At Bagdad [a plant in nearby Leechburgh], a scab put a coil on a flatbed trailer and it fell off. The guy [the driver] refused to let it back on. A welder had an accident and broke a concrete holding unit.”

The company has brought in replacement workers from Strom Engineering, guarded by a small army of private security forces.

“Strom recruits people with criminal records, they’re bringing that into the community,” she added. “I heard they [the scab workers] didn’t have to take a drug test. I had to take a drug test.”

It is now two weeks into the lockout of the 2,200

steelworkers by ATI, a Pittsburgh-based specialty steel manufacturer. There have been no negotiations with the United Steelworkers (USW) since ATI announced the lockout on August 14 and ordered workers out of 12 mills in six states.

ATI is seeking to impose thousands of dollars in increased premiums and co-pays for workers’ health care, in line with the Obama administration’s attack on so-called “Cadillac health plans.” The company is also seeking the elimination of pensions for new hires. It wants to expand the use of outside contractors and impose work rule changes that would turn workers into casual laborers, with irregular and unpredictable shift times, less access to overtime pay and worse working conditions.

The USW has isolated the locked-out workers from other steelworkers, including the 30,000 US Steel and ArcelorMittal workers whose contract is expiring next week. ATI has so far rebuffed the USW’s offers of tens of millions of dollars in concessions, opting instead for an all-out assault. Workers at ATI’s Brackenridge plant report that the company has stockpiled enough steel to last perhaps six months or a year.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact