

French autoworkers support US workers' rejection of Fiat-Chrysler contract

Our reporters
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French autoworkers at the PSA Peugeot-Citroën plant in the Paris suburb of Poissy spoke to WSWS reporters Tuesday, expressing their support for US autoworkers' rejection of the Fiat-Chrysler contract pushed by the United Auto Workers (UAW) union.

PSA workers at Poissy, a former Chrysler plant, applauded the rejection of a contract maintaining the unequal two-tier wage system, a proposed UAW-run health care "co-op" and wage increases that barely keep up with inflation.

"Everyone should be paid the same, it's basic, if they do the same work, they should get the same pay," said Rachid, a PSA worker with several years' experience. "What is happening in France is that factories are going to other countries, where people are paid less than us for doing the same work," he added.

Marie, a cleaning woman at Poissy, said the two-tier wage system was "not acceptable. I would have voted 'no', I would not have accepted that."

At Poissy, where wages have been frozen since 2012 and production was recently shifted from two to one assembly line, workers hoped the rejection of the UAW contract would begin a fight back against attacks on autoworkers around the world.

"I hope there will be sympathy struggles, because things are going badly everywhere," Marie said. "Here they are laying us off, even subcontracted workers like us are not working, and PSA workers are not working either. We were laid off Monday, Tuesday, and we will be laid off again for a week at the end of the month."

"What we need is not just an all-European strike but a world strike. Everyone is fed up. What we need here is another May '68. I wasn't old enough to see it myself, but things have to move, because everyone is totally fed up," Rachid said.

Thierry, who drives a bus that brings PSA workers to

the Poissy plant, also stressed the significance of the struggles of American workers for workers in Europe. "When you look at it, it's important because whatever starts in the United States, if it starts there it can create a European movement," he said.

Karim, a PSA worker with 30 years experience, stressed the similarities between attacks on wages and conditions in American auto plants and at Poissy. "Here they are bringing in all sorts of subcontractors, logistics is being subcontracted out. One of my co-workers works in maintenance that is also going to subcontractors. They are talking about the stamping operations, too. Everything is to be handled as much as possible by outside firms. The corporation is getting out completely, they are just staying in assembly, keeping the workers who are on the assembly line," Karim said.

He noted that working for a subcontractor meant taking a deep pay cut compared to staying on as a PSA worker. "It's about 30 percent. Subcontractors also don't get paid 13th month bonuses, shift bonuses, or seniority pay. There is a base salary and that is it."

When WSWS reporters distributing the leaflet "The significance of the 'no' vote at Fiat Chrysler" said there needed to be an international struggle independent of the unions, Karim strongly agreed. He criticized French unions such as the Stalinist General Confederation of Labor (CGT) union, the Workers Force (FO) union, and the French Christian Workers Federation (CFTC) union.

"What you are saying is very important," Karim said. "If you look at the CGT, FO, CFTC, all those people, it gives you the impression—actually it's not an impression, for me it's the truth—those people do no actual work and they are defending their own interests. They are there, they take walks around the factory, they have coffee and whatever, but they are not here to

defend us. They are there to defend the boss.”

He added, “Every union federation you can imagine in France is here in Poissy, but they do no good, there are six or seven but they do no good at all. The proof is that thirty years ago, when I started working, if there was a union official, he would be available for a certain number of hours each week or month, to defend you, go see things at the plant, and so on. Now, their time is totally free, they do no work those people, you can just see they are bought by the bosses.”



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