

Autoworkers support Detroit teachers' fight

Our reporters
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Autoworkers have spoken out in defense of Detroit teachers who have launched a series of sickouts over deplorable school conditions created by the decades-long attack on education by the Democrats and Republicans, and the recent bankruptcy of the city.

Autoworkers at Fiat Chrysler (FCA), GM and Ford passed through a recent battle against the car companies and the United Auto Workers, with FCA workers rejecting the first national contract backed by the UAW since 1982. This was followed by the near unanimous rejection vote by Nexteer Automotive workers in Saginaw, Michigan.

Anthony, who works for skilled trades at one of the Fiat Chrysler plants in Detroit, told the *World Socialist Web Site*, "I fully support what the teachers are doing. After our contract, they are now clamping down on overtime and attempting to reduce pay in whatever way they can. The power is with the people. I am with the teachers, union or not union, the state is depriving young people of an education and the teachers are representing these kids.

"I just read an article that the US is now 15 on the list in math and sciences. How is this to be explained when we are supposedly the richest country in the world? The money is going to buy weapons and not educate young people. The US is starting to look like any third world country where you have the very rich and the poor, no middle class. In a country like Brazil, there are beautiful luxury condos on one side and then there are big walls to separate the poorest layers of society. We have become like that—a two-tier system."

Loraine, a veteran Fiat Chrysler worker, said, "I am very proud of those teachers; they finally stood up and documented what they are fighting against. Before the sickout they took pictures of the black mold, schools falling apart and showed they had legitimate reasons to walk out, and why the parents should support them. This is not just about their pay, which is very

important. They are rebelling against the union, which should have called the district out over these conditions long ago.

"How can children learn under these conditions, not to mention the poverty in their homes? They come to school and have no heat. Teachers have to take money out of their own pockets to supply the children with materials that our taxes are supposed to pay for.

"When they started the lottery it was supposed to go to schools. The poorest people in this country buy lottery tickets when the odds are 200 million to one. They feed this to the public like hanging a sandwich over a starving baby's head. It's just another tax on the poor.

"I am totally for those teachers. It is the same thing with the autoworkers. The auto corporations are making money hand over fist and they say they can't give workers a higher wage.

"I couldn't watch Obama's State of the Union. The line he is feeding this country is ridiculous. The economy is doing better than ever, but just for the big businesses and the one percent. The jobs created pay the minimum wage. You have to work two jobs nowadays to take care of half a household because the wages are under the poverty line. You can't really call that a job, it's more like slavery. We created millions of jobs, Obama says, unemployment has fallen, but that's only because half the people quit looking for jobs. When I look at my own community I'm not seeing all these jobs. Show me where the economy is better than ever. It's worse than 10 years ago.

"Obama bailed out Wall Street. He bailed out auto companies. Now work is coming back to the US because we are cheap labor. Plus they give tax breaks for the corporations and that comes right from the money for the schools.

"The companies are controlling the unions. I would tell autoworkers to look to the teachers and follow their

lead because nothing is going to get done through the UAW. I would tell teachers and other rank-and-file workers you are not going to get anything you want from the unions because they are part of this political agenda to tear down wages. They are basically doing the same thing to us as the refugees caught in war. They are starving the people in this class war.

“Either take this job, or shut up’, is what they tell you. But workers can keep the job and speak up for what we want. If it were not for workers, GM would not have these profits. The companies are paying their richest investors, including the UAW. They say they are investing back into the plants, but what is that doing for my dinner plate? It’s not going to the people, the autoworkers or the teachers.”

A worker at FCA’s Warren Stamping in suburban Detroit said, “My mom is a retired Detroit Public Schools (DPS) secretary and so is my aunt. My whole family has been DPS. I graduated in 1996 and I remember having to take toilet paper to school since I was in high school! It’s worse now than it was before. Something I don’t understand about DPS. They say the lottery is to help Detroit Public Schools, and I’ve asked time and again—where does the money go? Nowhere can I find where this is going to the school system.”

Another Warren Stamping worker said, “It’s crazy what’s going on all over. They are trying to cut back a lot and make working people pay for it. They are going to make you suffer. The companies, the union and the government are not interested in the welfare of the citizens. Teachers don’t make as much money as we do. I support the teachers fully because if I was in their shoes I would do it too.”



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