

“GM will do anything for profits and stockholders”

US autoworkers speak on record profits

Our reporter
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The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to autoworkers in the US and Canada about the record profits announced by General Motors and other Detroit-based automakers. Workers pointed to the contrast between the celebrations in corporate boardrooms and the real life experiences of workers, who have suffered from the criminal actions of GM and the other auto companies.

In particular workers pointed to the recent scandal over defective ignition switches in GM vehicles tied to scores of fatal crashes and the lead poisoning crisis in Flint, Michigan—a former center of GM manufacturing left in ruins after the company abandoned the city.

Chris White, a retired GM worker at the Oshawa, Ontario plant, told the WSWs, “GM is making obscene profits and handing out huge salaries to executives while saying wages are too high. When Mexico becomes too expensive they go somewhere else where it is even cheaper. Meanwhile, you have kids here coming out of college flipping burgers.

“GM kept the defective ignition switches in their cars hidden from the public. They were guilty of not fixing that defect when it was first discovered. Now they are discussing the same thing for airbags.

“I keep a close watch on all those things. Here in Canada GM is saying they will not put a new product into the Oshawa plant until after the contract negotiations later this year. That is blackmail.”

He remarked on the situation with lead poisoning of the water supply in Flint, Michigan, where GM once employed 80,000 workers. After closing the plants it left behind toxic industrial sites all over the city.

“I remember when GM was closing plants in Michigan. It could happen here as well. This facility once had 20,000 workers and now it is down to 2,500. They have been downsizing and downsizing. The tax implications for the city for GM moving out would be

quite substantial.

“It has taken a big effort to clean up the land after it has been used for industrial purposes. Workers are often not informed of the hazardous materials used in manufacturing. Canada is still the largest exporter of asbestos in the world. Most of it goes to Third World countries.

“Corporate greed and capitalism is the way of the world. GM will do anything for profits and stockholders. GM in Canada never had a bankruptcy, but they took benefits from the retirees just the same.”

He remarked on the recent US contract negotiations. “It seems like the unions have marched us 100 years backwards. When you start paying union leaders like company executives they start thinking like executives. They went from two tiers to three or four tiers. It is against all union principles.”

GT, a GM skilled trades worker from Indiana, debunked the much-touted \$11,000 profit sharing check that workers are set to receive. “It looks good until you examine it more closely. If we had not given up cost of living increases all these years our pay would now be \$45 an hour. I work 2,500 hours a year. That comes to \$25,000 extra. It sure beats out \$11,000, even after taxes. If you tally up overtime pay on top of that it comes to more like \$32,000.

“Profit sharing is another scheme between the UAW and GM to screw us and make sure that the company and the union both keep their share. The UAW is more a liaison with management to make sure management does okay.

“UAW President Dennis Williams is making more than \$300,000 a year. He wants to protect that. He has nothing in common with me.”

He spoke on the lead poisoning crisis in the former GM center of Flint. “The same thing happened in

Anderson, Indiana, where I am from. They used to have 30,000 employees in the city and now they have none. They made huge profits and dumped the workers. They misused people and the environment and then walked away.”



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