

“I’d say it’s the worst election ever”

# US autoworkers speak out on war, inequality and the 2016 elections

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Less than seven weeks remain before the US presidential elections, and polls show a close race between Democrat Hillary Clinton and Republican Donald Trump. For over a year, the American population has been subjected to a bombardment of lies and propaganda surrounding the two candidates, aided by the corporate media.

Despite the fact that both campaigns have spent tens of millions of dollars to dupe the electorate, most workers view the election with a combination of fatigue, concern and disdain. A Pew poll last week asked voters what words they associate with the 2016 election. The three top responses were: frustrated, disgusted and fearful. Even those who say they plan to vote for one of the two candidates do so out of hatred for the opponent. Only 11 percent of voters say they would be excited by a Trump victory, while 12 percent said the same if Clinton wins.

In working class cities, suburbs and rural towns across the United States, the hatred for the two candidates is palpable. While yard signs, billboards, and bumper stickers are usually ubiquitous this close to a general election, this year there is a near total absence of indicators of support for the two candidates. One is more likely to see yard signs jokingly calling for voters to support “nobody” or, as one sign in Missouri indicated, country music legend Willie Nelson.

The *World Socialist Web Site* recently interviewed a series of autoworkers from various factories in the Midwest and Midsouth. These autoworkers are supporters of the Socialist Equality Party and will not be identified by name to avoid possible retribution by the United Auto Workers or the auto companies.

“I’d say it’s the worst election ever,” said a Missouri autoworker. “But more people than ever know what’s going on. A lot of people have always said they’re voting for the lesser of two evils, but now they don’t even want to do that. They’ve had years of proof that neither party is out there for them, there is no representative of their struggle. Pretty much everyone in my plant says they don’t want to vote for

either one.”

A Kentucky autoworker said: “It’s just a big joke. I can’t even focus on the elections because it’s so corrupt. Hillary has her emails, and Trump keeps talking his BS about the refugees. It’s a circus. It’s totally unlike what I’ve seen before. I talked to another guy on the line at work and he said he was going to watch the debate next Monday, not because he expected to learn anything from either of those two, but because he finds it amusing and wants to get a kick out of it.

“But things are getting more volatile. People are tired of it, with the UAW and with the government. There is more hostility toward the UAW leadership, doubting what they are saying, and as far as the government goes it’s trickling over in the same way. Nobody is comparing their credentials, they’re making fun of the elections and treating it like the circus it is. One candidate has deleted all her emails and she’s crooked, and then you’ve got this other nine ball who has bankrupted all these business. That’s what I see.”

A young autoworker from Indiana said: “We’re finished. We’re screwed in 2016. It doesn’t even matter. They’re both the same side of the coin. There’s Trump, and Hillary, well she’s just a criminal. We are left with no decent choices at all. I don’t think they’re going to do anything for the working class with either Trump or Hillary. They say they’re for the people, but it’s all about their contributions and people they owe favors to. Nothing is going to be there for the working people, just for the corporations and the millionaires and billionaires.”

The autoworkers also expressed hostility to Democratic Senator Bernie Sanders.

A Missouri autoworker said, “We know Sanders was a false socialist, but he had a lot of support. He used ideas from people who think like us—people who are socialists. Of course we know that capitalism and socialism can’t coexist, but a lot of people just know they want something different. But once Sanders turned his back on all these people and

started to turn them toward Hillary Clinton and the Democratic Party, people wrote him off. But now people are thinking about socialism.”

The Indiana autoworker supported Sanders during the Democratic Party primaries, and has previously expressed disagreement with the Socialist Equality Party’s criticism of Sanders’ campaign. Today, he says, he sees things more clearly.

“Sanders is a joke,” he said. “It’s like the WSWS said a long time ago, there isn’t going to be change through the Democratic Party. Just look at what they did to Sanders, they screwed him royally. Clinton can break the laws and do whatever the hell she wants, and no one in the political establishment cares. They turn a blind eye to the stuff she’s done. The government, media, everything—the mainstream outlets try to cover up for her. If I did what she did, I’d be prosecuted for treason. But when she does it, it’s just another day at the office. I see now that Sanders is covering for her when he says, ‘Yeah forget everything I said for months about how Hillary represents the banks. I got screwed over by the DNC and just vote for Hillary now.’ That’s how it is.”

The United Auto Workers endorsed Hillary Clinton and is encouraging workers to vote for the Democratic Party. The Kentucky autoworker said, “The UAW is pushing the Democratic Party. They endorsed Hillary and you’re not going to force me to vote for Hillary. Most people are just pissed that the UAW is trying to sway us to the Democratic Party, the Hillary Party. They gave us a pamphlet with all the Democratic names on it.

“Meanwhile we’re sitting here struggling with the contract they forced on us. Now we’re going to get laid off for a couple of weeks, and with the economy the way it is, everybody is being brought back down again. But the UAW is a mirror image of what is happening in the government. They talk about transparency, but these elections just remind me of the contract: all the lies, the idea that ‘we hope you don’t figure it out,’ and trying to slide things through that we don’t want in secrecy.”

The Missouri autoworker added: “I go on the UAW web site, and they’re always pushing voting for Hillary, and 90 percent of people commenting on Facebook say there is no way in hell I am voting for her. Clinton should have been prosecuted and should be in jail right now. She is a liar, and Trump is a crazy man who will say anything.”

WSWS reporters asked the autoworkers whether they were concerned with the fact that both candidates are united in their support for American imperialism’s drive to war.

The Indiana autoworker said, “I don’t want to die in a nuclear war, and for them World War Three is a money maker. I fear that it is going to happen. I just hope we don’t

get nuked. The US is in the [South] China Sea, and they’re trying to mess with China for no reason, and that’s going to provoke World War Three. It’s the US’s stupidity of trying to control everything. That’s not being talked about in the elections. And the media is talking about Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie getting divorced. But the world is hanging by a thread. There are so many nuclear weapons.”

The autoworker from Missouri said, “War—that’s what kills me. The Democrats used to try and use anti-war sentiment, but now they’re even worse. It’s been nonstop war since 2000. This nationalism—do you ever stop to think you’ve got a lot more in common with people building cars just like us in Germany or wherever? And you want to bomb them? What are you talking about?

“[San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin] Kaepernick is shedding light on American nationalism. Until 2009 football players didn’t even come out to do the national anthem. The government started paying the NFL to get the players to stand up and show patriotism to the people. It’s an advertisement for the military. It’s like the plane flyovers. There go hundreds of thousands of dollars.”

The Kentucky autoworker said, “I’m tired of the war machine myself. You’re spending trillions of dollars on the war machine where we could be using the money here back at home. They’re bombing Syria, now helping ISIS, and they’ve been accused of supplying weapons to them and what not. Now you’re going to send billions more for the wars. And here we have veterans that are homeless, children that are homeless, schools closing, the Flint water crisis, the situation in Detroit, and all that stuff could be taken care of even if they just stopped the wars for a year. You could do so much.”

All of the autoworkers the WSWS spoke to said they were voting for Socialist Equality Party candidates Jerry White and Niles Niemuth. They expressed interest in attending the Socialist Equality Party’s anti-war conference titled Socialism vs. Capitalism and War, to be held in Detroit on November 5. The Indiana autoworker said: “I like this conference because we need to get the message out about the wars. Hopefully each person will tell 10 more people, and each of those will tell another 10, and we can spread the message of this meeting quickly. It’s about damn time.”



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