

SEP presidential candidate Jerry White visits Windsor

Growing opposition from Canadian autoworkers to Unifor-backed sellout contracts

A WSWS reporting team
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Jerry White will speak at an information call-in meeting for autoworkers in Canada and the US on Wednesday, October 5 at 7:00 pm Eastern Time. To participate, dial 438-800-2937 in Canada and 213-416-1560 in the US and enter PIN 581 991 086#.

Socialist Equality Party (US) presidential candidate Jerry White spoke to Canadian Fiat Chrysler (FCA) workers in Windsor, Ontario Monday and called for a united struggle, by Canadian, US and Mexican autoworkers against the transnational auto giants. Some 6,000 workers are employed at the FCA Windsor Assembly Plant, which builds mini vans.

Many workers stopped to speak to the socialist candidate and were eager to discuss the US elections, war and their own contract struggle at FCA Canada.

White explained that no matter what their nationality, autoworkers face a common struggle against a common enemy and need to forge a joint strategy to defend jobs, wages and working conditions. He noted that American autoworkers had rebelled in 2015 against the attempt by the United Auto Workers (UAW) to shove through a sellout deal. The UAW was only able to obtain ratification of the contract through the use of lies, intimidation and fraud.

Workers at the Windsor plant expressed anger over the sellout agreement that Unifor pushed through at GM. That deal continues the hated two-tier wage while eliminating the last vestiges of a defined benefit pension for younger workers. On top of that, the contract contains a miserable wage increase for veteran workers, below the rate of inflation. They said if a similar deal were brought back at FCA, workers would

reject it.

“You start at the bottom and you stay at the bottom,” one temporary part-time worker told White.

A young worker with one year at FCA said, “I just want the two-tier wage to be gone. If you are giving me \$20 an hour and somebody else \$35 an hour to do the same work, that is wrong. It should be equal pay for equal work.

“We are getting paid enough to support a single person, but not a family. It is peanuts compared to what it could be. It’s not like the company can’t do it with their profit margins.”

A FCA worker with 12 years in the plant said, “We gave up concessions and now the new hires have lost their pensions. This is for a bunch of promises from GM that they can walk away from at any time. With the companies making big profits we’re in a position to fight for all that we lost. But the union isn’t doing that.”

Catherine, who is nearing retirement, said, “What they got from GM is not enough. They’re shoving bonus money in our faces to get us to bite. In reality the union is not looking out for us and getting us what we deserve.

“The majority of the money it seems is coming from the government, and the company is not giving anything up.”

Asked what she thought about the FCA workers in the US overwhelmingly defeating the first sellout contract brought back by the UAW, Catherine said, “That was very good. It showed the solidarity of workers.”

“Why should we trust the corporations to carry out some promise?” another worker asked. “They are always promising to keep jobs and then they cut jobs anyway. The corporations are always trying to keep workers divided. I agree with the fight to unify Canadian and US workers and to stop competing against each other.”

“In the 40 years I’ve been at Chrysler, the GM contract is the worst I’ve ever seen. It’s worse than when we gave up all the concessions in 2009. Back then [former Canadian Auto Workers President] Buzz Hargrove made the same promises, and the government gave Chrysler \$300 million, but they still laid off thousands.

“I don’t know how many times Unifor said, ‘You got to accept this to save your jobs,’ but it’s the same line. The GM workers didn’t even get to see the full contract and all the hidden items. If they try to do that at FCA we will vote it down just like the American workers did last year.”

Workers need a new political strategy, said White. In the United States, workers are being forced to choose between the billionaire real estate tycoon Donald Trump and multi-millionaire Hillary Clinton, the chosen candidate of Wall Street and the military intelligence complex. Whoever wins the US elections, White warned, the next administration was preparing to expand military interventions overseas and carry out savage austerity at home. Canadian workers face a similar situation, with the Unifor union wedded to an alliance with the big business Liberal Party, which is likewise committed to an expansion of the Canadian military.

One young worker said of the choice being presented to American workers of Clinton or Trump, “It’s scary.”

A young worker recently hired into the plant also spoke with White. Discussing the US elections and the increasing danger of wider wars, regardless of whether Clinton or Trump wins, he said, “Nothing good ever comes out of these wars. Every war is fought for the corporations and their greed. I agree that we have to unite workers all over the world and establish an understanding with each other. We all have the same interests.”

Patty said, “The GM agreement will give the company even more money from the government, with tax cuts and other giveaways. That is going to come

from us workers when they cut school budgets and other things. They say this will enable the companies to hire more workers so they can pay taxes. In other words, they are going to squeeze workers who are getting low wages and no pensions while the companies pay little or no taxes—like Donald Trump in the US.

“The CEOs are raking in millions in bonuses but they don’t share the wealth that we as workers create.

“The union is not what it used to be no matter what Jerry Dias says. Inside the plant they don’t do anything to protect us.”

Asked about the growing danger of war, Patty said, “I’m not for war. A war with Russia or China would be catastrophic for the world.”

The SEP candidate said the ruling classes, with the help of the nationalist unions, “[W]ant to pit workers in Canada, the US, Mexico and in Russia and China against each other, first to see who will work for the lowest wages and then to fight each other in a war for the very same transnational corporations that are waging war against workers in every country.”

Patty replied, “Those of us who know better are not going to fall for that, and we want to unite workers everywhere to fight for a better world for all of us.”



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