

Another decisive repudiation

Ohio auto glass workers vote 2-1 against the UAW

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Workers at a Dayton, Ohio area auto glass plant voted by a two to one margin against representation by the United Auto Workers (UAW) in a vote held this week, the latest repudiation of the corrupt and crisis ridden organization.

The factory, Fuyao Glass America, is owned by Chinese billionaire Cao Dewang and operates on the site of a General Motors SUV assembly plant closed in 2008. The facility, located in Moraine just south of Dayton, employs some 2,000 workers of whom 1,500 were eligible to participate in the union election. They voted 868 to 444 against the UAW.

After decades of betrayals, workers have taken the measure of the UAW, which has presided over the decimation of jobs and workers' living standards in Detroit, Dayton, Indianapolis, Cleveland and other former industrial centers. Workers forced to pay dues to the UAW are supporting the lavish lifestyles of right wing bureaucrats, earning six-figure salaries, who collaborate with management everyday against workers.

Fuyao Glass is one of a number of Chinese-based manufacturers which have recently located operations in the United States, taking advantage of poverty-level pay rates under conditions where labor and energy costs are surging in China. Starting pay at the Moraine factory is just \$12.88 an hour.

The UAW blamed an intense anti-union campaign by local Republican politicians and plant management for the loss. However, opponents of the UAW did not have to search beyond the latest news headlines to find arguments against the UAW.

Dewang merely had to point to the documented corrupt relations between the union and the auto

companies, including the ongoing FBI investigation into the illegal diversion of funds from joint training centers into the pockets of union officials in Detroit.

For its part the UAW dedicated significant resources to the vote, including the holding of pickets outside the plant. The unionization effort received the support of many local Democratic politicians, including Dayton Mayor Nan Whaley.

The defeat suffered by the UAW is significant on a number of fronts. After all, the vote, unlike the recent vote at Nissan in Mississippi, did not take place in a right-to-work state noted for anti-union activity. In fact, the Dayton area was for many decades heavily unionized and a center of the GM empire, with tens of thousands employed in its plants making everything from struts, to steering wheels, brakes and radiators. The city was the scene of pitched labor battles, including the epic Univis lens strike in 1948, which saw mass pickets facing off against national guard troops backed by machine guns and armored cars.

However, the UAW long ago repudiated all of the militant traditions of the great struggles of the 1930s and 1940s. Nowhere has this been more evident than in Dayton itself.

Since the early 1970s Dayton has been ravaged by a succession of factory closures, starting with the shutdown of National Cash Register, followed by Frigidaire, Dayton Tire and Dayton Press. General Motors abandoned the city, closing its parts making operations including Delco Products, Delco Moraine, Harrison Radiator and the Inland Division.

In not a single instance did the UAW and other unions, including the International Union of Electronic Workers (IUE), a major presence in Dayton, oppose the

shutdown of plants. During this entire period the unions did not call a single rally, strike or protest.

Instead, the UAW and IUE promoted vicious anti-Japanese and anti-Mexican chauvinism, blaming workers in other countries for what was the abject failure of the capitalist system. The promotion of anti-foreigner racism went hand in hand with the imposition by the unions of one round of wage cuts after another, handing back all the gains wrested by workers from the employers in a previous period.

Moraine Truck Assembly was the last GM plant to close, eliminating another 2,400 jobs. According to a report in the *Wall Street Journal*, the UAW and GM later signed an agreement barring workers at the plant, members of the IUE, from transferring to other GM facilities.

The results have been devastating. Dayton, which once boasted prosperous neighborhoods and higher than average income for workers, has witnessed a precipitous decline, and is now littered with abandoned houses.

The city and the surrounding area is a center of the growing opioid epidemic in the United States. Montgomery County, where Dayton is located, will see a projected 800 deaths from opiate overdoses this year. That is more than double last year's record 349 opioid deaths.

The wages at Fuyao Glass are on a par with the wages paid at many auto parts suppliers where workers labor under terms of sweetheart deals brokered by the UAW. This includes the use of contract workers and temporary and part time employees who make substandard wages and have few if any benefits, but still must pay dues to the UAW.

These conditions exist at General Motors, Ford and Fiat Chrysler manufacturing plants as well. The terrible conditions facing Temporary Part Time(TPT) workers in these factories was tragically highlighted by the recent death of Jacoby Hennings.

The young TPT worker apparently shot himself at a Ford stamping plant outside of Detroit after spending an hour with officials at a UAW office in the factory. Hennings was holding down separate jobs at Ford and Fiat Chrysler due to the precarious nature of his employment and seems to have snapped under the pressure after he failed to get any support from the union.

It is not hard, therefore, to see why Fuyao Glass workers opposed another deduction from their paychecks in the form of dues to the UAW.

The *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* has received a substantial amount of correspondence from TPT employees who describe a hostile attitude on the part of the UAW and an intense and exploitive regime in the factories.

Workers need organizations, but they must be independent, democratically controlled organizations, not the UAW and the other pro-capitalist, bureaucrat-dominated unions.

The *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* calls for the formation of factory committees based on an irreconcilable opposition to the attempts of the employers and government to place the crisis of capitalism on workers' shoulders.

This is not a fight that can be waged successfully in one workplace or within one country. It goes hand in hand with the building of a political movement of the working class based on a socialist program. It means as well rejecting the attempts to pit American workers against workers overseas and the establishment of the closest unity of autoworkers and all workers on an international basis.



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