

US Ford worker supports autoworker strike in Romania: “They need to hook up with us”

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After reviewing the struggle of Ford Workers against a union sellout that yielded drastic pay cuts at the Craiova plant in southern Romania, a supporter of the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) *Autoworkers Newsletter* at the Ford Rouge Complex in Dearborn, Michigan, outside Detroit, denounced the attack as “SOP (standard operating procedure)” of the corporate-union dictatorship which is now typical in factories everywhere, regardless of the nationality or political persuasion of this or that union official.

The Ford worker explained the similarities of today’s struggle in Romania to that which erupted in the 2015 auto contract battle in the United States and its tragic aftermath, which yielded a massive influx of temporary and part-time workers at less than half pay, the destruction of both the conditions of work and the dignity of workers, as well as a rising toll of deaths in the factories resulting from both systematic breaches in safety conditions and a sharp increase in worker suicides.

His immediate, forceful response to the struggle in Craiova was a call for a united global struggle against the union-corporate conspiracy to impose pay cuts, humiliation and intimidation. The WSWS *Autoworkers Newsletter* protects the names of correspondents because of potential retribution from the company and the union.

Our supporter began by declaring, “They [Romanian Ford workers] need to hook up with us at [Ford] Rouge. But they need to hook up, not just with us, but with all workers, here and in Europe, Africa, China, everywhere.”

The story of union head Mrs. Maria Manea was all too familiar. She was selected to impose the new contract that doubled workers’ contribution to their medical insurance with no comparable compensation,

effectively carrying out a massive pay cut.

“You know what that was,” he continued. “She was bought and paid for,” and went on to encourage the brothers and sisters in Craiova to carry through a thorough house-cleaning.

“They should not have stopped with getting rid of just her. I am sure that up and down the line, the whole union chain of command was bought and paid for.”

Like many others in the plants, WSWS supporters are drawing the lessons of years and decades of one bitter betrayal after another. “That is what we have seen,” he said. “It is like the fix is in.

“I’ll use the analogy of the NBA [National Basketball Association] finals,” he explained, referring to suspicions of rigging. “They can’t control all the players. But when you look at the referees, the corporate heads that control all the revenue from television advertising, stadium tickets, promotions and gambling—all of that—you have to ask yourself, do they want four paydays, or do they want seven?

“So they tell the referees to call more fouls against so-and-so, so that that star player has to sit down and they can drag it out to seven games. They do the same thing in hockey. And that is how it is with the union. We are going to pay you under the table and keep the contract the way the company wants it.”

Many workers have told the *Autoworker Newsletter* that the pressure and intimidation brought to bear on these younger workers led directly to the alleged suicide of young Ford worker Coby Hennings in the nearby Ford Woodhaven Stamping Plant.

“That is by far the number one issue for legacy workers, new hires and part timers as well,” he said. Ever since the restructuring of the auto contracts under the Obama administration’s bankruptcy guidelines in 2009, the corporations have benefitted, to the tune of

record profits year after year, from a flood of new hires, TPTs (temporary part-timers), and contract labor at vastly reduced rates of pay and the destruction of workers' rights and working conditions.

He continued, "That is what happened in our last contract. Nick Fatalis was union president. He sold us out. So we voted him out. Now we have Bernie Ricke. But the set-up is the same. Same SOP (Standard Operating Procedure). It's been going on for years. We are not there when they count the votes. The union has only a select trusted few who count the votes. They count the votes. Same as the contract. We voted 'NO,' but they put our ballots in the trash."

"They want to keep the TPT's on three days a week. They are making less than half pay, and they have families and mouths to feed. Nobody should have to wait eight years to reach top pay. They will never get to top pay. The legacy workers don't like it either. None of them had to wait eight years to get top pay. It was 90 days."



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