

“We have to stand up and show we are not going to take this anymore”

US Steel workers rally in Pittsburgh area

Our reporting team
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Several hundred workers from US Steel’s Clairton and Irwin works and the Braddock mill took part in a rally Thursday outside of the Clairton Works just outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The event was part of a series of rallies organized by the United Steelworkers outside US Steel and ArcelorMittal mills throughout the country as labor agreements covering 31,000 steelworkers are set to expire on September 1.

US Steel is demanding that workers accept a seven-year contract, which contains sweeping concessions for current, future and retired steelworkers. This includes a wage increase of only 3.25, 2.5 and 1 percent in the first three years and a profit-sharing scheme for the last four. The deal would also set up a new two-tier wage and benefit system for new workers, with increases in out-of-pocket health care costs for active and retired workers.

Despite these unprecedented demands, the United Steelworkers union (USW) has indicated that it will not call a strike and will force workers to labor under an extended contract or no contract at all. In contrast to the USW, steelworkers expressed their determination to fight.

Steve Zombek, who works at the Clairton mill, said, “I’ve been here 8 years and I finally think it’s time we get a fair contract. We want better pay, better benefits and more for the retirees. That is what we are here for.

“What US Steel is offering is a horrible. They can take it and stuff it. They make millions of dollars and it is time for us to get our piece.

“Going on strike is a little rough, it is a little scary, but we have got to do what we got to do to fight for our future.

“Today is the meeting, we are going to find out. We

are just as much in the dark as everyone else. We are going to find out what is going on. Everybody needs to stand up. All the unions need to stand up, every one of them. It has been way too long.”

Ernie Carey with 27 years at the Irwin Works said, “With the tariffs and tax cuts, US Steel is printing money. Give us a cut. Health care is something we all need. As you get older you are going to need it. We are going to be on a fixed income and with health care cost going to rise every year it won’t be accessible.

“Everybody here is suffering with something or will be in our later years. It is the price we pay for working in the mill. People don’t understand the kind of health problems we will have.”

Ernie’s coworker Joe Binay, with 16 years at the Irwin Works, said, “You take someone in his position, working for 20 something years and then in the last three years they pull the rug out from under him. I have 16 years, so I’m on the back side of it. We took concessions last time and now we want a piece of the pie.

“There is an unfortunate trend. People who make the laws are making it that way, there are income and wage gaps are getting bigger. We seem to be on the losing side of that and it has got to change.”

Ernie said, “Nobody wants a strike, but it will be something that we have to do. We have to stand up to the company and show that we are not going to take this anymore.”

Joe added, “We took concessions last time. We froze our wages and then management gets five- and six-figure bonuses even when the company is losing money. We have to stand up. Teachers, everyone, it is time we stand up and fight for what we deserve.”

The WSWS also spoke with James, a veteran steelworker with 30 years at US Steel Gary Works, who attended the rally outside the giant steel mill in northwest Indiana. “I was there at the rally, and it was the same bull as 2015, verbatim. We will be working under the same contract come September 1st, with no call of a strike. We haven’t had a raise in six years and the anger and hatred is boiling over. I haven’t seen it at this level in my 30 years.

“I hope my fellow workers don’t get screwed over like the United Auto Workers union crooks did to the autoworkers. Myself and 70-80 percent of my coworkers want a strike right now, but it’s never going to happen under the union. It could only happen without the union’s consent.”



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