

No layoffs! No concessions!

Autoworkers call for demonstration February 9 to fight GM plant closings

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Autoworkers and other sections of workers and young people will be marching in front of the General Motors headquarters in Detroit on February 9 to oppose the company's plans to shut five factories in the US and Canada and eliminate nearly 15,000 hourly and salaried workers.

The demonstration will begin at 2:00 pm EST. GM headquarters is located at 300 Renaissance Center in downtown Detroit, Michigan. (To sign up for updates, go to wsws.org/auto.)

The demonstration has been called by the Steering Committee of the Coalition of Rank-and-File Committees, and it has been endorsed by the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*. The steering committee, which is made up of autoworkers from Michigan and Indiana, along with workers from Amazon and other companies, was established at the December 9 Emergency Meeting to Fight GM Closings, organized by the *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Party (US).

In a statement circulated on social media, the steering committee called for support for the demonstration.

The statement says: "General Motors' plan to close five plants in the US and Canada and wipe out 15,000 jobs is an attack on all workers that must be stopped."

Calling the plant closings a "corporate crime," it asserts: "The workers and young people of Detroit, Lordstown, Oshawa and others targeted by GM must declare with one voice that these plants will not close! Their closure will have devastating consequences for tens of thousands of autoworkers, their families, and the communities in which these plants are located.

"The actions by GM are part of a global restructuring of the auto industry and an attack on the international working class, driven by the demands of Wall Street for

ever greater profits that will worsen record levels of social inequality."

The steering committee was formed to organize workers independently of the corporate-controlled unions, the UAW in the US and Unifor in Canada. These organizations, the statement declares, "are businesses—cheap-labor contractors and an industrial police force, controlled by executives that are in the top 3 percent of income earners."

It continues: "For four decades, these organizations have pushed through concessions, claiming they would save our jobs. While the givebacks enriched the auto bosses, 600,000 jobs were wiped out, and we were robbed of our wages and benefits. Thanks to the UAW and Unifor, an entire generation of autoworkers has been turned into low-paid temps."

The statement urges workers and young people "to build rank-and file committees in every factory, workplace and community to advance the interests of workers in opposition to corporate management, independent of the UAW and Unifor."

The statement makes a particular appeal for the unity of all workers, in the United States and internationally, opposing the nationalism promoted by the unions. "The struggle of autoworkers must be connected to the struggles of all workers—including auto parts workers, teachers, Amazon workers, service workers and others—and fight for the unity of American workers with our class brothers and sisters in Canada, Mexico and the rest of the world.

"All workers face the same fight, from teachers in Los Angeles, to federal employees being locked out, to the Yellow Vest protesters in France. The billionaires who rule society want to steal our wages, pensions and

health benefits and turn every worker into an industrial slave.”

The call for the demonstration takes place as the transnational auto companies are engaging in a global jobs massacre. Ford has just announced that it is “reviewing” its factories in Germany, France and Russia as part of a cost-cutting plan that could eliminate up to 25,000 jobs. The company is now preparing an alliance with Volkswagen in a move that could lead to even more job cuts. UK automaker Jaguar is also slashing 5,000 jobs.

And while GM is on its way to make at least \$10 billion in profits and has squandered \$25 billion on stock buybacks and dividend payments over the last few years, the company is not done with its job-cutting. The *Detroit Free Press* cited an industry analyst who said several engine and engine component plants will likely be hit by layoffs in Flint, Romulus and Bay City, Michigan, along with one in Ohio and western New York.

While the UAW and Unifor—along with the Trump administration and politicians in both the Democratic and Republican parties—are claiming the job cuts in the US and Canada are due to the company producing cars in Mexico and China, workers in both these countries are also being hit with plant closings and layoffs.

“We need to demonstrate our working class power as a united global force,” said Nick, an autoworker from Detroit who is on the steering committee. “We see what happens to communities after plant closings. Look at Flint and Youngstown, Ohio, near the Lordstown plant. They are industrial wastelands. We have to come together and say: ‘No, GM, you don’t have the right to shut these plants.’”

“I want to especially urge my brothers and sisters in Oshawa, Canada, who are starting to fight on their own, to join our demonstration,” Nick added. “Form your own rank-and-file committees, list out your objectives and fight for them. We can’t let these giant companies and unions use a divide-and-conquer strategy against us. Working class people are one global people, and we have to unite. Together we can fight to end our exploitation and oppression, and the tyranny of this system.”

“We’re calling on the working class to stand up and join the fight back against GM plant closings,” said Angela, another steering committee member who

works at Fiat Chrysler in Kokomo, Indiana. “This could just as easily be happening to workers at Chrysler and Ford. Our brothers and sisters at GM need our collective strength to fight to defend our jobs and lives. All workers have to unite. Join me on February 9!”



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