

Committee for Public Education (Australia): Support the fight against GM layoffs!

The Committee for Public Education (CFPE)
9 February 2019

The Committee for Public Education (CFPE) in Australia extends the warmest solidarity and calls on teachers and students across the Midwest to attend the February 9 demonstration against General Motors' mass layoffs that has been organised in Detroit by the *World Socialist Web Site Auto Newsletter* and the Steering Committee of the Coalition of Rank-and-File Committees.

General Motors is preparing to close five plants in the US and Canada and destroy over 15,000 jobs, at the same time as it reports annual profits of nearly \$12 billion. The corporate elite in the US and around the world are seeking to turn the clock back to the 1930s, eliminating any and all restrictions on the accumulation of ever greater profit and personal wealth at the top of society.

With the support of the Republican and Democratic parties, and the United Auto Workers (UAW) union, the auto giants are pursuing a global restructuring agenda that aims to pit workers in different countries against one another, while destroying tens of thousands of jobs and driving down wages and conditions.

Teachers and other workers in the public education system confront the same enemy as auto workers. While the ultra-wealthy elite spare no resources to give the best private education that money can buy for their own children, we are told that "there is no money" to fund properly resourced public schools for working class communities, with well-paid and supported teachers and other school staff.

It is time to take a stand! Teachers around the world have followed, with immense sympathy and support, the determined struggles waged by American public school teachers in the last year—from West Virginia, to Oklahoma and Arizona, to California. In each instance, however, the teacher unions were able to strangle the

strike movement and ram through sell-out agreements that resolved nothing for public school teachers and students.

In Australia, teachers have had similar bitter experiences with the teacher unions, which have collaborated with different governments to create one of the world's most unequal education systems. Public money is poured into elite private schools while public schools remain chronically underfunded and dominated by regressive standardised testing regimes.

The February 9 demonstration, organised independently of, and in opposition to, the trade unions, and appealing for international support, provides the way for auto workers to fight back. It is also a lead for all workers, including teachers. Rank-and file committees must be organised in every factory, workplace and community to fight for jobs, wages, decent conditions and for social equality.

The stakes could not be higher. In Australia, GM, Toyota, and Ford shut down all of their production plants between 2013 and 2017, as part of their global restructuring operations. The entire 70-year car industry in the country has been destroyed. Tens of thousands of jobs were eliminated. The Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) and other unions suppressed all resistance among workers to the mass layoffs, with bureaucrats boasting to corporate chiefs and government figures of their role in delivering a series of "orderly plant closures."

The result is Depression-level unemployment as high as 30 percent in working class communities around the shuttered factories. The promises by the companies and government of job "retraining" and "community investment" programs have proven to be hollow lies.

The destruction of the auto industry in Australia came after decades of the unions' promotion of nationalist

poison. Workers were told by the unions that their enemy was not company management and the capitalist profit system, but workers in other countries employed on lower wages. Auto workers in Australia were lied to and betrayed.

American auto workers must take their struggle forward in unity with their class brothers and sisters in Canada, Mexico, and throughout the world. The ongoing fight being waged by workers in Matamoros, Mexico, their establishment of independent action committees and their powerful march to the US-Mexico border, calling on support from their American brothers and sisters, is proof of the possibility to unite workers across national borders in a common struggle.

The February 9 Detroit demonstration represents a major step forward. The Committee for Public Education pledges our ongoing support for the fight by American, Canadian and Mexican workers for their social and democratic rights.



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