"People are tired of not being able to pay their bills while the rich eat filet mignon"

As global jobs massacre continues, workers around the world voice support for fight against plant closures

Our reporter
9 February 2019

The *World Socialist Web Site* is continuing to receive statements of support for the February 9 demonstration in Detroit against General Motors plant closings called by the Steering Committee of the Coalition of Rank-and-File Committees and the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter*.

This week GM began the mass layoff of 4,250 salaried workers in North America. This follows the announcement that it will close five plants in the US and Canada, including assembly plants in Oshawa, Ontario, Lordstown, Ohio and the Detroit-Hamtramck facility in Michigan. At the same time, Ford will eliminate a shift April 1 at its Flat Rock Assembly Plant south of Detroit, impacting some 1,000 workers.

Anger is mounting over the job cuts that will have a devastating impact on communities ravaged by deindustrialization. Autoworkers, students and community residents have given statements of support for the demonstration, both from across the US and internationally.

Alex works at the Fiat Chrysler Trenton Engine Plant south of Detroit and has been closely following the developments of workers struggles in Matamoros, supporting the call for a unified fight of US, Canadian, and Mexican workers.

Alex said he supported the February 9 demonstration against GM's planned plant closures. "People are tired of not being able to pay their bills while the rich eat filet mignon. The way things are going, I think we're going to see in this country either a civil war or revolution break out."

When asked about tactics employed by Unifor union in Canada and the United Auto Workers in the US to divide workers by promoting nationalism, Alex responded, "This is what they've been doing for at least the last two decades! I keep telling the younger workers here that the union is not fighting for us. The younger generation especially really has to wake up and recognize what's happening to them. They try to keep these younger workers in the dark and get them to think that this is just the way things are and that the union is actually representing them."

He was also highly supportive of the call for workers to organize outside of the unions through rank-and-file committees.

"Look at the workers in [Matamoros] Mexico, or what's happening in France," he said, referring to the ongoing Yellow Vest protests. "People are out on the streets against their corrupt governments and against the rich."

A worker from heavy equipment maker John Deere wrote, "I support the February 9 demonstration and urge workers internationally to support it as well.

"The UAW has not called a national strike for over 30 years. Why? What happened? I remember when I first started working at John Deere in the 90s. They told us not to talk to the older workers. Why? Because they didn't want us to understand what the unions used to be like. They didn't want us to get any ideas about going on strike. They definitely don't want a general strike,

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which I think needs to happen today.

"This was also around the time they introduced the two-tier system. The UAW told us we had to make a sacrifice to keep John Deere afloat. Well, John Deere is doing just fine and we're still paying for it, just like the autoworkers."

The WSWS has also received messages of support from workers internationally, who are watching with interest the fight by US autoworkers.

A metal worker from Turkey sent the following message, "We support your fight against factory closures by GM and the February 9 demonstration in Detroit. In Turkey, we follow both the struggle by 70,000 Matamoros workers and fight against GM only through the WSWS. We want to thank the WSWS for being the only political media organ of the international working class. This is a fact that many workers are beginning to understand.

"Almost three years ago, thousands of automotive/metal workers in Turkey launched wildcat strikes against the companies (Renault, Fiat, Ford and others) and their trade unions. It was part of the first steps of an international rebellion against the pro-capitalist trade unions. These workers and other sections of the working class follow your inspiring struggles via the WSWS.

"We have a common enemy in the capitalist class all over the world and have to unite against them internationally. For that, we must develop our political independence from the trade unions and establishment parties and build our own international socialist party and rank-and-file committees in our workplaces and connect them internationally."

A student from China attending the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor wrote, "I support the workers demonstration in Detroit because I believe that working class is the true revolutionary class. When I came to learn about the living and working conditions of working class here, I found that they are not in any sense different from the plight that workers in China face.

"Even more, the methods used by the counterrevolutionaries are not different either. I support the workers' struggle in Detroit because I see this not as a regional or national question, but a step and an integrated part in the broader international struggle of the working class against the already globalized capitalist system."

The WSWS also received a statement of support from Florlisa Fowler, a Flint resident who played a prominent role in organizing opposition to the lead poisoning of the city's water supply.

She said, "As someone who has lived in Flint all of my life and felt the full impact of GM, and the UAW on the families in Flint … it is time to take a stand against what they have been doing to the working class—the constant threat to jobs, cutbacks when they are making a steady profit off the backs of the workers, the poor conditions at many of the plants, not to mention the different tiers of pay they have created which hurts and divides the workers.

"When the auto companies moved our jobs, the UAW did nothing to stop it. Ever since the UAW got control of that VEBA (retiree health care trust fund), they have been part of the companies.

"Workers from all areas of the world must stand together or this not only will continue, it will get far worse!"

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