

Swindon Honda workers speak out

“The working class needs to be organised against global capitalism”

Our reporters
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Workers at the Honda plant in Swindon, England, and other workers attended a demonstration on Saturday against the threatened closure of the plant. More than 3,500 workers will lose their jobs if the factory closes, and a further 15,000 workers in the supply chain across the UK will be affected.

Several workers spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* about the jobs threat and the way forward to fight the global assault on car workers' jobs. “We thought Honda was quite a good company but then they suddenly decided to close without informing the workers,” one worker from the plant said. “We heard it from the media before they told us. It seems we are really nothing to them. All these years they have been taking us for a ride.

“We have to do whatever it takes. All of us have rents or mortgages. We won't be able to pay. It will be very difficult to get a similar job around here.”

Janos, from Ukraine, worked at Honda for 18 months before his contract was terminated last November. “That was it for me,” he said. “The people there were very friendly and helped each other but now they are taking a huge hit. Honda closing has something to do with Brexit but I think companies are preparing for another world economic crisis like 11 years ago. Honda has had good profits so there is no reason to close.”

Jenny from the Plastics Operations section said she had worked in Honda for 14 years. She said the union and company had agreed to get an independent assessor to “look at the finances to see if Honda is shutting out of greed.”

“Unite has had a no-strike agreement right from the start [in 1989] when they first came in. I think they never thought a closure would come about. This is

about Honda maximising profits for shareholders.”

Ali, a Honda worker, said it was disappointing so few of the workers were at the demonstration. He explained: “The trouble is that they don't have much faith in the union. And looking at today's demonstration you can understand why. Mr [Unite union leader Len] McCluskey says Honda wouldn't treat Japanese workers like British workers. But Mr McCluskey should ask himself why. His attitude is so pathetic. So, it's no wonder they treat him with contempt. To admit that the union didn't even know the factory was going to close is laughable.”

Anna said a closure of the plant would have massive repercussions for Honda workers and the local community. “We need to think about a new world, the new industrial revolution that is taking place. Capitalism doesn't work for this new world. The working class needs to be organised against global capitalism. We have to have a world where wealth is for the many and not for the few.”

Archie said: “I hate the way everything today has been geared towards asking the government to help out and save Honda. [Business Secretary Greg] Clark and the Tories don't care about us. They hate us. They are only getting involved because Honda leaving is a sign that everything is going to collapse after Brexit.

“I think a lot of my mates in the factory don't want anything to do with the union. In the past they have let pay cuts, redundancies and non-production days happen just so Honda can maintain its huge profits at our expense. It has been blackmail. The company always says we will commit long-term to making cars in Britain if you agree to our terms. Even though it seems Honda is well-controlled there have been wildcat

strikes in the past.

“I read your leaflet before the march started and it really made sense to me. I agree it’s impossible to keep our wages and benefits in today’s world when companies are operating across the world. Honda is a global company but there is no equivalent for the workers. The statement from that big union [IndustriALL-Europe] person supporting us was just words. There was no talk of helping us practically or organising something with Honda workers in Europe.

“It’s clear there is a huge reorganisation of the car industry going on in Britain. We’ve seen Jaguar Land Rover and Ford making redundancies. There’s Barden Bearings [a subsidiary of the German company Schaeffler] closing its plant in Plymouth and Llanelli with 800 jobs going. It’s a stampede. And it’s happening across the world.

“The things we have been told today are totally inadequate. The shop stewards on the stage looked terrible. They were standing there with their hands in front of them as if they have already lost.

“I agree something new is needed and your idea of rank-and-file committees looks good. And I agree that they have to spread the word about socialism. I will hand out your leaflets at work and look at that car workers blog [the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter*].”



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