

Hundreds of autoworkers discuss contract fight with GM, Ford and Chrysler in online meeting

Marcus Day
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Over 300 autoworkers, along with Amazon and other workers, attended an online meeting hosted by the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* Thursday night.

Occurring just a little over two days before the contracts for autoworkers at General Motors, Ford, and Fiat Chrysler expire, the meeting was called in order to discuss the strategy for an independent struggle by autoworkers against the conspiracy between the United Auto Workers and the corporations.

The event revealed the growing sentiment among workers for a unified struggle across industries and across borders.

Greetings from auto workers in Silao, in central Mexico, were translated live by WSWS Latin America correspondent Andrea Lobo. At GM in Silao, autoworkers have reported that they are facing speed-up and retribution as the company seeks to force them to stockpile vehicles in advance of a possible US strike.

“To workers in the United States, I want to thank you for the support shown for my case,” said Israel Cervantes, who was recently fired as part of a series of reprisals at his plant. “And, in the name of all my co-workers at General Motors that are not here because of the reprisals happening, we tell you that you have our full support and our struggle is for getting rid of these unions that steal our dues without doing anything for the worker.”

Reports were given by a number of writers for the WSWS on subjects ranging from the current contract negotiations to the UAW corruption scandal and the need to organize independent rank-and-file factory committees.

“The question is, nothing is going to change unless workers ourselves take the initiative,” said Jerry White,

labor editor for the WSWS, “and use the enormous strength that we have. We have to develop a movement from below, take it out of the hands of the corrupt unions, by building new organizations of struggle, rank-and-file committees.”

Shannon Allen, an Amazon worker from Texas who has won a wide following for her exposures of the working conditions at that company, delivered a strong message of solidarity to the meeting.

“If the workers are going to fight,” she said, “they’re going to have to form a rank-and-file committee, and that is what is of the utmost importance. We’re trying to link up the whole working class. GM, Fiat Chrysler, Amazon, McDonald’s, the list goes on and on. We’re all the working class.”

Referring to conditions at GM, Amazon and elsewhere, she continued, “The methods of exploitation of workers today, using high-tech surveillance, and the speed you have to use to make the things we produce in the United States and around the world would make Henry Ford blush. Every minute, Jeff Bezos, the CEO of Amazon, makes \$149,353. Every minute.”

“We do not have a union at Amazon, but what we want is a rank-and-file committee, so that workers could have control of the means of production.”

An autoworker in Detroit said during the meeting, “This country is being hollowed out. Our jobs are being shipped to Mexico while our brothers in Mexico work for no pay and with no rights. While our families grow poorer and Wall Street grows richer.

“UAW leadership has illegitimately represented our interests while our pay has declined and our plants have been closed. The UAW and our employers have destroyed our communities and let our factories grow

over with weeds, plywood and graffiti."

Referring to the suspicious fire at UAW headquarters earlier in July, he continued, "The UAW burned down their own headquarters to hide their crimes!"

"If we don't stand up today we will lose everything forever," he summed up. "This is our last opportunity to stand. To stand for Lordstown. To stand for Hamtramck. Or we will wind up with no leverage and no jobs and no communities and no pay."

In response to a question from a worker who asked whether it would be legal to form rank-and-file committees, Joseph Kishore, national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party in the US, said, "The UAW can't say that's illegal. There's still a First Amendment. You have a right to speak, a right to assembly. Have discussions with your fellow workers."

"There's a clash," Kishore said in concluding remarks, "and in that clash, the UAW is on the side of management."

The *Autoworker Newsletter* will continue to host online meetings and encourages the widest possible discussion among autoworkers of a unified struggle internationally. The next online meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 19, at 7 p.m. EDT. We urge workers to spread the word and bring others to the event.



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