

“Capitalism is the core of the problem:” Striking GM workers call for global struggle against auto companies

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GM workers on the picket discussed the need for an international strategy for the expansion of their strike with the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* this weekend.

“Pro-capitalism—that is the core of the problem. And it’s across the board—worldwide!” a veteran worker at Flint Truck Assembly said.

“When people who don’t work in the auto industry ask me what this strike is about, I tell them it is about setting a global standard. It is about the working class worldwide. We need to set the global standard for a livable wage for everybody.”

“This is class war. It is a global strategy to pit us against each other,” he said. “Like Silao, Mexico [where GM workers have been fired for supporting the strike in the US]. They would love to stand with us. We want to stand with them.”

“Everybody needs to be able to make a livable wage. Not just here in America,” he continued. “I say everywhere around the world. I have seen poverty everywhere. I have traveled in the world, and it all equals the same thing.”

The worker drew the connection between the exploitation of GM’s international workforce and the hollowing out of Flint, the company’s birthplace and former base of operations. “I have seen what it did to the city of Flint. It decimated the economy and the social structure. We went from a city of home owners, to a city of tenants, to an empty city. Now they are trying to rebuild the city and bring labor and residents back in, but not at a livable wage. Every new job is at \$10 an hour.”

He denounced the abuse of temporary workers, who are paid a fraction of the wages of full timers with

fewer benefits and who are left at the mercy of the company. “Some temps have been in the plant as long as five and six years. Some do several years over at the metal fabrication plant and now they are doing more years as temps over here at the assembly plant.”

There is widespread anger with the conduct of the strike by the United Auto Workers (UAW), which is working behind the scenes to shut down the strike and enforce a sellout. It has kept workers in the dark about the content of its talks with the company, and is forcing Ford and Fiat Chrysler workers to remain on the job, where they are working forced overtime to stockpile vehicles.

In addition, the UAW is deliberately wearing down autoworkers with poverty strike pay of \$250 per week. A worker at GM’s CCA parts distribution center near Flint reported that working mothers at the facility are using Gofundme to meet expenses and selling blood plasma to survive. Meanwhile, UAW officials continue to rake in bloated salaries of thousands of dollars per week.

The Flint striker rejected the toxic nationalism which has long been the stock in trade of the United Auto Workers, which pits workers in the US against their brothers and sisters in Mexico and other countries in the name of defending “American” jobs. “The UAW wants us to feel that we can’t stand with [Mexican workers] because they are not American employees.”

“I have been watching the union’s strategies unfold since GM set out to break the UAW in the late 1980s. And they have been working on us ever since.”

“[The UAW] pushed the bankruptcy through,” he said, referring to the Obama administration’s forced bankruptcy of GM and Chrysler in 2009. The UAW

was rewarded for its role in the bankruptcy with billions of dollars in GM stock. “They really didn’t have to go bankrupt, but it was a good way to liquidate debt. They utilized that to keep us from asking for more benefits and more wages.”

A worker at Fiat Chrysler’s Trenton Engine Plant near Detroit declared: “This strike needs to be North America wide and beyond. But at FCA and Ford we are [already approaching tentative agreements]. That is not right. The strikers are just now getting their \$250 strike pay. That is less than poverty wages.”

He continued: “Look at Gary Jones. They found \$2 million in cash in a box in his house. Right now, the UAW leaders are just trying to buy time off their prison sentences by cooperating with the company.

“I have never seen a strike authorization happen the way this one happened. They took the janitors out first and told assembly line workers to cross their picket line before finally calling a nationwide strike on September 16.”

A worker at GM’s Arlington Assembly Plant near Dallas, Texas said, “This is my first strike, and it isn’t like how I pictured, like the strikes that you read about in the history books. The thing that is the hardest for me are the small pickets. They are only assigning workers picket duty for four hours a week, and the largest pickets will have maybe 10 people to a gate, instead of calling out the whole shift.”

He continued: “We aren’t being told anything by the UAW about the firings in Mexico, or even what is going on at other plants. None of us really know what is going on, unless you know people in other plants that you are in touch with, or if you are one of the ones reading the *Autoworker Newsletter* .

“But if they get treated that way down there, then it’s just a matter of time before it comes here. We need the same agenda as workers in Mexico.”

The workforce at the Arlington plant is diverse, with workers drawn from all over the country. The plant serves as a receptacle for so-called “GM gypsies,” or workers forced to relocate after their original plants were closed. In addition, there are a large number of immigrant workers in the plant, which is located in a metropolitan area with one of the largest Hispanic populations in the United States.

“We have no problem with them,” he said. “They go back home to visit their families, then they come back

and tell us about how things are for the workers down there.”

He concluded: “If American, Canadian and Mexican workers sat down together, that would show the bigger picture.”



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