

After UAW sellout of strike, GM fires workers for social media posts

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Less than twenty-four hours after the United Auto Workers declared its sellout deal ratified and shut down the 40-day strike at General Motors, the auto giant moved immediately to begin firing militant workers for their social media posts.

"Just to let everyone know, a [couple] of members have been terminated as of this morning for [Facebook posts] while on strike," a worker posted to the UAW Solidarity Now Facebook group. "When he reported this morning, his badge wouldn't work and was escorted to labor. He said labor has a list of names. (Flint Assembly) GM has been monitoring social media (as we know that they do)." The worker posted a screenshot of a statement from the Local 598 chairman who confirmed the firings and acknowledged that "GM global security has been monitoring Facebook [throughout] the strike."

The victimization of militant workers takes place as the auto companies and the UAW threaten 55,000 Ford and 47,200 Fiat Chrysler workers whose contracts come up next.

A Fiat Chrysler worker reported that higher seniority "legacy" workers were being threatened with termination for posting statements critical of the company and the UAW on social media or even advising younger workers about the upcoming contract fight.

At the same time, the UAW is sanctioning forced overtime and speedup so that the company can stockpile vehicles to weaken the impact of a potential strike. "We are concerned that workers at Fiat Chrysler are going to get screwed worse than any of the Big Three," the Fiat Chrysler worker said.

These threats take place after GM workers at its Silao plant for refusing to increase production of Silverado and Sierra pickup trucks during the US strike. One of the victimized workers told the WSWWS *Autoworker Newsletter*, "The plant is opening Monday and the workers have been informed that we will have no permission to go to the bathroom and they are taking away our vacation days to make up lost production from the strike. The company and the union agreed to this. The workers filed grievances with the labor relations department, but they want to treat us like slaves."

"The fired workers face a rough road ahead. Many of us have been blacklisted and we can't find another job to feed our families. We are looking to the American workers to demand that we get reinstated and an end to the blacklisting."

Autoworkers must demand that GM immediately reinstate all workers fired for exercising their right to free speech during the strike in the United States and in Mexico. But workers must organize this fight independently of and in opposition to the UAW, which deliberately isolated the GM strikers, put them on starvation rations of \$250-75 a week in strike pay and then rammed through a pro-company contract.

The deal is almost identical to GM's original proposal before the strike. It confirms the closure of four plants and paves the way for the conversion of large sections of the workforce into low-paid temps with no contractual rights, but who still pay union dues.

According to the union's own dubious figures, 44.5 percent of production workers voted against the contract, and workers in at least 12 local units voted it down, including in large assembly plants like Lordstown, Ohio; Spring Hill, Tennessee; Bowling Green, Kentucky; Delta and Orion townships in

Michigan and three western New York component plants.

Many more workers were opposed to the sellout deal but did not see the point of remaining on strike for several more weeks when they knew the union would only come back with the same proposal.

Generations ago, the defense of workers from victimization stemming from strike activity was one of the basic representational activities that trade unions carried out. The participants in the Flint sit-down strike, who occupied GM's factories in defiance of the law, along with workers victimized for union activity, were rehired after the GM strikers returned to work.

The union has long since abandoned such elementary responsibilities. While Local 598 has reportedly filed grievances on behalf of the fired workers, there can be no doubt that it will go the same place as the vast majority of grievances filed by autoworkers—nowhere.

While nothing is known about how GM compiled their lists of workers to fire, it is entirely possible that the UAW itself is working with the company to finger the most militant workers. Most Facebook groups that the autoworkers frequent are closed to the public and require a vetting process for new members to prove their identity, precisely to keep workers from being victimized for their comments. However, union officials regularly troll these pages on the lookout for militant workers.

Since UAW President Doug Fraser helped Chrysler CEO Lee Iacocca close down the most militant plants in the aftermath of Chrysler's 1979 bankruptcy, the UAW has a long history of victimizing and threatening militant workers. The *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* documented a case from last year where UAW officials at GM's Fort Wayne Assembly colluded with management to fire a worker who had reached out to the union for help with company harassment.

Little more than a week ago, the local bureaucracy at Spring Hill, Tennessee called the police on workers campaigning for a "no" vote outside of the local union's informational meeting. At Wentzville, Missouri, officials stopped an informational meeting when they discovered that a worker was livestreaming the event on Facebook and intimidated her into stopping the recording.

The UAW has particularly targeted the WSWS

Autoworker Newsletter for censorship and has threatened workers who have circulated its articles. As it did in 2015, UAW officials denounced the *Autoworker Newsletter* as "fake news," as Solidarity House hired a Washington, DC PR firm and colluded with the corporate media to conceal the real content of the sellout deal.

It then rushed through the "education sessions" on the contract and ratification votes to give workers as little time as possible to study and discuss the deal. One Lordstown worker said UAW national and local officials were giving one story about the contract to one local and other stories to other locals.

This is to say nothing of the dubious character of the voting process itself, which was carried out with no independent oversight. Absurdly large "yes" votes at large plants like Arlington, Flint Truck and Wentzville, Missouri led to charges by workers that the UAW had once again resorted to stuffing the ballot box to ensure an inflated "yes" vote and the contract's passage nationally, as it did at Ford in 2015.

Far from defending the heroic workers in Silao, the UAW demanded that far more than nine Mexican autoworkers lose their jobs, declaring that reallocating product from Mexican plants to the United States was a top priority in their negotiations.

With the signing of this contract, which will condemn a whole generation of temp workers to poverty and at-will employment, the UAW is helping the auto companies "import" the same conditions of industrial slavery north of the border.

The World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter will continue to provide updates on this developing story. If you know of a case where workers have been victimized after returning to work, email us at autoworkers@wsws.org. Any information you provide will be published anonymously.



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