

Strikebreaking operation directed at workers in plant near Pittsburgh

Samuel Davidson
13 January 2020

Management at a metal fabricating plant near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, has begun hiring replacement workers for 90 members of the United Auto Workers who have been on strike since September.

On Monday, Langeloth Metallurgical officials quadrupled the number of security guards at the plant as they began bringing in about 100 strikebreakers.

Workers at Langeloth Metallurgical, in Washington County about 40 miles west of Pittsburgh, walked out September 9 after the union's executive committee rejected the company's "last, best and final offer" a month earlier. The previous contract expired in March 2019.

Workers went on strike to protect seniority rights and over safety issues. The company was seeking to cut its reported \$400,000 training budget by restricting what jobs workers could do. Since the walkout began, the UAW has sought to isolate the strikers, making no effort to connect their struggle with the fight of workers at the Detroit-based auto companies, whose contracts expired in September. Meanwhile, workers have been forced to subsist on the UAW's miserly strike pay of \$250 a week.

The company, which is owned by Thompson Creek Metals, produces steel products with Molybdenum, an element used as an alloy in steel production to increase its strength.

Molybdenum has a melting point of 4,753 degrees Fahrenheit, and workers at the plant have to work around furnaces making the molten steel, with safety a major concern. Workers had been forced to work 12-hour days.

Jim Hall, President of United Auto Workers Local 1311, which represents the workers, told the WTOV9 of Steubenville, Ohio, that the union's international representative received a memo from the company last

Friday afternoon.

"He had gotten an email from the company's attorney stating that they were going to hire permanent replacement workers so that they could continue to meet their orders," Hall told the Steubenville television station.

UAW Local 1311 has no full-time staff. It is part of UAW Region 9 out of Philadelphia. Despite the provocative attack on the Langeloth workers neither the Region 9 website nor the UAW international website has posted any mention of the strike or that the workers are being replaced.

The spectacle of the UAW, which is sitting on top of \$1 billion in assets, standing idling by while management carries out blatant strikebreaking once again demonstrates the bankrupt and reactionary character of this organization. Recently filed court documents reveal that newly installed UAW International President Rory Gamble is under investigation in relation to a scheme to pocket kickbacks from a vendor of UAW-branded merchandise. Two former UAW presidents have been named as accomplices in the theft of more than \$1 million in workers dues money.

The refusal of the UAW to mobilize opposition to the strikebreaking by Langeloth Metallurgical is in line with its long history of collaboration with company management.

In a statement issued at the beginning of the strike union officials said, "UAW Local 1311 have worked for decades with LMC to ensure the company's profitability & our members job security. Today we are standing united for our workplace dignity & seniority rights."

In the name of ensuring "the company's profitability" and "job security" the United Auto

Workers has in mind the imposition of attacks on workers living standards, such as the creation of a two-tier system throughout the auto industry and the elimination of pensions and other critical benefits.

In an effort to divert the anger of workers UAW Local 1311 has recently embraced the intervention of Republican State Representative Jason Ortitay, who has postured as a supporter of striking workers. Ortitay recently contacted management about brokering a return to work.

“Now we have Jason here; this is tremendous,” said Local 1311 President Hall. “I think that this was great that he came out here. He showed everybody that his heart’s in it as well as ours.”

Workers cannot rely on representatives of the two corporate-controlled political parties to defend their interests. At the federal, state and local levels the Democrats and Republicans have presided over the destruction of living standards and the massive growth of social inequality.

The defense of jobs, living standards, benefits and safe working conditions can only be achieved through the mobilization of the independent strength of the working class. This requires the building of new organizations of the working class, independent of the UAW, based not on the profit interests of the rich, but the interests of workers.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact