

“It’s a recipe for disaster”

Autoworkers denounce bipartisan drive to reopen schools

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Autoworkers from assembly and parts plants in Michigan and Indiana spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* in recent days and denounced the criminal campaign to reopen schools being waged by the Trump administration and the Democrats at the federal, state and local level.

Workers pointed to the underlying criminality of both the back-to-work and back-to-school campaigns and voiced their support for the formation of a network of rank-and-file safety committees to organize communication across the country and across industries.

“What the American government is saying is they don’t give a damn about your children, nor the parents,” declared a Fiat Chrysler worker in Indiana. “Trump is pushing the limits. Shame on them for putting innocent kids at risk. No one knows how [school re-openings] will affect kids. We are constantly learning new things about this virus.

“I would be scared to death as a teacher. What happens in a single-parent home when the parent contracts COVID-19? We are seeing people hospitalized for well beyond a two-week period. Who will care for your child?”

Workers living paycheck to paycheck, if they are working at all, will find it increasingly difficult to provide safety equipment for their children as both families and schools are starved for funds. “How are the parents able to afford and continue to find the daily PPE required for children while in school?” he asked. “Are the schools not funding those supplies?”

At the Ford Dearborn Truck Plant outside Detroit, a worker questioned the entire back-to-work and back-to-school policy. “They want to pretend like it’s safe to

get the kids back in school,” he said.

He said he had watched the videos posted by Georgia high school students of the flagrant violations of safety precautions in the crowded hallways of their school. The school administration first suspended the students and then reversed the suspension in response to the outpouring of support from teachers, parents and other students who saw the video. “I’ve been watching the conditions in Florida and Georgia. There was a high school that was jam-packed with students and they didn’t even have face masks. Social distancing is impossible in that school.

“The virus is going to be in the air,” he continued. “The masks they have are not designed to filter virus particles from the air. The school is supposed to be a safe place for kids. What is the point of school if we are not going to protect the kids?”

Many workers are painfully aware of the savage budget cuts inflicted on school districts everywhere since the early 1980s. “The class sizes have increased so much over the years, they don’t even have enough seats for the students,” the Ford Dearborn worker added. “How can that be safe? Anything you touch could give you the virus. It is irresponsible. It’s just heartless. It’s going to spread through the whole school and then the children will take it home.

“The ICUs are filling up, and that’s when there will be a much higher death rate because people are not getting the care that they need. We definitely need to join forces in a general strike. The teachers have the best interest of the students at heart. But from the superintendents on up they do not share those sentiments. They are really hostile to the teachers.

“What about the threats to cut school funding?” he

continued. “That highlights the attempt to force people to do things which are unsafe. Just like they’re forcing people back to work by cutting their \$600 per week supplemental unemployment benefit. They are cutting off the money from what people really need. I heard that there are 1,600 nursing home workers going on strike in Detroit. They are risking everything. This is just the beginning stage. We need to support each other and all struggles will come together.”

A worker from Fiat Chrysler Sterling Heights Assembly in Michigan said, “I think it is foul that students are being brought back. Any stories of it not being transmitted by kids are totally false. You can refer to that camp in Georgia. It was only open for five days and more than 70 percent of the people tested positive.”

“I think this is horrible,” said a worker from the Faurecia plant in Saline, Michigan, who was formerly a substitute teacher. “This is ridiculous. It is a terrible thing because children don’t know what’s going on. When they’re getting off the bus they’re going to be all huddled up because they are all best friends.

“In the classrooms it’s a problem because the desks are so close together. They cannot social distance. The teacher has to wear a mask and the kids have to wear masks. The children will not know what this procedure is all about. It is a recipe for disaster. It’s just crazy.

“You can thank the president for that. These people are mindless, careless.”

A worker from the Faurecia plant in Columbus, Indiana, reported, “If the children contract COVID-19, they’re going to give it to their families. They are jamming COVID-19 down our throats. The government doesn’t seem to care.

“We need to unify. We need to join with the autoworkers that are forming rank-and-file committees in Michigan and Ohio. Everybody that I talk to seems to be receptive. We can’t use the union because the union is in bed with a company.”

The support for teachers and the opposition to reopening schools extends broadly throughout the working class. “The teachers are now standing up. We all need to stand together,” a flight attendant at Delta Airlines told the WSWS. “When these children are starting to die, we do not have any choice. People are going to fight.”

Denouncing the attempts of the Democratic Party to

divide workers via racist and identity politics, she continued, “We don’t need identity politics. It is not a matter of race, gender or religion. It is the working people, period. Look at the George Floyd protests. It was not just black people that were protesting. Black, white, green or red, the working class struggle has no color.”

She voiced her support for the Socialist Equality Party’s call for the development of network of rank-and-file committees and the preparation of a general strike. “For the capitalists, all they can see is go back to work, go back to school,” she said. “They don’t care who dies. Any parent would be livid.

“We are in the middle of a pandemic, and they keep pushing people to go back to work. This is a ticking time bomb here. The factory workers are already screaming. Now they want to pull the children back into a Petri dish. They are really working on the last nerve of the working people to protect their families.

“This is the very reason why we need rank-and-file committees. The unions don’t care. The businesses don’t care. The working class needs an organization of its own. An organization that protects working people.”



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