

“These same conditions exist all over the world”

Faurecia Gladstone Rank-and-File Safety Committee defends immigrant workers at Indiana parts plant, opposes back-to-school drive

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Auto parts workers at Faurecia’s Gladstone plant in Columbus, Indiana, recently formed a Rank-and-File Safety Committee to fight unsafe working conditions and management harassment and victimization. The Committee recently published a statement through the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* defending James Grady, a whistleblower in the plant who was set up and victimized in a conspiracy involving both plant management and the local leadership of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers union.

Yesterday the committee reported that workers at the plant are “declassing themselves,” which means refusing leadership positions on the shop floor, and others are leaving the factory altogether in response to the brutal regime of forced overtime and the disregard of the advice and work restrictions signed by workers’ family doctors. To help fill the vacancies, the company posted on its plant bulletin boards a long list of skilled trades positions which have now become available.

Last week a gap leader who worked on multiple lines was allowed to work for five days after having reported exposure to COVID-19. She was not sent home until she finally began showing symptoms. To make matters worse, the company refused to compensate her for lost wages. They said her lost time resulted from “self-quarantine.”

A supporter of the Autoworker Rank-and-File Safety Committee Network from another Faurecia plant in Saline, Michigan, which supplies interior parts for

Ford, FCA and Tesla, told the *Autoworker Newsletter*, “Faurecia is keeping stuff about the Coronavirus on the hush-hush! They don’t want you to know what is really going on.”

She denounced the company policy of taking a worker’s vacation pay if they stay home to self-quarantine. “That’s not right. You are not supposed to take the test and come right back to work,” she said. “It’s unsafe. A lot of people have to go back to work because they cannot afford to lose their vacation time. The company is holding that against them.”

After the *World Socialist Web Site’s* initial report on Gladstone, the company hit back by blocking the *World Socialist Web Site*, which supports the rank and file movement by publishing its statements, from its wifi network in the factory, and circulated allegations that the WSWS was engaged in false reporting.

Supporters of the Committee reported to the WSWS that the head of Human Resources had come onto the shop floor last week, apparently at the direction of top management of the French multinational company in Paris, to accuse the WSWS of making false reports and to claim that the crisis would blow over and business would continue as usual. As the transparent propaganda campaign swung into high gear, multiple workers at the factory wrote into the WSWS to say, on the contrary, that everything in its articles was true, “and more.”

The Faurecia Gladstone Rank-and-File Safety Committee issued the following statement on Tuesday, August 25, to denounce the inhuman conditions at the

plant and to advance the call for a nationwide strike to stop the corporate back to work and back to school drive.

We are tired of Faurecia treating us like garbage. We don't want the headaches of running to speed up production. Corporate management has no concern for our health and well-being. We stand 100 percent behind every worker who has been forced by the inhuman conditions at Gladstone to declass themselves and the others who have been compelled to leave the plant.

The union (IBEW 1424) gave the company the green light to impose brutal exploitation when it accepted in the contract imposed in March the company's right to "*manage any way they see fit.*" The company uses that language to their advantage in every possible situation. They do not care if we are injured or sick. The head of Human Resources tells us to get to work or use our precious, limited FMLA.

The union has repudiated its responsibility to protect us. It works hand in pocket with company management. The pandemic shows that these same conditions exist all over the world. We are building the Network of Rank-and-File Safety Committees with our brothers and sisters in other plants to protect the interests of all employees.

Our hearts go out to the kids, parents and teachers in Muncie, Indiana, in Florida, in Georgia and all over the country who are being forced back into school for face-to-face instruction when the pandemic is by no means under control. Any job, school or public gathering is a transmission belt for the disease. Faurecia, Ford and Fiat Chrysler are all doing the same thing—**DELIBERATELY**. They chose to overlook the danger for the profit.

We must put our foot down. We need to do it together. In 1970 the truckers went on strike. When the president went on TV and ordered every one of them back to work, they wouldn't listen to him. And they were right. Nothing got done until the truckers decided to stand

together. That should be educational for us. We need to stand together.

What John F. Kennedy said, "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for our country," no longer holds. Our country is not looking out for us. We need to look out for ourselves as workers. In 1970 the country ground to a halt. The harsh reality is that we have to do this in order to be treated fairly.

In recent weeks, management has brought in large numbers of "supplemental" workers from Haiti. In defiance of the company effort to foment chauvinism and racism as a means of splitting and disorienting the workforce, the Gladstone Rank-and-File Safety Committee expressed solidarity with their new coworkers and decided to expand their struggle for safe working conditions, free speech and transparency to include the Haitians who had just arrived and were being exploited as well.

"We need to have sympathy for these guys because the company is running the same gamut on them as they are on us," a member told the *Autoworker Newsletter*. "If we could talk to them, they would know that the company is screwing them the same way they are screwing us."

To join the Rank-and-File Safety Committee at your plant, or for assistance in establishing a Committee, contact the World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter at autoworkers@wsws.org.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact