

Indiana auto parts workers support call for nationwide political general strike

Faurecia Gladstone Rank-and-File Safety Committee
18 December 2020

The rank-and-file safety committee of Faurecia auto parts workers in Columbus, Indiana, have issued a statement denouncing the company's ruthless exposure of the workers to the coronavirus and the collusion of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW Local 1424). The statement appeals to workers to support the Socialist Equality Party statement calling for a national political general strike to save lives.

As the WSWS and SEP have stressed, with the possibility of a vaccine being widely distributed in the coming months, it is especially urgent to stop the present, accelerating, needless spread of the virus and loss of life.

The statement of the Gladstone committee follows. To learn more about joining this committee or the national autoworker rank-and-file safety committee network, contact autoworkers@wsws.org.

We founded this committee last August to fight the spread of COVID-19 and save lives, to defend whistleblowers and our right to speak out and to join with our brothers and sisters around the country and across the world in struggle against the system that is guilty of imposing this catastrophe upon us.

In our first statement we wrote: "Our lives are in danger every day we come to work. We all know coworkers who have been infected with the deadly coronavirus..."

"Management and the IBEW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers) union won't tell us how many people have COVID-19. ... They put on a show of safety procedures at the entrance... We know they're just going through motions."

The outbreak at Gladstone has gone from bad to worse. A horrific explosion burned Sheila Skaggs almost to death, and the company and the union refuse

to explain how it happened, or anything about her condition.

Everyone that we have talked to who had COVID and was off a month or more has been denied their short-term disability income. That right there is awful! Some of our coworkers are forced to hide the fact they are sick because they are afraid they will be denied short-term disability that THEY paid for themselves in a payroll deduction.

Faurecia knows that they are spreading the virus, and they are forcing people to work and doing nothing to stop it. We know the company has called several people who were infected with coronavirus and told them to come back to work after only 10 days. They told them, "Well, if you don't have a fever then you can come back." At the same time, they are twisting their arms by denying them disability payments or any other compensation. Others receive a lousy \$200 a week, which nobody can live on.

The companies are using economic pressure to force us to work in spite of the danger.

Instead of spending that \$6 trillion associated with the CARES Act on the big businesses and the banks, they should have spent that money on closing down all businesses that are nonessential and using that money to sustain the working class and small businesses that need it.

There are already more than 308,000 dead, and it is estimated that an additional 250,000 to 450,000 will die in the next few months. Think about this. That's death on a scale of the Civil War in the United States.

The Congress of both Democrats and Republicans is haggling over providing a lousy \$300 per week for unemployed workers. Meanwhile, the most ruthless politicians are demanding that the corporations be protected from being held liable for unsafe workplaces

and exposing workers to COVID-19. What the government is saying, in essence, is that it is okay for these companies to kill us.

What the capitalists are doing is murder. How much more are we going to stand for?

The Faurecia Gladstone Rank-and-File Safety Committee hereby rejects their criminal policy. We endorse the Socialist Equality Party Statement entitled, “For Emergency action to save lives! Close schools and shut down nonessential production! Full compensation for workers!”

When the wildcat strikes forced industry to shut down last March for two months, that slowed the virus and saved thousands of lives. But you still had places like Faurecia that lied and stated that they were producing essential parts.

Some may have voted for Biden hoping that he was going to shut nonessential places down so that the virus could be contained. But as soon as he was elected, he said he wouldn’t shut down businesses, “Period.” On the contrary, he declared that all the schools would be opened within his first 100 days.

The SEP is right. We need to shut all nonessential production and all the schools and universities throughout the entire country, and pay workers to stay home and keep themselves and their families safe. At the same time, essential workers who have to work must be well protected and paid hazard pay.

The Federal Reserve handed enough money to Wall Street this year, \$3 trillion, to pay 200 million workers a decent paycheck for six months, which is time enough to stay healthy until we have a vaccine that is widely distributed.

The companies, the unions and the governments are the ones in essence that are killing people by making us go to work in cesspools of coronavirus, and they’re getting beyond filthy rich from it. They are “Pandemic Profiteers.”

The SEP says it best: “The entire response of the ruling class to the pandemic demonstrates that capitalism is incompatible with human progress and life itself. The alternative to capitalism is socialism—the restructuring of social and economic life to meet social need, not private profit.”

It is we the working class that need to stop this madness. We need to take a stand, like it says in the SEP statement. Not just factories, not just teachers, we

are saying the whole working class, along with small businesses, because the government did not give these small businesses what they need.

We need to secure the money so that we can take care of the working class, not the top 4, 5, or 6 percent. They don’t need it. They do not care, and they will not help us.

Enough is enough. We need to get together, formulate a plan and take strike action. We need to get what the working class needs.

To join the Faurecia Gladstone Rank-and-File Safety Committee, contact autoworkers@wsws.org.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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