

American Trotskyist and retired General Motors worker Jim Lawrence dies at age 83 (February 18, 1938—January 25, 2022)

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It is with sadness and a deep sense of loss that the Socialist Equality Party reports the death of Comrade Jim Lawrence at age 83. He died in hospice Tuesday after being seriously ill for the past month. Jim's wife of 59 years, Lois, was at his side when he took his last breath.

Lawrence, a retired General Motors worker and veteran of the 1970 General Motors strike, was well known among workers in his hometown of Dayton, Ohio for the militant defense he carried out for the interests of the working class. This meant an unrelenting and principled opposition to the collaborationist and corporatist policies of the United Auto Workers, which oversaw the de-industrialization and devastation of major industrial centers like Dayton, Ohio and Detroit, Michigan.

After meeting the Workers League, predecessor of the Socialist Equality Party, in 1972, Jim was won to the perspective of the Trotskyist movement and conducted a life-long fight for workers to break with the Democratic Party and wage a struggle for socialism, uniting with their class brothers and sisters worldwide.

Even after retiring from Delco-Moraine in 1996, Lawrence continued the struggle to educate workers on the nature of the trade unions, the role of the Democratic Party and why it was necessary for the working class to establish itself as an independent political force building its own rank-and-file committees.

Lawrence ran as a socialist candidate for Congress in Dayton and in 2004 stood as the Socialist Equality Party vice presidential candidate along with Bill Van Auken for the presidential election.

Following the massive betrayal by the United Auto Workers of the 2007 nationwide strike by GM workers,

Lawrence spoke to the WSWS on the significance of this development and how it would lead to an assault on every gain ever won by workers.

The contract sanctioned plant closings and the two-tier wage system and relieved GM of its legal obligations to provide health benefits for retired workers.

Speaking on the role of UAW, Lawrence said, "The problem is not so much that there are bad people inside the UAW. It is the whole concept of trade unionism and nationalism that has failed and is no longer viable and never was in the first place. It is not about starting up a new union that is going to be more militant. Any union will do what? It will negotiate the terms of wage slavery. As soon as the corporation says, 'I can't afford this or I am going to lock the door,' the union will cave in. The problem is trade unionism itself, not so much the individual leaders."

Lawrence believed deeply in the world scientific outlook of Marxism, was a principled and impressive man whose legacy will live forever in the Trotskyist movement.

A longer obituary will be published to review the many contributions he made to the Trotskyist movement.

Messages of sympathy can be sent to comments@wsws.org.



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