

Ultium Cell workers in Lordstown, Ohio support Clarios strikers: “Everyone needs to stand together”

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Are you an Ultium Cell worker in Lordstown, Spring Hill or Lansing? Support the Clarios strikers and help break their isolation. Fill out the form after this article to report on conditions in your plant and form a support committee.

If further proof is needed that the United Auto Workers apparatus is seeking to isolate and betray the three-week-long strike by 525 Clarios battery workers near Toledo, Ohio, it can be found not far away in Lordstown, Ohio. There, the UAW has not even informed the 1,100 workers at the Ultium Cell factory, who make batteries for General Motors, that the strike is taking place.

But when the Ultium workers were told about the strike, they were eager to support their brothers and sisters at Clarios.

“I definitely support their strike,” said one worker who was coming off the day shift. “We are all autoworkers. They are doing the same thing here. They [GM and Ford] just want everyone to work for nothing. We are not at full production, but the company is already making millions. There is no reason we can’t earn a living wage.”

The worker said that he used to work for an auto parts manufacturer in Warren, Ohio before being laid off when the plant closed. “When I was laid off, I was making \$30 an hour. We are not making anything near that here.”

Ultium does not post the starting wages on their job applications. ZipRecruiter, where many of their jobs are also listed, gives the estimated pay at \$16 to \$20 an hour, and it lists the company’s national average at just \$17.67 an hour.

Ultium Cell is a joint venture between GM and the

Korean electronics manufacturer LG. Many of the workers at the Lordstown plant are contract employees from South Korea. GM, Ultium and the UAW seek to keep the workers in the plant divided along national lines.

“They have us taking each other’s pictures all the time,” one worker explained. “If we think they didn’t do something that they were supposed to do, we are to take their picture. If we don’t do something that they think we were supposed to do, they take our picture.

“We are all workers. I just want to do my job and go home with ten fingers and ten toes, and nothing hurts at the end of the day.”

He explained that this was the same thing that was done when he first started working for GM. “I drove a Nissan, and they told me they would turn my car over if I didn’t buy a GM car.”

A group of South Korean workers on the way in stopped to talk.

One of the workers explained that he is on a two-year contract and that they would be deported if they are fired. “For us, this is good money, and the conditions are fine. I am able to send money home to support my family.”

A contractor who works for food service explained that she also did not know about the Clarios strike. But when she heard what the workers are fighting for, she expressed her support.

They too are being used as cheap labor, she explained. “We run the cafeteria and market, nobody is earning enough to live. Prices are going up every day on eggs and bread. With each check, we have to decide which bills we can pay, and which we have to put off. And more and more are getting put off.

“Everyone needs to stand together and stand up.”

A former worker who was dropping off a friend said, “It is time that people are fighting back. The company just wants to walk all over you.” She explained that she was harassed when she worked there. “They find anything to pick on you.”

In addition to the Lordstown plant, Ultium is building a plant in Spring Hill, Tennessee, which it expects to have running by the fall of 2023, and another in Lansing, Michigan, which is scheduled to be built by 2025. The company is also considering a fourth plant in Indiana.

The plants are vital to General Motors’ shift towards electric vehicles. GM has invested billions in electric vehicles, and it plans to have a full line by 2025. Its goal is to shift 50 percent of sales to electric vehicles by 2030.

“They can’t make their cars without us,” said one worker who didn’t know about the Clarios strike but supported what they were fighting for. “So, we deserve to be paid a decent wage.”

In addition to the low pay, workers also expressed concern about safety, scheduling and the way they are treated by management.

The auto companies are seeking to finance the conversion to EVs on the backs of the workers through lower wages and the destruction of working conditions.

This model is also being followed by Ford, which has announced a multi-billion-dollar investment to develop their line of EVs. Like GM, Ford has announced that it is building its own battery plants. Ford is also in the process of building and or acquiring lithium mines to ensure a steady supply of this metal, which is required for batteries used to power automobiles.

In the drive to switch to EVs, GM and Ford have received the full support and cooperation of the United Auto Workers. Late last year, GM announced that it would not oppose the recognition of the UAW at the Lordstown facility.

The UAW apparatus is prepared to carry out the same betrayal of workers at Lordstown as they are trying to do at Clarios. The apparatus is an instrument of the corporations, a second layer of management tasked with suppressing the struggles of the workers.

The UAW has a long history of collaboration with GM and the other automakers to cut wages, benefits

and impose massive job cuts.

David Green, the UAW regional director overseeing the attempt to push through a concessions contract at Clarios, was the former president of UAW Local 1112, which now represents the Lordstown Ultium Cell workers. He was president of the local when GM closed its nearby assembly plant, throwing over 3,500 workers out of work.

While GM was closing down the Lordstown Assembly Plant, Green and the rest of the UAW leadership sought to divert anger from GM by blaming workers in Mexico. Green supported and helped impose one concessions contract after another, telling workers that taking pay cuts was necessary to compete against workers in Mexico and it would save their jobs.



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