

“If the whole country has to strike, then that’s what we have to do”: Toledo, Ohio workers denounce Trump’s dictatorial moves

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Workers: Speak out against the drive to dictatorship in the form below! All submissions will remain anonymous.

Workers in Toledo, Ohio spoke out Wednesday against the Trump administration’s deployment of military troops to major US cities and the mass round-up of immigrant workers by ICE at factories in Georgia and other states. A WSWS reporting team spoke with workers on the picket line at the Libbey glass plant, and during shift changes at the Dana Driveline and Stellantis Toledo Assembly Complex.

“I saw in Georgia that South Koreans came in to help build a plant and they sent ICE in there to remove the people who were building the plant and teaching more than 8,500 workers in Georgia how to work. They just locked them up and put a kibosh on the whole plant.

“It’s the same thing here. Libbey used to be family-oriented company, and it’s just corporate greed, all across the board. They want to talk inflation and this and that. But its corporate greed and there is nobody stopping it. The Democrats aren’t, the independents and the Republicans are surely not going to stop it.”

He agreed that the ICE raids were aimed at terrorizing all workers and pointed out the chilling photos of workers lined up with their hands tied behind their backs at the LG battery plant. “Yes, you can have a visa, you can have green card—they are revoking all of that. Even the college students.”

He added, “Trump might not be the smartest president, but he knows what he was doing. He’s got the Supreme Court. They overturned Roe v. Wade. You can’t run for a third term as president, and now they’re considering it.”

Regarding the deployment of troops to major cities, he said, “That’s against the law, the Constitution. What Trump does, he takes a hammer to all these programs, beats them up and then he says, ‘See, it doesn’t work.’

He enthusiastically supported the preparation for a general strike, saying, “Yes, yes, that’s what we should do. People can’t stay silent. Look what the Nazis did.”

Another striking worker said, “The working people in this country produce everything and are treated like crap. The rich don’t want to pay taxes. Their fortunes come from our hard work. It’s our duty to make sure they don’t bring us back to the days of industrial slavery.”

Regarding Trump’s deployment of troops, he said, “We need to stand up. If that means the whole country has to strike, then that’s what we have to do. Trump has no power if we don’t give it to him—or anyone else who tries to take our rights. My generation, the new generation, eventually somebody is going to have to take a stand.

“They want all these wars but it’s the workers who build the tanks and the weapons. So, if the working class doesn’t do the work, it’s not going to get done. The whole working class needs to strike. We need to put the rich people in their place. They have nothing without us. If people don’t want a dictatorship, they can stand up and take what they’ve earned.”

A young Libbey worker initially wanted to avoid a political discussion about Trump’s policies because, he said, “I was more a Trump supporter than a Biden supporter, not that I liked either one for my president.”

He described the oppressive conditions Libbey workers were fighting: swing shifts that forced workers to work seven days straight before getting two days off and alternating each week between day, afternoon and night shifts; starting wages of \$15-16 an hour, with a decade or more needed to reach top pay scale. “It’s almost impossible to pay the bills. The only way is by working lots of overtime. But they want to take that away in this contract,” he said.

He said dividing workers between different pay scales

and the four different unions at Libbey, “is how they win.” workers are members of International Association of Machinists Lodge 1297 and three locals of the United Steelworkers.

He agreed that the ruling class was trying to divide workers along national lines, acknowledging “everyone is an immigrant” in the US.

The WSWS reporters said the Democrats had attacked immigrants too, and that both parties defended the oligarchs who wanted to destroy Social Security, and all the gains workers have wrenched from the ruling class in over a century of class struggle. “They want us to think it’s the immigrants who are making it bad, when it’s the billionaires,” a reporter said.

“I wish a lot more people understood that” the young worker replied, “It’s hard to stand when you’re divided.” The worker expressed disdain for union officials who drive fancy cars and tell workers they have to do everything to boost the company’s profits to keep their jobs. “That sounds like corporate-talking,” he said. “It’s insane how it is now. It seems like we need a union against the unions,” he said, expressing support for the fight of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) to transfer power from the union apparatus to the workers on the shop floor.

“The whole ICE thing is BS,” a worker at the nearby Dana Driveline plant said. “It’s a violation of everybody’s Constitutional rights. It doesn’t matter if you are here legally or illegally, whatever you want to call it, people have rights. There are people who are here legally and they are revoking their legal status, acting like all of a sudden, they’re illegal. It’s BS. It’s fascism.

“This is just how it begins. If they don’t have rights, we don’t. It never stops with these people—they won’t stop with these ‘illegal people.’”

Asked what he thought about a general strike, he said, “It would be great if we could do that. We have to figure out how we can stay in solidarity, so we can organize this. If we just stopped making them money, they are going to listen to us. We have the power, we just have to organize it. A general strike is the way to go.”

As for the Democrats, he said, “They are center-right at best. They could have prevented a lot of this but carried out a lot of the policies that Trump is doing. It goes [as far back as] the Patriot Act, that’s when I started following things.”

Describing the conditions of workers, he said, “They’re saying that prices are going down but they’re not. People are struggling and it’s going to reach a breaking point

because you’re putting people between a rock and hard place.”

Another Dana worker, asked about Trump’s deployment of troops to Washington, Los Angeles and other cities, said, “He’s trying to reverse history. He’s just trying to make the rich richer and doesn’t care about us.

“Trump doesn’t know what we go through in these factories. There are guys in here inhaling paint and fumes for 10 hours. Trump is trying to take everything, and it’s really not good for anybody. Half the people in here who voted for him are second guessing voting for him. We told you, this man was no good.”

As for the Democrats, he said, “they’re on the policy of, ‘if you can’t beat him, join him.’ I think building something new would be a breath of fresh air. It’s going to take us, the next generation, to make a difference.”

Referring to the United Auto Workers and its collusion with the corporations, he said, “We ask for help from the union and we don’t get it. But we have to pay dues.” Responding to the fight by the IWA-RFC to build new rank-and-file committees to mobilize the working class independently of and in opposition to the union bureaucracy, he said, “Me and my friends we talked about how there used to sit-down strikes and workers demanded what they needed. It’s up to us to do this.”

At the Toledo Jeep plant several workers expressed their support for a general strike against Trump, with one worker saying, “This is getting bad, sending troops into cities is illegal. If he can carry out mass arrests of immigrants, he can do the same thing to anyone who opposes what he is doing. It is hard to get everyone together but if we don’t stand up, we’ll have a dictatorship.”



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