

Break the isolation of the National Steel Car strike by turning to workers across North America! For workers' unity, not bogus USW "solidarity"

National Steel Car Rank-and-File Committee
2 September 2026

Over 1,200 National Steel Car workers have been on strike at the Hamilton, Ontario, railcar production facility since August 12. Are you an NSC worker? Contact the National Steel Car Rank-and-File Committee (NSC-RFC) to discuss the way forward in your strike and the issues you want dealt with in your next contract by filling out the form at the end of the article.

Brothers and Sisters,

We've been on strike now for just over three weeks, and it's clear that our struggle stands at the crossroads. Either we seize control of it, broadening it to include workers across North America in the fight for workplace safety, better conditions and wage increases to make up for decades of givebacks, or the USW bureaucracy will sell us out.

Our overwhelming vote to walk off the job August 12 proved that the vast majority of the more than 1,200 of us on the picket lines wants wages that provide us with a decent standard of living and an end to dangerous working conditions in the plant. Our strike enjoys widespread support. But unless we build the National Steel Car Rank-and-File Committee as the democratically organized voice of workers on the shop floor and seize control of this strike from the USW apparatus, we won't be able to mobilize our powerful allies throughout the working class to win our demands.

The USW is following the same playbook as 2023, when they isolated and defeated our courageous 41-day strike. Before we even walked out three weeks ago, the USW had given up their ostensible opposition to the piecework system, which was responsible for the deaths of three of our colleagues between late 2020 and June 2022. Now, they're politely asking Greg Aziz for a seat at the table in determining the piecework rate!

The USW's program: Isolate our strike, suppress the rank and file

The "solidarity" talked about by the USW bureaucrats is a cover for their determination to finalize a sell-out deal with Greg Aziz. They do everything possible to subordinate us to the pro-employer "collective bargaining" framework, within which the USW and other unions build corporatist partnerships with bosses and government ministers and

impose concessions on us.

If the USW really wanted to support our strike, it has the resources to do so: over 800,000 members across North America, including more than 200,000 in Canada; and over \$2 billion in assets, among them a strike fund in the hundreds of millions. But it can't fight for our interests, because the privileged interests of the USW functionaries on six-figure salaries—led by USW Canada head Marty Warren with a salary of around C\$350,000—depend on cooperative relations with corporate bosses like Aziz and the big business politicians in Ottawa and at Queen's Park.

The bureaucracy's "solidarity" amounts to cheering on the parading of fellow local union bureaucrats and favoured NDP politicians as they use our picket lines to posture as "friends of hard working families." We all know the anti-worker track record of the NDP. From 2019 to 2026, they propped up the Trudeau and Carney Liberals, as they spent billions on rearmament and the war against Russia, bailed out the corporations during the pandemic, virtually abolished the right to strike and enforced real-term cuts to public spending transfers to the provinces.

The hostility of the USW bureaucracy towards us is revealed by their contempt for our democratic rights. Many of us have spoken out on the picket line in favour of a unified struggle with our class brothers and sisters across Canada and in the United States in direct opposition to the trade war fuelled by the ruling elites on both sides of the border. In interviews on the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS), strikers have denounced unliveable wages, decades of frozen pensions and the disregard for safety shown by NSC.

USW Local 7135 Recording Secretary Shawn McMullin and his allies responded with a vicious attack on the WSWS, ordering strikers not to speak to the only media outlet that seeks to give them a voice. He labelled WSWS reporting teams as "bottom feeders ... who only want to exploit and pervert our struggle." He went on to demand that the WSWS and we strikers be muzzled, using carefully couched language about this being "a free country/ but be careful who you talk to." This reminds us of a mob boss soft pedalling a threat. He finishes his missive with the line, "Please look out for one another on the line, not everyone that comes down is genuine in their intentions and want to hurt, not help."

If McMullin and his pals were genuinely looking for people who want to "hurt, not help" our strike, they need only look in the mirror.

It is precisely because the WSWS encourages rank-and-file workers not to toe the USW bureaucracy's line of isolating our struggle and patiently waiting for Greg Aziz to call for a resumption of "negotiations," and supports our committee in advancing a program to win our strike that the bureaucracy deems them off-limits and open to attack. This included the doxxing of a WSWS reporter.

Local 7135 President Frank Crowder quickly echoed and amplified McMullin's threatening comment. The WSWS, he declared, "are looking for a confrontation." He then asserted that our committee does not exist and that "it's a trick" to get workers' money.

Aside from the fact that the Crowder-headed gang has been tricking us for years into accepting rotten contracts and that the Steelworkers apparatus are the ones that have withheld our strike pay for two weeks and are now giving us just \$420 per week, we find it remarkable that the USW Local 7135 president and his colleagues would waste so much of their time on an organization that supposedly doesn't exist.

The threats are not only aimed against WSWS reporters and the National Steel Car Rank-and-File Committee. They are designed to intimidate and silence any opposition from striking workers to the sellout the USW bureaucracy is cooking up. That is why rank-and-file workers must insist on the right to speak with WSWS reporters and discuss a strategy to win the strike without the interference and threats of USW bureaucrats.

Conditions are ripe to broaden our strike

The truth is they are terrified of the potential for our strike becoming the catalyst for a much broader movement of the working class against dangerous working conditions, wage cutting, and piecework and other forms of brutal exploitation. Such a movement would threaten the privileged positions of the USW and all the pro-capitalist union bureaucracies.

Over 120 locked out workers at Marathon Petroleum's Martinez, California refinery, members of USW Local 5, have sent messages of solidarity to our strike and called for a worker-led unified movement across North America's national borders. Some 23,000 steelworkers at US Steel and Cleveland Cliffs in the US could have been in a strike position Tuesday as their contracts expired at the end of August were it not for the USW's agreement to a 30-day contract extension imposed behind the backs of the rank and file.

Millions of workers across the continent are disgusted by the fascist threats of US President Trump as he seeks to establish a presidential dictatorship and expands world war. Anger is building across Canada to dangerous working conditions and the vicious class war that the financial elite and their political hirelings are waging on us, even as they hypocritically call on workers to rally around "Team Canada."

In the United States, a rank-and-file rebellion is developing among autoworkers, who have repeatedly rejected contracts the United Auto Workers bureaucracy has sought to impose. The most conscious expression of this insurgency is the candidacy for UAW president of the socialist autoworker Will Lehman, who calls for the abolition of the bureaucracy and the return of power on the shop floor. Lehman has issued a statement backing our strike and calling for cross-border unity among the working class. Because of his courageous stand, Lehman has received death threats from the UAW bureaucracy. A campaign against the threats, supported by workers in Canada, led to

the two-year suspension of the bureaucrat who threatened him.

Mobilize the rank and file and broaden our strike to win

Under conditions of an upsurge in the class struggle across North America, we are fighting to turn to our real allies—other steelworkers, railway workers in Canada and the US, and all workers confronting brutal exploitation and the rising cost of living. As we wrote in our statement last week, the NSC-RFC must be broadened throughout the plant, send delegations to other sections of workers to link up with them in struggle, and elect its own negotiating committee to bypass the pro-corporate USW.

We wrote:

Workers in Canada, the United States and Mexico confront the same corporations, politicians and union bureaucracies. Our strength lies in uniting across national and union boundaries against them: class war, not trade war.

A major step in this fight is securing the support of rail workers throughout the US to set aside all rail cars marked NSCX. These are the cars that Aziz makes us produce for him at the end of every contract order and leases to operators throughout the US so he can still cash in during the strike. Set NSCX cars aside to back our struggle!

We say:

Build the NSC-RFC throughout our plant!

Make the National Steel Car strike the spearhead of a working-class counteroffensive against dangerous workplaces and capitalist austerity, and for decent-paying, secure jobs for all!

Unite Canadian and US workers against the fascist Trump and the central banker Carney! No to trade war, rearmament and war! For international working-class unity!



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact