

Melbourne Solidarity protest for GM workers

classconscious.org held a solidarity vigil outside the GM Headquarters in Port Melbourne Melbourne on Saturday 28th September.

We came to show our solidarity for the 46,000 GM workers in the United States who have been striking since September 16th. This is now the longest strike in the US auto industry since 1976.



The gates of the now closed Holden factory can be seen in the background at the rear of GM Headquarters in Melbourne.

Why does this strike matter to Australian workers?

Capital organises internationally – so must workers!

The global capitalist system is dominated by transnational corporations who produce goods and services in a truly integrated process. If workers in one country fight for better wages and conditions, these corporations can simply threaten to move their production to a country where wages and conditions are lower. Corporations have used this power, aided by the trade unions who have forced workers to accept lower and lower condition in the name “international competitiveness”. This was the process that saw, the worsening of conditions of workers in the Australian car industry, until eventually all factories including GM’s were closed. This point was accentuated by the fact that we vigilled outside the closed gates of the GM Holden factory in Port Melbourne, which now lies derelict, despite all the concessions. made by its workers to supposedly help keep it open.

The only solution to fighting this process is for workers to organise internationally. If we do so it removes the power of the transnational corporations to pit workers against each other and allows workers to truly exert their power to fight for their rights. Workers must join together in a joint struggle against the transnational corporations and against the capitalist system itself. This is the only way to advance our collective interests.

We cannot allow the ruling class to use nationalism to weaken and divide us and fool us that their agenda of trade war, protectionism and putting “our country first” offers anything but impoverishment and war.

Whilst we stand with workers who fight back in every country, the rise in militancy in the US workers class as demonstrated by the strike wave of teachers, autoworkers and others has special significance given the dominance of US imperialism over the capitalist economy. A fight back by the US working class has implications for all workers globally as a consequence.

Workers face the same issues all over the world

The GM workers are fighting against the fact their wages have been frozen now for almost a decade. They are fighting the fact that under the Obama administration, when the auto companies filed for bankruptcy after the Global Financial Crisis, the hated “two-tier” system was introduced where new workers were hired on much poorer wages and conditions.

These are the same conditions faced by millions of Australian workers. Wages in this country have also stagnated since 2007 and workers face ever more precarious casualised employment conditions.

What we demand!

That GM immediately accedes to the demands of its workforce for better pay and conditions and in particular the abolition of the two-tier system

That GM stop harassing and firing Mexican workers who are standing in solidarity with their US counterparts and refusing to accelerate production in Mexican GM factories.

Solidarity with the GM workers not the UAW corrupt bureaucracy

We stand in solidarity with the workers of GM not the corrupt union bureaucracy of the UAW. These bureaucrats have enriched themselves over decades by suppressing the struggles of workers. They have literally been caught taking bribes from the auto companies in the last round of negotiations. Workers cannot trust this union to fight to win this struggle. They were forced by their members to take this action but will sell it out at the first opportunity.

We endorse the creation of independent committees of workers in the GM factories to take the struggle into their own hands and out of the corrupt union leadership. We also endorse the efforts of workers within the UAW to expose efforts of the leadership to keep members in the dark and to shut down the strike.

We call on all workers and youth internationally to stand together, not just in this struggle but in a collective struggle against the profit system and for our rights.

[A solidarity protest](#) is also occurring in San Francisco on Sept 28th as part of efforts to develop an international solidarity campaign for the GM strikers.