

Week of
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THE SPARK



GM Strikers Will Make the Decision

The proposed GM contract does not contain everything GM workers deserve. The current in-progression (two-tier) workers don't catch up fast enough, and new workers will face the same 8-year progression. Not enough temps will become permanent. And new temps will come into the plants. The "furloughed" plants – Lordstown, Baltimore Transmission and Warren Transmission – are closing for good, and so is CCA Fontana. No one really knows how many jobs will exist at Detroit/Hamtramck.

But there is something else to say. Something important. Gains were made, and whatever they are, whatever money is in the contract is there because GM workers were determined to make a fight – and did fight.

They must be the ones to decide if it's enough. They are the only ones who can know right now what they think is possible.

The situation they face, the situation we all face is not easy. The problems go far beyond one company and one industry, and they won't be solved one company at a time.

In this decades-long economic crisis, every company tries to squeeze more work out of fewer workers in order to cut jobs. Every city, county and state government and every school system does the same. Every employer looks for tricks to drive down wages.

Companies one after the other close plants, close offices and warehouses. They pick up production and move it elsewhere, sometimes to another country, more often to another part of this country. Companies farm out work to "sub-contractors" – who pay lower wages.

Companies go bankrupt, close down, reopen under another name, merge with each other – and always see how many jobs they can get rid of and how much they can lower wages.

These problems won't be overcome if we go on fighting one plant at a time, one company at a time, or even one industry at a time. The problems run across the whole economy. The answers to

those problems will be found when workers across the whole economy begin to bring their fights together.

Does that mean the strike of GM workers was useless? NOT AT ALL.

First of all, their strike began to show the power that workers can have, simply because they do the work that is needed to make the economy, the whole society run. By the second week of the strike, the business press was filled with stories about how the strike was affecting the economy. If workers at just one company can do that, how much more power many of us together will have!

Other workers came out and stood on the picket lines with GM workers – Ford workers, FCA workers, parts plant workers, hospital workers, truckers, nurses, public sector workers, retirees, even students. Drivers refused to cross picket lines. Other workers brought carloads of canned goods, and gift cards and money to GM locals to sustain the strikers.

It's not enough, but all of that was important. Solidarity is not just the name of an online magazine. It's something that has been needed by the whole labor movement for a long time – the acknowledgment that when one of us is attacked, we are all under attack; the recognition that when one of us fights, it's everyone's fight.

What GM strikers did opens the door for other workers who are fed up with accepting a situation that is intolerable.

That's what pulled other workers out to GM lines. That's what can be the impetus for other workers to start their own fight.

For too long, too many of us have gone along with this nonsense that there is nothing you can do. That no one else wants to fight.

Well, there IS something that can be done. And GM workers did it. They decided themselves to fight. They started the ball rolling. Now the question is, what will other workers do? And what will the GM workers themselves decide? We certainly haven't heard the last from them!