

Auto strike spreads

'No deal, no wheels!'

By Martha Grevatt
Center Line, Michigan

Just seven and a half days into a historic strike against Ford, General Motors and Stellantis (formerly Chrysler), on Sept. 22 at noon the union expanded its targeted strike of three plants to include all 38 parts distribution centers (PDCs) of Stellantis and GM. These warehouses, located in 20 different states, house parts that get shipped to dealerships for repairs.

The expansion raises the total number of striking Big Three members of the United Auto Workers to 18,600, up from 13,000 at the three assembly plants that began the strike Sept. 15.

Spirits were high when this writer visited picket lines at PDCs in Streetsboro, Ohio, and Center Line, Michigan. Strikers in Center Line chanted, "What do you want? End tiers. When do you want it? Now!" and "No deal, no wheels!"

The union has made 10 core "Members Demands" on the companies, centered around wage increases, restoration of the cost-of-living allowance, ending unequal pay and benefit tiers, pensions,



WW PHOTO: MARTHA GREVATT

Center Line, Michigan, outside Stellantis parts distribution center, Sept. 24, 2023.

job security and a shorter work week. Feeling the impact of the strike, Ford has conceded to a number of these demands, thus the decision not to expand the strike at Ford for now.

Workers on the line expressed strong feelings against the tiered pay and benefit structure. Tiering allows the companies to give some workers lower pay and/or lesser benefits than others doing the same work based on their date of hire or if they are classified as "temporary part-time"

or "supplemental." For example, at the Big Three, production workers hired after October 2007 will not get a pension or health insurance when they retire. Temporary workers have lower pay, fewer benefits and far less protection from discipline and firings.

Labor and community support growing

Solidarity is building on many fronts. Big Three UAW members at plants not on strike are engaged in the contract struggle,

organizing support rallies, joining picket lines, holding "Red Shirt Wednesday" actions in the plants and refusing voluntary overtime. Strikers from two assembly plants an hour's drive apart, Ford's Michigan Assembly Plant and Stellantis' Toledo Jeep, have been supporting each other with car caravans from one plant to the other that then circle the plant of their UAW counterparts.

Beyond the UAW, many major unions have made statements backing the auto strike and have sent members to pickets and rallies. The Teamsters union has made it clear its member drivers will not cross the picket line.

Speaking about the importance of the auto strike, Association of Flight Attendants-CWA President Sara Nelson stated in a Sept. 23 interview on MSNBC, "Workers are making our demands up front, we're very clear about what our demands are. It has gone in the wrong direction for too long ... We're going to wreck their [the billionaires'] economy." Workers understand that, "This strike is about all of us."

Labor and community supporters stop

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Historic Palestine Writes Festival triumphs over opposition



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Palestine Writes Festival Executive Director Susan Abulhawa welcomes the participants at the opening plenary, Sept. 22, 2023. Behind her is a large puppet of Handala, a symbol of Palestinian resistance, provided by Spiral Q.

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

The resistance aroused by a Zionist assault on the Palestine Writes Festival this Sept. 22-24 weekend at the University of Pennsylvania turned the event from what would have already been a marked success into a defiant triumph over Zionism and repression.

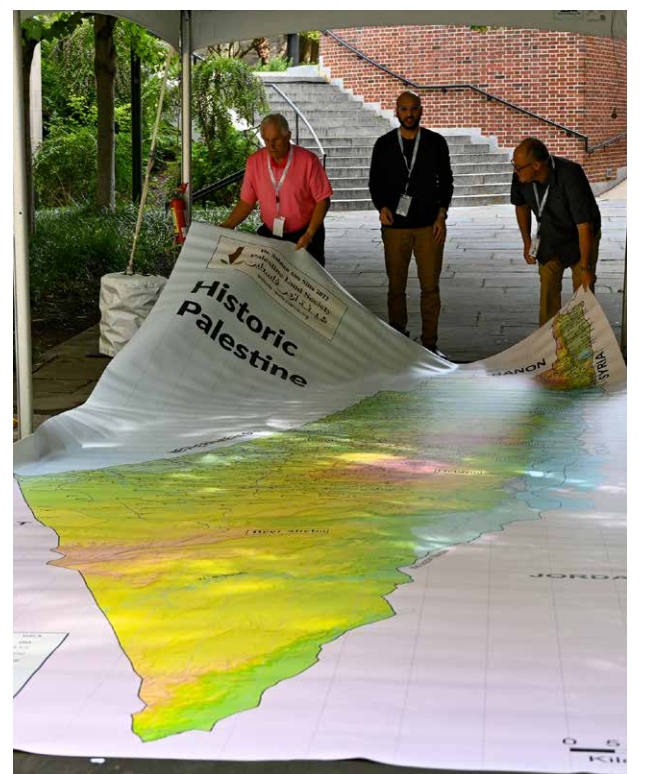
Had the Zionists and their allies among the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania stayed silent, had they allowed the first ever, in-person, U.S. Palestine Writes Festival to go ahead unchallenged, attendance would have still been significant. It would have been a success. Early registration was over 800 people.

But the Zionists carried out a vitriolic attack campaign over several days. They drove a mobile digital billboard truck around the UPenn campus. They made calls, threatening to stop the event. They contrived a libelous attempt to connect the festival to an alleged attack on the campus Hillel organization. And they finally demanded the festival drop some key speakers — including Roger Waters, former member of the rock band Pink Floyd.

Even before the doors opened on Friday afternoon, Sept. 22, registration had surpassed 1,400 people, and continued to grow over the weekend. In response to the attacks, many individuals and organizations stepped up to defend the event, including over 36 UPenn faculty, several UPenn student groups, Jewish Voice for Peace and others. Even reporters in corporate media, including The Philadelphia Inquirer, provided positive coverage of the event.

Inside the Irvine Auditorium, everything was transformed into a pro-Palestine environment. A huge 10-by-30-foot map of historic Palestine identifying towns and villages existing before the 1948 Nakba was displayed initially outside, but later moved indoors due to the weather. Posters and enlarged historic photos of Palestinian society and culture were prominently displayed on wall surfaces throughout the building.

All of this helped make this festival an earthshaking, emotional, unified, defiant



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

A 10-by-30-foot map of Palestine prior to the 1948 Nakba laid out at Palestine Writes Festival, Philadelphia, Sept. 22-24. Participants pointed out their ancestral home villages and towns.

victory of resistance to Zionism — much in line with the historic resistance of the people of Palestine against over 75 years of occupation.

More coverage of this event to follow on Workers.org.

'No deal, no wheels!'

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by regularly with coffee, water, firewood and snacks.

Worldwide, labor federations and metalworker unions are expressing solidarity, including in Mexico, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Brazil and Venezuela. Mexican autoworkers are prepared to refuse overtime if the companies try to shift work from struck plants to Mexico to break the strike.

The World Federation of Trade Unions issued a statement on the day the strike was expanded, saying, "The WFTU expresses its firm internationalist solidarity with workers in the USA and fully supports their just demands, especially at a time when the companies are gaining millions in profits and the workers are suffering the aftermath of the new capitalist crisis and inflation."

From India: "First of all, from the entire rank and file of [the All India Central Confederation of Trade Unions, affiliated with the WFTU], we extend our unwavering solidarity and support to the ongoing historic strike of United Auto Workers (UAW) against the 'Big Three.' We also congratulate the UAW and its leadership, who have successfully ushered a new era of radical working-class movement in the union." AICCTU, with about 2.5 million members, is one of 10 labor federations in India.

UAW President Shawn Fain stated that the UAW supports Italian autoworkers who have recently held intermittent strikes against Stellantis.

Biden says he will picket

Vying for labor support in the 2024 elections, a number of Democratic Party politicians have said they support the strike. Some have spoken at rallies or joined picket lines. President Joe Biden joined striking workers on Sept. 26, one day before

former President Donald Trump was to be in Detroit to try to woo autoworkers away from support for their union. This is all happening right as UAW President Fain, in office only six months, is taking on the corporations in a big way after decades of what Fain calls "company unionism."

While Biden said he would "stand in solidarity with the men and women of UAW," in the same tweet he called for "a win-win agreement." But in the struggle between labor and capital over the wealth created by labor, there is no "win-win." One side's gain is the other side's loss. The less the bosses pay the working class, the more they keep for themselves in the form of profits. Any gain for workers cuts into the bosses' profit-taking.

Neither Biden's appeal to the UAW nor Trump's demagoguery will help autoworkers win a decent contract. It's by weaponizing their power to withhold their labor that autoworkers can make good the slogan, "When we fight, we win."

Martha Grevatt is a retired UAW Stellantis worker who served on the executive board of UAW Local 869.



Activists from the Marxist Youth League and WWP-Buffalo show up in solidarity to a rally called by the United Auto Workers, Tonawanda, New York. WW PHOTO

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Workers World
121 W. 27th St., Suite 404
New York, NY 10001
Phone: 212.627.2994
E-mail: wwp@workers.org
Web: www.workers.org



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Editors: John Catalinotto, Martha Grevatt, Deirdre Griswold, Monica Moorehead, Betsey Piette

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Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multinational, multigenerational and multigendered organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it's the only way forward!

Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the neverending quest for ever-greater profits.

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on im/migrants, misogyny, LGBTQ2S+ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and impoverishment and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it. Wages are lower than ever, and youth are saddled with seemingly insurmountable student debt, if they even make it to college. Black, Brown and Indigenous youth and trans people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

The ruthless ruling class today seeks to wipe out decades of gains and benefits won by hard-fought struggles by people's movements. The super-rich and their political representatives have intensified their attacks on the multinational, multigender and multigenerational working class. It is time to point the blame at — and challenge — the capitalist system.

WWP fights for socialism because the working class produces all wealth in society, and this wealth should remain in their hands, not be stolen in the form of capitalist profits. The wealth workers create should be socially owned and its distribution planned to satisfy and guarantee basic human needs.

Since 1959, Workers World Party has been out in the streets defending the workers and oppressed here and

worldwide. If you're interested in Marxism, socialism and fighting for a socialist future, please contact a WWP branch near you. □

If you are interested in joining Workers World Party contact:

National Office
121 W. 27th St., Suite 404
New York, NY 10001
212.627.2994
wwp@workers.org

Atlanta
PO Box 18123
Atlanta, GA 30316
404.627.0185
atlanta@workers.org

Bay Area
P.O. Box 22947
Oakland, CA 94609
510.394.2207
bayarea@workers.org

Boston
284 Amory St.
Boston, MA 02130
boston@workers.org
instagram: @wwpboston

Buffalo, N.Y.
335 Richmond Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14222
716.883.2534
buffalo@workers.org

Central Gulf Coast
(Alabama, Florida, Mississippi)
centralgulfc coast@workers.org

Cleveland
cleveland@workers.org

Durham, N.C.
919.322.9970
durham@workers.org

Houston
P.O. Box 3454
Houston, TX 77253-3454
713.503.2633
houston@workers.org

Minnesota
minnesota@workers.org

Philadelphia
P.O. Box 34249
Philadelphia, PA 19101
610.931.2615
phila@workers.org

Portland, Ore.
portland@workers.org

Salt Lake City
801.750.0248
slc@workers.org

San Antonio
sanantonio@workers.org

Seattle
seattle@workers.org

West Virginia
WestVirginia@workers.org