

“We’re all in this together. That is how I see it.”

Detroit Fiat Chrysler autoworkers defend Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning

By a WSWs reporting team
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On Thursday a *World Socialist Web Site* *Autoworker Newsletter* campaign team spoke to workers at the Fiat Chrysler Warren Stamping plant, just outside of Detroit, about the arrest and imprisonment of Wikileaks journalist Julian Assange and whistleblower Chelsea Manning.

Assange and Manning have been persecuted by the US and other governments since they released evidence of US war crimes to a global audience in 2010. Last week, Assange was arrested and imprisoned in London, the latest maneuver in a plan to rendition him to the United States to face possible espionage charges carrying a potential death penalty.

WSWS campaign team members distributed copies of the *Autoworker Newsletter* containing a statement by the Steering Committee of the Coalition of Rank-and-File Committees calling on all workers to fight for the defense of Assange and Manning.

As workers came on and off their shifts many recognized Julian Assange’s face on the team’s signboard and shouted their support. Among those who knew of Assange, “hero” was the expression they used most often to describe him.

Hiram, a veteran worker, said, “They need to leave him alone. Let’s face the facts; these governments are doing dirt, and they need to be exposed. I saw the video [of Assange’s arrest]. Terrible! What they are doing to one, they will do to us all. Therefore, we’re all in this together. That is how I see it.”

A number of workers told the WSWs that they had not heard about the case. Dachanea, a young worker with five years at Chrysler, was shocked to learn about the imprisonment and abuse of Assange and Manning, both of whom have been held in solitary confinement

under conditions that the UN has called tantamount to torture. “I’m speechless about what they’re going through. I think it’s powerful that they are speaking out. But the world is going to help them, because the world is against the government as well.

“They don’t want us to know what they’re really doing. Everybody has the right to talk. To take it away shows that you’ve got something to hide.”

“We all need to speak up and do something. The more the better. They can’t stop us all.”

Workers saw the connection between the attack on democratic rights and the attempt to silence and intimidate them in the workplace. Many were eager to tell about the terrible conditions that they face. Under a series of sellout contracts forced through with the connivance of the United Auto Workers, young workers have been stripped of most rights. Hundreds of temporary part-time workers at the plant work for substandard pay, without regular shifts, benefits or contract rights, but still must pay dues to the UAW.

WSWS campaign team members reminded workers that in 2015 the UAW slandered the *Autoworker Newsletter* as “fake news” because it reported truthfully the details of the sellout agreement that the union was trying to force through.

One worker said, “They took away our pensions, so we don’t get to retire like people used to. We make half the wages that the older workers make. And the union doesn’t fight for us, either.”

“The more work we do, the more money they make, but they treat us like we don’t do anything for them.”

In the ongoing federal corruption investigation into UAW finances, union officials, including former vice president for Fiat Chrysler Norwood Jewell, have

pleaded guilty to taking millions of dollars in bribes from management to sign sweetheart contracts stripping workers of fundamental rights and benefits.

One veteran worker stopped to make a donation to the WSWS *Autoworker* Newsletter, expressing her solidarity with Assange and Manning. Expressing her utter disgust with the UAW she remarked, “I would rather work at Walmart than have to face the crap that I go through every day at this plant.”

Hiram said that he felt that the fight to defend Assange and Manning required a struggle against the entire political setup in the United States. “As far as Democrat and Republican, I believe they all sleep in the same bed together. And behind the scenes there are people with huge money, money we can’t even image, who are really calling the shots.”

“Working people need to support Assange. They’re aiming at us. And the goal is to keep us divided.”

Hiram said he would like to give the following message to Assange and Manning: “Don’t give up! Because we must—we MUST!—expose corruption, in the government, the corporations, and in the unions.”

Leonard, a veteran worker with over 20 years at the nearby Warren Truck, plant said that the defense of Assange was bound up with the defense of the basic democratic rights of working people. “The government wants to keep us in the dark. If we know the truth than we will ask questions and they don’t want that.

“Workers have to watch what we say on Facebook because we are told we can’t ‘defame’ the company, no matter how bad the conditions are. We have to defend freedom of speech; that’s why I’m against the jailing of Assange.”

Another worker at the Warren Stamping plant added, “Assange is a hero. It’s the government who are criminals. War makes money. The five-star generals got up in Congress and said that the government wasn’t spying on the American people. Why aren’t they being charged?”

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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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