

Faurecia workers in Spring Hill, Tennessee reject UAW

By Zac Thorton
13 March 2020

On March 6, workers at a Faurecia Interior Systems facility in Spring Hill, Tennessee voted 78?63 to reject joining the United Auto Workers (UAW). This is the latest in a string of defeats of UAW efforts to expand its dues base into the American south. It is also the third such rejection in the state of Tennessee, following the rejection by workers at Volkswagen’s assembly plant in Chattanooga in 2019 and at Nissan’s Smyrna facility in 2017.

Faurecia’s 145,000 square-foot facility, which first opened last August, is located near General Motors’ sprawling Spring Hill Assembly complex, and supplies door panels and plastic interior moldings for the Cadillac XT5 and XT6 and the GM Acadia SUVs. These components were originally produced at GM’s Vehicle Interior Systems Plant, adjacent to its manufacturing facility, but were outsourced to the Faurecia plant, in a move which was facilitated by the UAW.

The results of the vote were reported in a public Facebook post by Local 1853 GM Chair Mike Herron, who wrote:

“Faurecia won the business, built a plant and immediately began fighting the UAW which was attempting to gain union recognition just like many of the other Faurecia plants. Instead, Faurecia hired a union busting firm to come in and scare the living daylight out of these Faurecia workers. More than 20 of these would-be union workers were fired before the vote.”

The *World Socialist Web Site* opposes these retaliatory firings of workers who were exercising their democratic right to seek union representation. That being said, the UAW’s portrayal of the outcome as solely due to management intimidation is self-serving and dishonest. It is a matter of historical fact that the

UAW was built in the 1930s in the face of intense and even deadly opposition by General Motors and the other auto companies.

But the UAW of today is a very different organization, which has spent decades collaborating with auto companies to enforce layoffs and wage cuts. Faurecia workers evidently saw no need to risk their necks to bring in an organization whose entire top leadership, including former president Gary Jones and his predecessor Dennis Williams, has been implicated in a massive bribery and corruption scandal, and which was described in a recent lawsuit by General Motors as a “Fiat Chrysler controlled enterprise.”

The UAW is in the midst of an ongoing federal corruption investigation, which has led to the indictments of more than a dozen individuals, including most recently, former UAW President Gary Jones. Jones is being charged in relation to a scheme to illegally embezzle over \$1 million in union funds.

Elsewhere in Herron’s post, he writes contemptuously of Faurecia workers who voted against the UAW, declaring: “It always amazes me to no end that a worker would turn down opportunities to upgrade their families quality of life through higher pay, bonuses, job security, free or low cost health care, decent retirement plans, car purchase discounts, potential legal services, job transfer processes, safety and ergonomic programs to protect the workers, vacation program, regular wage increases, skilled trades apprenticeships, leave of absence provisions and limitations on the number of temporary workers. Having a voice in the workplace is also crucial which a union guarantees.”

Herron’s rosy depiction of the benefits flowing from the union is belied by the experience at the General Motors plant next door, one of many that took part in a

nationwide strike last year. During the 40-day walkout, which it only called in the face of overwhelming opposition and distrust among autoworkers, the UAW strung out workers on starvation strike pay and refused to call out workers at Ford and Fiat Chrysler. It eventually forced through a sellout containing almost all of GM's main demands, including a blank check on the use of temps.

During the voting for that contract, the president of Spring Hill Local 1853, Tim Stannard, called the police on union members who were exercising their democratic right to free speech by protesting the contract, literally depriving them of their "voice."

The dress rehearsal for the betrayal at GM was at another Faurecia facility in Saline, Michigan. The union shut down a walkout there by 1,900 workers, after just nine hours and rammed through a sellout deal that addressed none of the workers' demands.

In opposition to the bankrupt UAW, the *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Party fight for independent rank-and-file committees, which take as their starting point not what management demands but what workers require.

The need for such organizations is all the more urgent given the fact that the automakers, with the support of the UAW, are now forcing workers to stay on the job during the massive coronavirus pandemic, endangering hundreds of thousands to exposure. Such committees should demand the immediate closure of all non-essential factories and workplaces, with full compensation for lost hours.

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Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>