



A Real Solution Must Be Found!

Holden is a major icon of Elizabeth and South Australia. It is a much-loved local car that many Australians identify with.

However, no solution yet put forward in relation to GMH has really addressed the future for workers at the plant.

Both “voluntary separations” and the spectre of closure threaten to scatter a skilled workforce to the winds.

This must not happen.

But neither should an ailing industrial dinosaur ask its workforce to make huge sacrifices for “guarantees” that cannot be trusted.

We must seek a solution that goes beyond what the employer and politicians deem to be acceptable.

There is nothing wrong – in fact, there’s everything right – in workers advancing their own independent agenda with the support of the broader community.

Corporate Blackmail

GMH has blackmailed successive state and federal governments to get one financial rescue package after another, with the threat of closing its Australian operations – as other multinationals like Chrysler and Mitsubishi did before them. And finally, inevitably, Mitsubishi didn't get enough – and abandoned South Australia anyway. Who's betting GMH will do any different?

Meanwhile, after having been promised \$275 million dollars by the SA, Victorian and Federal governments, Holden has demanded a doubling of government investment in building its next generation **Holden Commodore** and **Holden Cruze** here, otherwise it will close its local manufacturing operations in 2016. That's another quarter of a billion dollars ransom. It has also attacked its workforce on previous occasions, cutting out shifts and reducing workers to a four day week. It has cut 400 job cuts at Elizabeth and 100 at its Port Melbourne engineering plant.

Recently it sought a direct wage cut of up to \$200 per week. Now it demands a three year wage freeze, cuts to shifts, overtime rates and leave provisions.

What that amounts to is, move your wages and conditions downwards towards those of the lower-wage countries, or we move there anyway. It is simply outrageous that one of the biggest corporations in the world can make demands of this nature. It is clearly past its use-by-date as a global entity as its US government rescue packages and its closure of plants such as the GM Opel plant in Bochum, Germany with 3000 job losses, announced in April, show.

This was followed, at the start of August by the closure of its Opel Australia distribution arm. Prior to that, South Korean brand Daewoo, also owned by General Motors, was killed off locally.

GMH is in crisis, a crisis of over-production and a crisis of capital investment and

production costs. It treats its workers as one more just-in-time production component, laying off and hiring workers according to the anarchic whims of the market.

The Alternative – Nationalise and Plan for Australia's Future Needs

The only answer to the problems besetting the manufacture of vehicles in Australia is to nationalise without compensation the entire industry and rationalise and plan its production to the needs of the market.

If General Motors pulls the pin, plant and equipment should stay here. Workers, who have more than paid for the cost to General Motors of plant and equipment through the millions of dollars profits from Australian workers shipped back to the USA since General Motors-Holden Ltd was formed in 1931, should also stay here!

Let the millions of tax-payer dollars earmarked to ensure the flow of profits to shareholders in Detroit be used to create a network of advanced manufacturing and research centres based around Elizabeth, Fishermans Bend and the Ford plant at Geelong. This can be done!

What do urban Australians need in the way of a small, green energy car?

Build it to meet that need.

What do Australian primary producers and urban tradespeople need in the way of a utility vehicle?

Build it to meet that need.

What vehicles are required for better public transport?

Design and build trains, trams and buses to meet that need.

What can be done with these big manufacturing facilities in the way of research and development for advanced manufacturing capacity?

Provide the funds and unleash the creativity of the workers both manual and intellectual.

What can be done for the workers?

Give them the responsibility to control the process and intensity of production, and to determine the social purposes to which their surplus value (profit) is put instead of seeing it disappear overseas.

Economic and political independence for Australia

Of course, to follow this alternative, Australian workers need to mount a decisive campaign through unions and community organisations for *their* own independent agenda.

The grand vision of a genuinely independent Australia based around the needs of its working people must be brought to realisation, and an advanced manufacturing base under government protection will be a central component of *our* Australia!

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