

# toyota attacks workers again!

On 16 April 2012 the Toyota plant in Altona Melbourne laid off 350 workers, the majority of whom were union activists. This mass redundancy comprised of over 10% of the workforce. The intention to lay off workers was first announced in January. The news at that time was that Toyota would call for voluntary redundancies.

However, on 16 April the 350 workers/activists were simply pulled off work without notice, frogmarched by security to a nearby convention centre to be told that they will no longer be employed.

Toyota claims that the lay offs were part of a restructuring process and that "performance" based selection criteria was used to decide who was to be made redundant. A large number of health and safety representatives and union delegates were made redundant. The union, AMWU Vehicle Division, is taking legal action against the company on the grounds that the redundancies are unlawful and discriminatory because they targeted workers for union involvement.

An example of the bogus nature of the selection criteria is the dismissal of Sam Taddesse, an elected OHS rep who was shortlisted for redundancy on the grounds that he had poor safety skills. "I'm a safety officer," he said. "I'm leading. I'm an example for others and I was selected by the group because I am strict with safety. I'm going to dispute it."

The discriminatory targeting of union representatives is union busting plain and simple. Toyota is using the global economic downturn to do what it has always wanted - to crush workers' organisation and intensify the rate of exploitation in order to remain profitable.

Although many articles have already been written on the lay offs at Toyota, what needs to be highlighted and brought to public attention is that this is not an isolated incident. This is part of a global drive by the entire capitalist class to push down our wages and conditions, outsource labour, dismiss us and force those of us who are "lucky" enough to still have a job, to work even harder.

To be understood properly, Toyota's union busting must be seen in its global context. The motor industry has seen some massive disputes in recent years. In 2009 workers in Ssangyong Motors in South Korea staged a 77 day factory occupation in a bitter struggle against redundancies. In 2010 a massive strike at Honda motors in China suspended production for



two weeks over a dispute over pay increases and the dismissal of union leader. In 2011 Maruti Suzuki workers in Delhi, India went on strikes for recognition of their unions.

Companies like Toyota are international in organisation and have operations across borders. In response workers need to understand the global nature of their struggles and if they are to take on a ruling class they must also organise internationally.

**support toyota workers  
stop the sackings !**

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