

Stellantis Kokomo Rank-and-File Committee founded in opposition to UAW betrayals and war

Stellantis Kokomo Rank-and-File Committee
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Over the weekend, autoworkers at Stellantis in the industrial city of Kokomo, Indiana met to ratify the founding statement of the Stellantis Kokomo Rank-and-File Committee.

Autoworkers in the city have been hard hit by nationwide layoffs under the new United Auto Workers (UAW) contract, falsely hailed as a “historic” victory by the union bureaucracy and the Biden White House. The decision to form the committee, to fight both management and the union apparatus, is all the more important because of the start of a strike by academic worker members of the UAW at the University of California.

It is a further sign of growing organized opposition among autoworkers, who have formed rank-and-file committees across the country since the start of the year. These committees must unite with the growing movement against war and attacks on the right to protest.

To join the Stellantis Kokomo Rank-and-File Committee, or for help starting a committee at your workplace, fill out the contact form at the bottom of this article.

We, the workers of Stellantis in Kokomo, Indiana, are forming the Stellantis Kokomo Rank-and-File Committee to unite workers across the city, the auto industry and workers internationally.

It's now been six months since the end of the auto strike and the ratification of the new contract. We have been forced to make sacrifices, while bureaucrats like UAW President Shawn Fain and UAW Vice President Rich Boyer have continued making six-figure salaries.

Like we have in other contract years, we all voted unanimously to strike. Instead, we got a “stand-up” strike which didn't put a dent in production. We never had oversight over our contract and negotiations that were behind closed doors!

Now our brothers and sisters in UAW Local 4811 in California have launched a strike in opposition to police attacks. We support this wholeheartedly, but the UAW isn't doing anything to even alert autoworkers to what is happening.

They are also limiting their strike to one campus, patterning it after the “stand-up” strike which was used to ram through the sellouts we're dealing with now.

Reality of the “historic” contract

Temporary part-time and supplemental employees were promised

top pay and pensions if they ratified the new contract last fall. But only two months later, our TPT and SE coworkers at Warren Truck, Rouge, Kokomo, Toledo, Lansing and Belvidere were fired. Just at Stellantis alone, we've had 2,400 people fired. At our plants, people found out they were fired when they came to the gates—Terminated without cause!

There are indefinite layoffs coming to Kokomo Engine Plant, Kokomo Transmission Plant and Kokomo Casting. The UAW has no strategy to fight them. The flipped TPTs and SEs, like in the last round, will not be told until it's too late. Instead, they keep us divided and isolated into different locals, tiers and pay scales.

For many of us that were fired, the UAW gives us excuses like “low performance” or “missed days.” Some of us that still have jobs and were flipped, our seniority dates don't match our hire dates, meaning we have to wait longer to move up in dates.

The UAW keeps using the phrase, “They [management] can do that;” or “You voted it [the contract] in.” But we only saw the highlights. Some of us that were temporary workers had high hopes, only to see during the “standup strike” which left most of the plants running that it was a sham. Now people that are flipped or have been here for over 10 years are on edge waiting for another mass layoff!

The union is nowhere to be found when we have grievances. Meanwhile, HR with the UAW and Stellantis are bringing back fired workers for summer help, only to be fired again.

Here are the abuses we face daily in the Kokomo plants:

- When there's a slowdown, managers blame TPTs and SEs for not being “trainable.” Then they complain that products are bad. They just want to push more parts out. Some of us don't get profit-sharing with these down weeks.

- We are not given breaks, as mandated in the contract.

- We have managers who have assaulted us and threatened our jobs.

- There's no communication between the union and the rank and file.

- We're overworked and mandated overtime. We've had full-timers who have lost time because of injuries. Our doctors ask us why our health is worsening. It is because our bodies are torn up. We're not supposed to continuously lift 30 pounds. We sometimes lift up to 50 pounds.

- There's maybe one safety person on the line, a situation that the union works with management to enforce. People pass out on the line, and it takes the union, security and management 45 minutes to drive over and get the nurse. Medical is not allowed on the floor without security. Like our brother at Ford's Rouge plant who died at work, if

someone had a heart attack here, medical would not be able to help in time.

The “hero” Shawn Fain

We know first-hand how all of the claims that UAW President Shawn Fain is a great “reformer” are a lie, because Kokomo used to be his base of power. When Chrysler was bailed out by the Obama/Biden White House in 2009, the UAW bureaucracy helped create bottom-tier TPTs and SEs in our plants. Those of us that were here back then saw how Fain told us that we had to take it. Now they’re doing the same thing today.

Since the layoffs, the UAW told some of us that there were grievances filed with the UAW International in Detroit. But nothing happened. They can’t even prove there were ever grievances filed.

Even if there were, it was only symbolic, like the recent petition which Unite All Workers for Democracy (UAWD) started here in Kokomo earlier this year. But UAWD is in power in the union with Fain. They’re the same organization that sold us this contract.

Our demands

In order to fight against job cuts and further attacks on the line, we have to take this out of the hands of the UAW bureaucracy. Every contract, we hear about “no more temps,” “no more concessions” or “no more corruption.” It is all smoke and mirrors. Fain is no better than his predecessor Ray Curry. We still don’t even have a local contract!

We have had enough. We are calling on our coworkers to organize with us to fight for our own demands. These include the following:

- **End mass firings and bring back fired workers. Abolish tiers and temporary positions!** Our coworkers in Kokomo, nationally and internationally are facing mass layoffs to boost the company’s bottom line and prepare for the shift to electric vehicles. If EVs require less labor to produce, then it should be used to make our lives better, not worse. We should have our hours reduced with no loss in take-home pay.

- **Workers’ control over production and safety.** With job cuts come speedups. We face this after every contract. With speedups come more accidents, or worse. The UAW bureaucracy gives its blessing to this. Instead, the rank and file should have control over working conditions, including the authority to shut down production whenever it is unsafe.

- **Support our UAW brothers and sisters at University of California and free Bogdan Syrotiuk!** We do not want war or genocide. Our UAW brothers and sisters are using their First Amendment right to protest. While Fain and Biden shake hands and hug, Biden sends the police after students, including UAW members. Like our brother Will Lehman said: “The campuses are not ivory towers, but centers of exploitation just like the auto factories. The graduate student workers voting to strike are treated as a bottom-tier workforce, just like the supplemental workers in the plants.” We also demand the immediate release of Bogdan Syrotiuk from the Ukrainian

prison. Bogdan is a socialist opponent of the fascist Ukrainian government and the US-NATO war against Russia. He was arrested for calling for the unity of Russian and Ukrainian workers against war. This is an attack on the rights of workers everywhere.

Why we need the Stellantis Kokomo Rank-and-File Committee

Our committee was formed against the contract betrayals by Fain and the bureaucracy, aided by their supporters in the Biden White House, the Unite All Workers for Democracy faction in the union and the Democratic Socialists of America.

From Clarios, to the Big Three, Allison Transmission, Lear, General Dynamics, Daimler and now the academic workers, the UAW bureaucracy is working with Biden to make sure a larger struggle does not happen!

With our brothers and sisters of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), we are for abolishing, not reforming, the UAW bureaucracy, to put power into the hands of the workers.

Our committee, like the sister committees of the IWA-RFC, is needed for the fight to defend our standard of living against corporate attacks, as well as our democratic rights.

Fain and the UAW work with Biden and the billionaires, offering us up as the new “Arsenal of Democracy.” This really means they want us to keep our heads down while they gear up for war.

This is why our UC brothers and sisters voted to strike after students were attacked by riot cops for peacefully expressing their First Amendment rights. It is also why the the bureaucracy has only called out one campus.

We create the billions for Stellantis and the Big Three. Like our brother in Italy told us, “Only through the unity of all workers’ forces can a real fighting movement be created capable of countering the methods that companies use to exploit the proletariat and the working masses.”

If you agree with this, join us. Fill out the form below to join the Committee and get started fighting for rank-and-file control.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact