

“We should unite around the world to fight these job cuts”

Toledo Stellantis workers denounce mass layoffs

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24 November 2024

With a January 5 date fast approaching for the layoff of 1,100 workers at the Stellantis Toledo Assembly Complex, demands are growing for a real fight to defend jobs. The layoffs are indefinite and will have a devastating impact with many younger workers who only recently obtained full-time positions being laid off.

The United Auto Workers supposed “historic” contract in 2023 opened the door to a jobs bloodbath starting with the firing of thousands of Temporary Part-Time workers (TPTs) also known as supplemental workers. UAW President Shawn Fain and other officials claimed they would be rolled over to full-time work if they voted to ratify the agreement.

The UAW bureaucracy has done nothing as layoffs mount at Stellantis plants across the US, already totaling some 4,000 just since September. Instead, Fain and his PR department have promoted their phony “Keep the Promise” campaign, which consists of filing impotent grievances against Stellantis and empty talk of strikes. The campaign served primarily as a platform for the UAW to promote the presidential campaign of Kamala Harris. Since the defeat of Harris, UAW officials have made it clear there will be no strikes for months, if at all.

With rank-and-file anger boiling, Fain recently visited locals at the Sterling Heights Assembly plant north of Detroit and in Toledo in an attempt at damage control. At these meetings Fain sought to pin responsibility for the 2023 sellout at UAW Vice President Rich Boyer, claiming he had allowed Stellantis to “run roughshod” over the collective bargaining agreement. In fact, both Fain and Boyer were well aware at the time they signed the 2023 contract that Stellantis planned thousands of layoffs.

Fain and other UAW officials have also sought to blame the Stellantis job cuts on “mismanagement” by Stellantis CEO Carlos Tavares, claiming the Portuguese-born executive is hostile to American workers. This ignores the fact that Stellantis is threatening to axe 2,500 jobs at its Ellesmere Port and Luton plants in the United Kingdom and

cut as many as 12,000 jobs in Italy. Earlier this year, Stellantis closed its giant engine plant in Bielsko-Biala, Poland after scrapping plans to build a second EV model in Poland.

More fundamentally, these cuts are part of a global assault on auto jobs by the transnational corporations, including last week’s announcement by Ford that it is eliminating 4,000 jobs in Europe, including 2,900 in Germany. This follows the threats by VW to close plants, lay off tens of thousands of workers and slash wages by 20 percent in Germany.

Rather than opposing the job cuts and seeking to mobilize workers, the UAW bureaucracy is collaborating with management to tamp down opposition. In response to the Stellantis layoffs, one UAW official posted on Facebook, “Why isn’t the union and Stellantis doing more to get the older employees to retire? Bigger bonus? Offering early retirement, etc...”

A *World Socialist Web Site* reporting team spoke to workers at the Toledo Assembly Complex who build the Jeep Wrangler and Jeep Gladiator, explaining that workers had to mobilize independently of the UAW to oppose the job cuts through the building of rank-and-file committees. In particular, WSWs supporters stressed the need for an international strategy based on uniting the struggle of US autoworkers with their brothers and sisters globally against the divide and conquer strategy of the corporations and the pro corporate union bureaucracies.

The team distributed hundreds of copies of the latest WSWs *Autoworker Newsletter* containing a statement in opposition to the Stellantis job cuts. Many workers, particularly younger workers, said they would be personally impacted by the layoffs.

Workers expressed deep anger at the refusal of UAW President Fain and local UAW leaders in Toledo to organize any serious resistance to the continuing wave of mass layoffs.

One worker told the WSWs, “People don’t agree with it.

They rolled over a bunch of people in March and they are about to be laid off. I didn't talk to anyone who went to the union meeting last Sunday, but people are upset that a lot of workers are about to lose their jobs. I definitely feel the UAW should be doing more."

The WSWs campaigners explained that the installation of the Trump administration signaled a further stepping up of the class war against workers by corporate America. While a number of workers said they had voted for Trump, out of disgust for the Biden administration, they had done so with little enthusiasm. One worker said, "either way we are in trouble the next four years."

Another worker said, "I want a third party. We can see what Trump has in mind because everywhere he goes he's with Musk, who said he would fire workers if they went on strike. He wants to cut trillions from the budget. We need money for Social Security and schools not for tanks in the Middle East."

A worker at the Toledo plant with more than a decade seniority told the WSWs, "A lot of workers are really depressed and the atmosphere at Jeep is somber." He added, "Workers are unsure about their futures and putting out resumes. They are thinking about second careers, or the older ones are retiring."

"It looks like we're allowing in an oligarchy. It's like they are using AI and robotics to make us expendable. At the same time, they're trying to burn us out; working us six days a week nine hours a day. Some departments are working Sundays for the first time in I don't know how long."

"Management is really uptight and really trying to push out the cars before the holidays. The rumor is they might lay us all off after Thanksgiving or Christmas, not just the 1,100 going on indefinite layoff on January 5."

"Fain was going around trying to unionize other companies like Mercedes in Alabama, where the UAW lost the vote, but they were seemingly oblivious to what was going on with all the jobs being lost at Stellantis and other Big Three companies. A lot of people wanted to challenge Fain at the union meeting about our jobs being taken away."

"I consider myself an independent. The Democratic Party has totally changed and it is totally out of touch with workers. All people want is peace and to support their families, and to have time with their families. They don't want war or being controlled."

Responding to the call by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees for a global campaign against the job cuts, he added, "This looks like a global restructuring of the auto industry. Stellantis is going ahead with the job cuts because their model of high profitability through overpricing vehicles is not working."

But Ford, GM and the other automakers are not far behind.

"I heard that VW is cutting jobs too. We should unite around the world to fight these job cuts. All over the world we are seeing microchip shortages, supply issues, companies trying to control the EV market, like Tesla, and the working class being dismantled. My friends are being laid off indefinitely on January 5 and we need to stop it."

Layoffs are continuing at Stellantis plants in Michigan and Indiana. Some 250 workers were just laid off at the Indiana Transmission Plant in Kokomo, Indiana. Another 500 workers at the Kokomo Casting Plant are currently laid off. Stellantis also recently cut 400 jobs at the Detroit Assembly Complex-Mack and is cutting another 400 at an adjacent logistics facility. In suburban Detroit, there have been a series of layoffs at Sterling Heights Assembly and at least 1,300 have been laid off at Warren Truck out of a planned 2,400 cuts.

A member of the Stellantis Kokomo Rank-and-File Committee reported, "Every TPT who was flipped to full time is now gone. They were let go about eight weeks ago. That's almost 2,000 in all the different plants. Per this contract, every single one is out of a job. Their seniority date was changed when they were flipped to full-time. So, for them, this is an indefinite layoff with no call back rights after four months."

She continued, "People are getting laid off who I thought would never get laid off. These are indefinite layoffs and it could be a year to 18 months before they are called back. They have gone back to July 2014 in hiring dates. They are doing away with all of the second shift."

"Everyone has one year of unemployment and SUB pay (supplemental unemployment benefits), but many have used part of that during voluntary layoffs earlier. Some are afraid they won't have anything left."

A real fight against layoffs can only be carried out through a rebellion by workers on the shop floor against the pro-company UAW apparatus. Worker interested in more information about building or joining a rank-and-file committee should send in the form below.



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