

“The corporations are our enemies, not immigrant workers”

General Motors announces 1,100 job cuts at Lansing, Michigan plant

Shannon Jones, Jerry White
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Just three days after phasing out the second shift at its Detroit assembly plant and eliminating 1,300 jobs, General Motors announced Monday it will lay off another 1,100 workers at its Lansing Delta Township plant when it ends third shift production on May 12.

The layoffs at the vast complex just outside of the Michigan state capital bring the total number of job cuts announced by GM since December to 4,600. On January 20, 850 workers lost their jobs at the neighboring Lansing Grand River plant, and another 1,100 were laid off at the Lordstown Assembly plant, near Youngstown, Ohio.

The ongoing job cuts expose the fraudulent character of President Donald Trump’s posturing about protecting American workers. Trump has said nothing about the GM job cuts while appointing GM’s CEO Mary Barra to his corporate advisory board.

Workers at the Delta Township plant, which employs 3,200 hourly and 250 salaried workers, were given a 60-day notice of the layoffs Monday morning. The plant produces the highly profitable Chevrolet Traverse, Buick Enclave and GMC Acadia sports utility vehicle models. The new generation Acadia, however, is being moved to GM’s Spring Hill Assembly Plant in Tennessee.

The plant will shut down from May to June to prepare for the launches of the new Traverse and Enclave. It will resume as a two-shift operation on June 12, according to the *Detroit News*.

“We have known this was coming for a while, so it is not a shock,” a worker at the Lansing Delta Township plant told the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter*. “We had three cars in the plant and now we are down to two. There is not enough demand for those

to run three shifts. We hope we will get another product, but it might not be this year but further down the road.”

He said that even if GM decided to move a new vehicle into the plant, it would take time to get the bugs out and ramp up production. “Most of the workers that are being affected are temporary workers. Some workers were given the opportunity to move to Tennessee,” where the production is being shifted. “However, those workers are already gone.” He noted that most of the workers facing layoffs were temporary workers, not eligible for transfer or for supplemental unemployment benefits (SUB).

GM is carrying out a global restructuring of its operations even as it is engaged in funneling approximately \$12 billion to its richest investors in the form of stock buybacks and dividend payouts. In a Monday morning meeting with investors Barra said GM’s sale of its European Opel-Vauxhall division to French automaker Peugeot-Citroen—which could lead to the shutdown of several plants and wiping out of at least 6,000 jobs—would free up \$2 billion to accelerate its stock repurchase plan to drive up the company’s share value.

The ending of GM’s 80-year presence in Europe is part of the automaker’s efforts to be a smaller, more profitable company with fewer employees, fewer pension and health care obligations. Barra told investors that GM continuously looks at every country and product line to ensure they provide a “great return.” Barra promised investors returns of 20 percent or more.

GM made a record \$12 billion in North American profits last year. Analysts have largely attributed the

profits to the concessions contained in the 2015 UAW-GM contract, which expanded the number of disposable temporary workers allowing the company to quickly cut back production and their workforce in response to slowing demand without having to pay early retirement or supplemental unemployment benefits. Known as “perma-temps,” these lower-paid workers are repeatedly hired and fired before they reach one year and qualify to become full-time employees.

A call from the *World Socialist Web Site* seeking a statement on the layoffs from UAW Local 602 was not returned. In comments to the *Lansing State Journal*, however, local president Bill Reed did not even pretend to oppose the layoffs, which will have a devastating effect on workers and their families. Instead, he repeated the company line, saying the layoffs were due to “a major vehicle change” and would probably be short-lived. “I know (GM) wants to utilize the plant at full capacity,” he said.

A worker who recently retired from the Delta Township plant told the WSWS, “They keep workers in the dark like mushrooms. What they are doing is laying off workers before they get a year in the plant so they don’t have to pay benefits. It is tragic, but that is how they repay people. Another thing I heard they are doing is laying off permanent people in violation of seniority because it is cheaper to work temps.”

“The union doesn’t represent the people,” he continued. “They are policemen for the companies. It is nothing but a pressure cooker in there. Management makes up new rules every day just so they can maximize profits. It is like a dictatorship now. You make a mistake and you get three days off without pay. I was not able to get a grievance written in the last 15 years. It is like an old boys’ network. If there are any rumors on the floor, they will haul you into labor relations.”

A worker at the GM Detroit-Hamtramck plant with five years said that he had just learned of the layoffs in Lansing today, which followed the layoff of 1,300 workers Friday at his plant. “We had heard that there were going to be layoffs, but there was nothing down on paper. From my understanding the temporary workers will be in a pool and may be called back in the future, but I don’t know how they decide who comes back, if it is random or not.”

He said there were still some temporary workers in

his plant who were being used to train permanent workers. However, the temporary workers would face layoff as soon as the training period was over.

As far as the future of his plant he said, “There is talk of more weeks of shutdown. You never know. There is no telling what is going to be happening.”

Margaret, a retired GM worker living in Ohio said she had been following the layoffs closely. “According to the UAW contract the temporary workers are supposed to be made full time after one year, so they are laying them off so they can’t get to full time.”

She said she had worked for seven years at the Lordstown Assembly Plant outside of Warren, Ohio. “At Lordstown they had temps working for years. They would lay them off after 90 days and then hire them back so they didn’t have to pay full wages. They are doing the same thing at Delta and Detroit-Hamtramck.”

Asked what she thought about the media blackout of the layoffs in Detroit she said, “I can tell you why there is no media coverage, GM wants to hide its dirty work.”

Margaret spoke about the collaboration of the UAW with management in the destruction of tens of thousands of auto jobs. “Since I started work GM has closed three-quarters of its plants and I have worked at seven different plants starting in Saginaw, Michigan. I finally took my pension and got out. The UAW doesn’t care about the workers.

“GM doesn’t want to give workers anything. They made billions of dollars in profits last year.”

She said she opposed the attempt by the Trump administration with the collaboration of the UAW to scapegoat immigrant workers for the destruction of jobs. “These workers come here to get a job and a better life for their families and now they are being punished. The corporations are our enemies, not immigrant workers. It doesn’t matter if a worker is immigrant or not, there is too much mistreatment of poor people. They are being tossed on the scrap heap. They value money more than humans.”



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