After mass layoffs at Ohio plant, UAW gives GM greenlight to hire lower-paid temps

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24 April 2018

Within days of announcing the elimination of an entire shift and 1,500 jobs at the giant Lordstown, Ohio assembly plant, General Motors announced that its subsidiary, known as the Lordstown GM Subsystems Manufacturing LLC, will be hiring low-paid temporary workers under an agreement the United Auto Workers signed behind the backs of rank-and-file workers.

"People out here are very angry," a GM Lordstown worker with 30 years seniority told the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter*. "I'm going to be out the door and laid off, and they are going to bring these people in with low pay and no rights." She went on to explain that her stepson who had been working at the plant as a Temporary Part-Time worker (TPT) had received an email from the dummy company offering him a job at vastly reduced pay.

"Our plant is known as a high seniority plant," she explained. "This is the second shift we have lost." Echoing the widespread contempt for the UAW among workers, she added that the union and the company "have been opening the contract and changing things to suit themselves for years. We don't have rights and conditions anymore."

The company and the union, she said, were seeking to drive out the older, high-paid workers and create a workforce largely made up of low-paid temps. "The union is just one false move after another. When we get a profit-sharing check, the union takes out a big portion for themselves."

A retired autoworker whose son was laid off from Lake Orion told the WSWS, "The union is just there to get a piece of the pie. Pensions are a thing of the past. Healthcare will soon be a thing of the past. They have been doing this for the last 20 years, bringing in workers with lower pay and no benefits."

In a failed effort to stem opposition from rank-and-file workers, UAW Vice President Cindy Estrada, who headed up the UAW 2015 contract talks, with GM issued a statement titled "Regarding Local 5960 Lake Orion and Local 1112 Lordstown." In it Estrada admits that the decision to outsource jobs was "agreed to by the involved local, regional, and national leadership. Everyone agrees that this situation sucks. But what would suck even more would be to have GM shut down any of our plants and devastate hundreds of our members' lives and the communities where those plants exist."

In an effort to blackmail workers into submission, Estrada then lists the recent wave of job cutting that GM has carried out with the full backing of the UAW. "In 2017, GM's car production was cut by over 20 percent, with the biggest impact to small cars. We saw the reduction of six shifts of assembly plant production and volume reductions at our Powertrain, Stamping and Components plants. There are currently nine open shifts of production in our assembly plants. GM is analyzing the future of many of their car products."

Estrada is only repeating the timeworn lies of the UAW that repeated concessions and handing over the gains won by autoworkers over generations of struggle will "save" jobs. Since the UAW first initiated its campaign of "job-saving" concessions at Chrysler in 1979-80 more than one million jobs have been wiped out in the auto industry, including 90 percent of the North American jobs at GM, Ford and Chrysler.

"For Lordstown, local leadership and management came to Detroit, and with the region and national parties, an agreement was negotiated to make changes that we believe will put the plant in a better position to stay open," Estrada declares. At GM in Lake Orion, Michigan, Estrada admits, "The national parties negotiated an Autonomous Vehicle Memorandum of

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Understanding (AV MOU) last summer to build developmental vehicles for testing," and then another AV MOU to build autonomous vehicles for sale at Lake Orion, which was also signed off by the UAW. "Yes, the MOUs make changes that impact some jobs that our traditional members perform…but we needed to get future technology into a UAW GM plant—and we did."

In Lordstown, UAW 1112 Shop Chairman Dan Morgan issued a flier attempting to stem the groundswell of opposition while admitting that a recently negotiated COA (Competitive Operating Agreement) cut legacy jobs at the plant. "The company gave us a commitment to an additional product or at least let us know that we would exist into the future." Such promises are worthless, as countless experiences have shown.

While workers will lose their homes, families will break up and workers will face enormous financial and psychological strain as a result of the layoffs, the job cutting does not "suck" for Estrada & Co. In exchange for countless concessions, the auto bosses have funneled billions of dollars into the joint job training centers, which have padded the high salaries of union executives like Estrada, who made $165,000 in 2017, not including expense accounts and whatever payments she gets for sitting on the UAW-GM Human Resource Center and as a trustee on the multibillion-dollar VEBA retiree health care fund.

Estrada is one of several UAW executives whose "foundations" have been investigated by the FBI. Several union officials at Fiat Chrysler have already been indicted for a corruption scheme involving the acceptance of company bribes funneled through the UAW-Chrysler National Training Center into phony charities controlled by union officials. The Cynthia Estrada Charity fund allowed its legal registration with the state to lapse in July 2017, and it is widely believed that she was passed up for the job of replacing current UAW president Dennis Williams because she is tainted by the corruption scandal.

The UAW has not lifted a finger to oppose the layoffs. On the contrary, the union has signed consecutive labor contracts that sharply increase the output of workers through 10-hour Alternative Work Schedules and which have vastly expanded the number of temporary part-time workers who are essentially a disposable workforce, hired and fired at will, whenever market conditions demand. While the Big Three have over the last few years slashed jobs at factories like Lordstown, Lake Orion and Detroit-Poletown, which make slower-selling passenger cars, rising gas and car loan costs could soon undermine sales of higher-costing SUVs and pickup trucks, leading to a new massacre of jobs.

This is part of an international job-cutting campaign by GM, which has shut plants in Europe and has halted production entirely in Russia, Australia and India. After announcing the destruction of 2,000 jobs in Gunsan, Korea, GM President Dan Ammann, who is in charge of global operations, said in an interview that the automaker could shut down production in South Korea if workers do not accept massive concessions. "We have made clear we need to have a business that's sustainably profitable in order for that business to attract further investment," Ammann stated.

The outsourcing of jobs at Lordstown and Lake Orion exposes once again that the UAW is not a workers' organization but a tool of corporate management and a cheap labor contractor. To defend the right to well-paying and secure jobs, to abolish the hated two-tier wage and benefit system, and win full-time positions for all TPTs, autoworkers must break with the UAW and elect rank-and-file committees in every factory. These committees must take up the functions long abandoned by the UAW—addressing workers grievances, opposing speedup, jobs cuts and the victimization of militant workers. The committees should declare that the 2015 contracts signed by corrupt UAW officials are null and void and fight to mobilize all auto and auto parts workers throughout the US and internationally in common struggle.

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