

# Anger grows as layoff approaches for 1,500 auto workers at Lordstown GM plant

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Lordstown GM workers are directing their anger against both the company and the United Auto Workers who have entered into a deal to layoff the second shift while hiring subcontractors into the massive assembly plant that builds the Chevy Cruze.

Some 1,500 workers are set to lose their jobs on June 22 when GM eliminates the second shift at the plant located on the outskirts of Warren and Youngstown Ohio. At the same time the UAW has struck a deal with the company to bring in lower paid workers from its subsidiary Lordstown GM Subsystems LLC to do many of the jobs.

Workers contacted by the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* pointed to the conflict of interest as the UAW collects dues from both the Lordstown workers and those at GM Subsystems, who are paid a fraction of what a traditional autoworker makes.

“They are trying to force out the older workers and replace them with temporary workers,” said Tammy, a Lordstown worker, with 23-year service who is set to lose her job on June 22. “I have 23 years and I am out the door. I know a worker with 50 years service who is being forced to retire. It is company greed, they will replace him with someone making just \$15 an hour.”

Tammy noted that she knows of another worker with 47 years and one with 35 years both who are being forced to retire.

“This is a way to force senior workers to retire. In order to keep your job you have to go on the line. GM doesn’t want any senior workers, they are forcing them either to work the line or take their pension.

“They don’t want someone making \$30 an hour driving a forklift when they can replace them with someone making just \$15 an hour, and the union is working with GM to do this.”

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autoworkers to stand behind their brothers and sisters in Lordstown to oppose the layoffs and the UAW’s blatant collaboration with management. A serious fight to defend jobs requires a break with the pro-company UAW and the formation of rank-and-file committees democratically elected and controlled by autoworkers.

Anger exploded at the Lordstown plant when it became known that UAW officials, including UAW Vice President for GM Cynthia Estrada, had signed a backroom deal with management sanctioning the hiring of lower paid subcontractors. In an effort to blackmail workers Estrada claimed the subcontracting was the only alternative to the possible closure of the plant. They should likewise reject the stock in trade lie of the UAW that concessions will save jobs.

Many workers with higher seniority are able to bid for jobs that are not on the line, such as forklift driver and keeping the line stocked with parts and supplies.

Under the deal agreed to by the United Auto Workers, GM can fill all non-assembly positions using its contracting firm GM Subsystems with workers who get paid just \$15 and less an hour. In turn, GM agreed that those workers will be members of the UAW and pay dues to the union.

Now the senior workers from the second shift will be forced to either bump someone off the line or be laid off.

In addition it has been revealed that the UAW signed a Memorandum of Understanding as part of a backroom maneuver with GM to bring in subcontract workers at its Lake Orion Assembly plant north of Detroit for the express purpose of replacing high seniority workers.

A Lordstown worker said, “Many people aren’t ready to retire, but they can’t work the line anymore.”

The heavy lifting and the repetitive motion destroys your body. “I lift 30 to 40 pounds when each car comes down the line and we do at least 400 cars each night. I’ve had rotator cuff surgery and there are times when I’ve lost all my feeling in my hands and arms. My body is beaten to death.”

“I’ve lived in this area all my life. I’ve raised my children and now I’m raising my grandchildren. I can’t move.

“The union is not protecting us. They are working with the company. The company is greedy, the International is greedy, the union is greedy. It’s not the temporary workers fault, they make at top \$15 an hour and they are just trying to feed their families.

“Instead of fighting for all the workers, the union is a part of the company working against us.”

Many workers that are being laid off from Lordstown had previously worked at Packard Electric making parts for GM cars. That company was bought by GM and then spun off and went into bankruptcy. Workers lost their health care and much of their pension through the bankruptcy court.

When they were hired into the Lordstown plant, they maintained their corporate wide seniority, but lost their seniority at the plant. The *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* spoke to another Lordstown worker with over 20 years service who is getting laid off.

“They don’t count the time I worked at Packard. All the time I’ve given to GM, all the dues I paid to the UAW and I will be out on the street. I hope this isn’t that long, I hope they bring back the second shift, I hope they bring back the third shift, but I don’t think they will.

“How can they say the union represents us, but all they care about is getting their dues money? It’s all about the company profits and not about the workers. Workers are going to have to unite and build an organization that fights for us.”

“They don’t even pretend to represent us,” said a second tier worker who is set to lose his job. “What ever happened to equal pay for equal work? Now the company is bringing in a third tier while older, senior workers are getting laid off. All they want is cheap labor.

“The union tries to blame work going to Mexico, but those workers just want to live too. Everyone should unite together and demand a decent living, not tell GM

we will just keep working for less.”

The attack on Lordstown workers is part of a global assault on jobs being carried out by GM, which has halted all car production in Russia, Australia and India and is threatening auto production in South Korea if workers do not accept concessions. The fight to defend jobs requires a united fight by autoworkers across national boundaries, challenging the “right” of the auto transnationals to chop jobs in their insatiable drive for profit.

A break with the UAW and the election of rank-and-file committees is the first step in this struggle. We urge Lordstown workers to contact the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* to begin this fight.



To contact the *WSWS* and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**