

The UAW is “letting the company get away with anything”

Growing opposition among autoworkers to brutal treatment of temporary workers

Our reporter
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The WSWS urges workers with information on conditions in the plants to contact us.

The recent interview by the WSWS with a veteran Ford Woodhaven Stamping worker about the still unexplained death of young temporary part-time (TPT) worker Jacoby Hennings on October 20, 2017 has gained a wide readership. The article detailing the role of the United Auto Workers (UAW), the police and the corporate media in covering up the circumstances surrounding Hennings’ death one year ago is being widely shared on Facebook and has provoked much discussion.

To this day there has been no serious investigation of this tragedy. Following brief sensationalized coverage, there has been no further reporting by the media. While police said that an unexplained grievance brought Jacoby that fateful morning to the UAW office in the plant, there has been no explanation from UAW officials present as to what took place in the hour before Jacoby’s death.

This case has highlighted the brutal treatment of TPT workers. The 2015 national UAW contract agreement allowed the virtually unlimited expansion of the use of TPT workers, who have few benefits and no contract protections, yet must still pay dues to the UAW. These workers are being used to replace older, higher-paid “legacy” workers, who management is attempting to drive out of the plants.

The sentiments expressed by the senior Woodhaven worker, who declared his solidarity with TPT workers, reflects a widespread feeling by older workers that the interests of younger and veteran workers are the same. The *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* encourages autoworkers to come forward and share

their stories relating to the treatment of TPT workers, both at Woodhaven Stamping and other factories.

A worker at Ford Dearborn Truck told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*, “Myself and all my friends voted against the 2015 contract. We said, why are all these young brothers coming in and not making the same as we are; all these two tiers and three tiers?”

“The UAW wants their union dues, but doesn’t want to represent them [TPTs]. They are letting the company get away with anything. It is really corrupt. They will sell their souls for anything.”

An “in progression” (second-tier) worker at Ford in Ohio said, “I have seen a lot of what was reported [in the interview] here. Almost everything he described has happened at my plant too.

“I have seen a lot of dirty dealings. They hire a lot of family and friends. Currently I know TPT workers who haven’t been hired as full time after two years.”

Remarking on the conditions in the plant, he noted that there was a serious opioid crisis in the area and that a TPT worker had recently died of an overdose.

A worker writing in anonymously to the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* made the following comments relating to the treatment of TPT workers:

“I am also a TPT for Ford and have been employed 2 years this month. Everything that is being said is correct about the abuse to TPT workers and the huge difference in job requirements for us compared to full-time workers. The full-time workers usually side with the TPTs just as ‘Mike’ did in the newsletter that I received. The problem is these workers have the right to speak up without losing their jobs but they don’t. They will pull us aside and agree with us about the unfair differences in our employment, but never speak

up.

“[The UAW] just takes our money and offers no help. I feel as though I am talking to management when I try to discuss anything with the Union and then I fear retaliation if I do say anything.”

Many autoworkers wrote comments on Facebook in response to the posting of the interview with the Woodhaven Stamping worker on autoworker discussion sites. Many workers drew a connection between the indictment of top UAW officials relating to the federal corruption investigation of payments by Fiat Chrysler to top union officials, the mistreatment of TPT workers and the abandonment by the UAW of any defense of workers.

James wrote, “NO ONE should be doing the same job for less pay and benefits period. I’m disgusted people still call the UAW a union. If the Feds haven’t showed you yet I hope you figure out the real monsters are our sellout UAW leadership. The company will always push the envelope as expected however it’s our union’s job to be our collective voice and they clearly are only out for themselves. I hope they all go to prison for what they did!”

Gus wrote, “They are getting a slap on the hand. The indicted probably still have their positions and probably had Union lawyers defending them. The UAW leadership is a bunch of family and friends that go down the line to the shop floor. The UAW leadership has sold UAW for \$9,000,000. When you consider years and years of fraudulent contract negotiation, I figure the UAW membership got shafted to the tune of \$2,000,000,000 (2 billion). Add, all the members grievances that were ignored and not gone to Arbitration, we a talking another Billion dollars.”

A worker at the General Motors Lake Orion Assembly Plant outside Detroit shared her experiences with the UAW. The Lake Orion facility is one of the passenger car assembly plants that GM has targeted for possible closure. All the major car companies are moving away from passenger car production to focus on more profitable trucks and SUVs.

A secret memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed by then UAW Vice President for GM Cindy Estrada and local UAW officials earlier this year allowed management to hire lower paid contract workers for materials jobs instead of regular GM employees at a considerable cost savings to the

company.

Gina, a Lake Orion worker, wrote, “It’s messed up, but since the IUAW forced this shit MOU on us at Orion Assembly, this is how the local management is treating all employees here!!

“Legacy employees! They are putting us all against here, so the worse it gets, the more will leave through an Appendix A transfer when Flint Assembly takes all the people they are planning on moving there. I think it’s a way to get legacy people out to be replaced by 3rd party or temp employees. And the IUAW is allowing it!!!

“I’m in paint, but in GA, people are getting thrown out left and right for not learning their jobs ‘fast enough’ or missing one or 2 things..stupid sh--t! Then, not only getting kicked out, being taken off your job, regardless of seniority.”

The *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* welcomes feedback from readers on our postings, and in particular on the conditions facing younger workers. Please share our articles widely with friends and co-workers. Those interested in learning more about the fight of the Socialist Equality Party and the World Socialist Web Site to build rank-and-file committees in the factories, independent of the pro-company UAW, should write in.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact