

Stop Stellantis and UAW's conspiracy to abolish the 8-hour day!

The Sterling Heights Assembly Plant Rank-and-File Safety Committee
16 March 2021

The Sterling Heights Assembly Rank-and-File Safety Committee calls on autoworkers to oppose the impending imposition of a 12-hour 7-day (12/7) work rotation at the plant.

We call for the rescinding of the 12/7 schedule and the reinstatement of the principle of the eight-hour day for all workers, the payment of time and one-half after eight hours and for Saturday work.

Management must immediately fill all vacancies in skilled trades to end their overwork. The new hires should come, in the first place, from among qualified production workers.

The four-shift rotation is scheduled to start April 5, with workers required to work seven straight shifts of 12 hours, with no overtime pay after 8 hours and no time and one-half on Saturdays. This grueling, health and family destroying schedule is mandatory and is being implemented without a membership vote.

The imposition of the 12/7 schedule is aimed at ramping up production even as the pandemic continues. Production workers are currently being forced to work mandatory 52-hour weeks with forced 10-hour schedules on Fridays and Saturdays. Such work hours make it impossible for bodies to rest and recuperate and destroy time for recreation and family life.

The UAW and management treat us as mere vessels for the production of profit, not as human beings with the fundamental right to a healthy and safe work regime and conditions.

We're in the middle of a pandemic. Longer workdays when people are experiencing physical pain or sickness can be a real problem; our bodies' immune systems would be weakened by such long working hours. Such long shifts and workweeks would be physically draining and potentially dangerous. It would take days to recover after each workweek.

If eight hours is painful, then 12 hours is going to be excruciatingly painful. No consideration is being taken for older workers and pregnant women or people with physical limitations.

The "team concept" being promoted by the UAW in skilled trades is not really a "team concept" at all, but way to combines as many as eight jobs with two or three tradesmen.

The 12-hour day for skilled trades is being imposed under terms of the 2019 contract that were never discussed or explained to members. The clear aim is to force out older workers while forcing the remaining workforce to fill in the gaps or face being replaced by lower-paid temporary or contract workers.

The very concept of such a long day represents a major step backwards. For more than 150 years, the eight-hour day has been a central demand of the organized workers movement, needed to limit the stress and strain on the body and permit time for recreation, family life and mental development.

By imposing this schedule, the UAW is violating even the language of its own constitution which states that its purpose is "To improve working conditions, create a uniform system of shorter hours, higher wages, health care and pensions; to maintain and protect the interests of workers..." Of course, these words were long ago abandoned by the UAW in favor of incestuous ties with management.

The 12/7 schedule also contains multiple violations of our Local 1700 contract which states that with regard to daily overtime, employees will not be required to work more than 10 hours per day and that overtime work on Sunday shall be voluntary. We voted for one forced Sunday per month, no more.

The 12/7 also violates current language on break times and lunch periods which states 'employees are

assigned regular lunch and break periods at specific times during the shift.' The new language gives management the 'discretion' to move your lunch daily and to reschedule it as late as 10 hours into the shift. It also contains multiple violations of rules regarding training.

Since Stellantis announced the new schedule, the UAW has been invisible. Their only response to the 12/7 schedule, as of every other abuse of workers by management, is "oh yeah, they can do that." They are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to defend corrupt union officers, but haven't even printed out and distributed copies of the current contract to workers in the plant, one and a half years after the union rammed it through.

In a recent legal settlement, Stellantis/Fiat Chrysler admitted to paying millions of dollars in bribes to corrupt UAW officials to obtain cost-cutting sellout contract agreements detrimental to the workers. However, these corrupt contracts remain in force with the full agreement of the UAW, the government and management. All these contracts are illegitimate.

We call for the widest discussion among autoworkers of a campaign to rescind the 12/7 schedule and the expansion of rank-and-file safety committees to all the auto factories in the Detroit area and beyond.

The defeat of the 12/7 schedule will not come through appeals to management, the establishment news media or the corrupt UAW, which has demonstrated it does not stand for us. We as workers must stand together, skilled trades and production, tier one and tier two, full time and temporary to demand with one voice the halt to this violation of our rights.

The fight must not end here. We must oppose all unsafe conditions in the plant. In the first place, workers must have full and accurate real-time information about COVID-19 and have regular testing. We must not be targeted, written up, terminated or harassed in any way for taking time off to get tested and get results, or for raising concerns about safety. Whenever conditions are not safe, we have the right to collectively refuse to work without any threat of retaliation by management or the union.

We showed the power we have by shutting down production one year ago this March as the COVID-19 pandemic spread. We must organize and unite that power by expanding the network of rank-and-file safety

committees at auto plants, schools, logistics and transport centers and other workplaces. These committees are independent of the corrupt unions like the UAW and stand for the interests of workers based on the principle the lives and livelihoods of workers before corporate profits!

If you agree with these demands, join us. Contact us by writing to autoworkers@wsws.org.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact