

Faurecia Gladstone Rank-and-File Safety Committee calls for fight against mass layoffs

Tim Rivers

17 August 2021

The Gladstone Rank-and-File Safety Committee, which workers formed at auto parts maker Faurecia in Columbus, Indiana a year ago to fight the spread of COVID-19, has issued a statement denouncing company threats to fire an entire shift and impose 12-hour workdays as the global conglomerate drives to boost profits while securing its recent \$8 billion purchase of a controlling share of the Hella corporation.

When the pandemic first broke out, the company exploited the crisis with the full collusion of its union to slash more than 250 jobs and impose 7—12 hour days on the skeleton crew that worked through the shutdown.

The brutal methods bound up with such acquisitions are all too familiar at the company. When it acquired operations at the former Ford plant in Saline, Michigan, to become the largest parts maker in North America, the company imposed across-the-board pay cuts and massive job destruction. Then followed a shop floor dictatorship of ruthless speed-ups and unsafe conditions with the full collusion of the UAW.

A sister rank-and-file committee was formed at the Michigan plant to expose the collusion of the UAW with company efforts to suppress information about the spread of infections and deaths among workers at the plant.

The company recently reimposed mask mandates throughout North America in an effort to head off a renewal of rank-and-file industrial action to stop the spike of the virulent Delta variant.

The Faurecia Gladstone Rank-and-File Safety Committee sent the following statement for publication to the *World Socialist Web Site*:

Faurecia Gladstone Brothers and Sisters!

Mask mandates were reimposed recently without any explanation as to why they were dropped in the

first place, or what dangers the spike in the spread of the Delta variant actually pose.

The truth is that a sharp spike of infections throughout the country shows that the company and the Biden administration, like Trump before him, have been misleading us. Reopening plants and schools is creating a catastrophe.

Reopening of schools is a criminal policy. Young children are not vaccinated. Epidemiologist Dr. Eric Feigl-Ding reported last week that children who carry 1,000 times the viral load of an adult represent a major vector of the spread. Moreover, authoritative studies prove that the virus can cause permanent brain damage more severe than lead poisoning.

We still do not have reports on the spread of the pandemic in the plant. How many have been infected and what have been the results? The corporation is continuing the policy of keeping us in the dark about the spread of the highly contagious Delta variant and the threat to ourselves and our families.

The threat to lay off C shift and impose 7 - 12 hour days on A and B shifts

We are scheduled for 11.5 hours every day. But we do not know from one day to the next whether we will have a full day of work or not or whether we will be compelled to report for work through the weekend.

The company claims it is for families, but we have no family life. How many families have ended in divorce because of our work schedule? Working on weekends, we are not making money because of the taxes. They have no concern for us.

What happened to the eight-hour workday and 40-hour week at decent pay that will support a family on a 40-hour paycheck?

We are subject to being moved between lines as many as half a dozen times in a single day. This is disconcerting, stressful and dangerous. But if we speak to the union, they say, “Oh, they can do that.” The corporation is touting its “high standards,” but their speed-up is eating at our health.

Abusing the point system

This is a company technique, again with the collusion of the union, of imposing a shop floor dictatorship with the constant threat of being fired. A supporter of this committee who has never been late or missed work was told that he has 5 points. Only 8 and we can be fired.

Something is wrong in Denmark. We reject these threats. We have the right to a quality of life that is better than this.

The pathetic union IBEW 1424 and its worthless business manager Frankie Ledbetter

The union allows management to exercise a free hand to impose 12-hour days, 7-day schedules, and dangerous job assignments with no consideration of our medical restrictions or physical limitations. The union has done nothing to protect us for years. On the contrary, they imposed language in our last contract that allows Faurecia to “manage as they see fit”!

Both of our last 2 contracts Gladstone had were voted down. A member of the committee talked to over 75 people that voted that said they voted no and the union said that only 26 people had voted no. Obviously somebody is lying.

The union has become part of company management. A press report when the South Plant opened in 2016 quoted Ledbetter stating, “It feels great to be working together with management.”

Since the union works “together with management,”

the rank and file needs our own independent committees of our most trusted co-workers.

Our demands

- Mobilize the working class—the only force that can stop the virus. Join and build rank-and-file committees!
- Shut down Faurecia along with all other non-essential production as well as face-to-face learning in schools until the pandemic is under control! Recoup the \$4 trillion given to the corporations through the CARES Act to provide full wages for all workers and teachers impacted by the shutdown.
- Full and up-to-date reporting on all COVID infections among workers and children. This is life and death information and we have the right to know. Full quarantine and compensation at full wages for any worker infected or exposed to coronavirus!
- No layoffs! No 12-hour days! No company secrets. We have the right to a secure job.
- Restore the 8-hour workday and 40-hour week with decent pay and benefits so that every worker can support his/her family!
- End the point system. Restore employee controlled personal days and holiday time off. Take the whip away from the bosses. End union collusion and the shop floor corporate dictatorship. Build rank-and-file committees to control safety and work rules.
- Restore decent pay with an across the board pay raise of 25 percent backed by a full cost-of-living allowance to protect wages from the impact of inflation.
- Restore fully paid, top quality medical insurance!

If you agree with these demands, join the Gladstone Rank-and-File Safety Committee. If you work at South Plant or Fort Wayne, contact us here: autoworkers@wsws.org and start your own Rank and File Committee.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact