

After executive threatens to close the plant, Warren Truck workers speak with supporters of UAW presidential candidate Will Lehman

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Supporters of United Auto Workers presidential candidate and Mack Trucks worker Will Lehman visited the Stellantis Warren Truck plant outside Detroit Thursday afternoon, following the issuing of threats by the company's Chief Manufacturing Officer Arnaud Deboeuf to shift production away from the facility.

Deboeuf, who visited the plant Tuesday, said that if quality issues and absenteeism did not improve management would remove any future products from the plant, which employs more than 5,000 workers.

At the same time Deboeuf is said to be deciding the fate of the third shift at the facility. He is scheduled to speak with UAW officials Friday.

Rather than oppose these threats, the United Auto Workers is acting as a mouthpiece for management, blaming workers for ongoing production problems. At the same time UAW has not opposed the threatened layoff of the third shift at the facility, which builds the Jeep Wagoneer.

In a statement that read like a management ultimatum to workers, UAW Local 140 wrote, "The defects in the trucks is above unacceptable and absenteeism is at 15%. They are giving us until March to decrease absenteeism and increase quality. If this is not improved significantly, the company is not willing to allocate any future products to Warren Truck."

A large proportion of workers at Warren Truck and other Detroit area Stellantis plants are temporary and supplemental workers, who pay dues to the UAW but have few benefits and no job protections. These workers start at the poverty wage of \$15.81 an hour, lower than the pay at many fast food restaurants in the area.

A temp worker who had worked at Warren Truck for a year said that the attendance issues and high turnover at the plant were due to the miserable way workers are treated.

"I have been here a little over one year and I am sick of being moved around in the plant. I am a good worker, I should have been rolled over to full time by now.

"Now I am getting laid off. I can't afford to wait a week before I start getting unemployment benefits. I need more money. No one has time for layoffs with inflation the way it is. I am lucky I don't have kids or a car note. People are looking for other jobs where they can get more money. They can't afford to be laid off all the time.

She said that she had spoken to Will Lehman when he visited the plant in August. "I met Will. He seemed like a nice guy. I liked what he was saying."

Supporters of Will Lehman distributed a statement by his campaign opposing the threats against jobs at Warren Truck. In it Lehman declared, "I call on all workers to oppose this attack on the workers at Warren Truck and mobilize in defense of their jobs. I met with workers at the plant in August and I know that a plant closure or any job cuts will rip away their livelihoods, devastate their families and destroy their neighborhoods. Workers cannot allow this to happen."

Lehman pointed out that Stellantis CEO Carlos Tavares made \$20.5 million last year, 300 times the pay of a regular worker, and in addition received stock and long term compensation amounting to tens of millions more. "It was the workers, including the workers at Warren Truck, who produced the wealth, not Tavares, Deboeuf and the other corporate executives," he said.

He called for the international unity of auto workers against attempts to pit them against each other in a struggle for jobs, warning that the auto companies “want to reduce all workers to nothing but low-paid temps.”

Many workers said they planned to vote for Will. Others were surprised to learn there was an election and that they could vote for union officers. The UAW apparatus is deliberately trying to limit workers’ knowledge about the election in order to deflate turnout in order to ease the election of incumbent President Ray Curry, who is widely despised by workers.

Many workers responded enthusiastically to the call advanced by Will Lehman to abolish the UAW bureaucracy and restore power to the rank-and-file. “We need to clear out everyone downtown,” one worker said.

Asked why he thought the UAW wasn’t informing workers about the election, another worker replied, “it’s by design.”

A more senior worker who said he was 1st tier said that he had been transferred to the plant from Sterling Heights Assembly (SHAP) several years ago. “At SHAP, I was working with about 10 vets next to me. That’s not the case any more. They beat us up a little bit more over here. I mean management tries to make us feel like we’re always in trouble, and these new guys will really let it affect them because they feel like everything must’ve been better with the quality before, when a bunch of vets were in the plant.

“And they don’t know that we’ve been having problems before. But these new guys are making less money than us vets. So the company is getting upset because they want the same quality of work for a bargain price.”

Another worker said that management has been constantly harassing workers. “The supervisors are on us. They are trying to find little things. I got taken off my job yesterday. I don’t get it. They are constantly shifting workers around. It is ridiculous.”

Yet another pointed to problems with “systems, software and issues with the machines in the paint shop especially.”

Supporters of Will Lehman also spoke to workers at the nearby Warren Stamping Plant. Workers reported that the company continues to hire temp workers while some full-time workers are still on indefinite layoff.

A Warren Stamping worker told Will Lehman’s supporters, “they were supposed to return October 10, but they have extended the layoff again.

“They move me off second shift, but didn’t give me time to rearrange my kids’ schedule. Morale is terrible. They are moving people from one shift to another.”

Commenting on the threats against Warren Truck workers, a worker at the Stellantis Mack plant in Detroit said, “My nephew got a job at Del Taco making \$18 an hour and temps start at \$15.81. Why are UAW members making less money than fast food workers? No one is going to work if they are underpaid.

“TPTs work three to five years without being made full time. So it looks to them like there is no future. TPTs have no pension, they have nothing to lose. Stellantis is doing everything to kill morale.”



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