

“This is an act of corporate terrorism which every worker must oppose”

Will Lehman calls on workers to fight elimination of third shift at Stellantis Warren Truck plant

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On Thursday, Will Lehman, candidate for United Auto Workers president, denounced the decision of Stellantis to eliminate the third shift at the Warren Truck Assembly Plant in suburban Detroit and called on autoworkers to fight the “corporate terrorism” of the global automaker.

The company’s announcement followed the provocative visit to the plant by Stellantis Chief Operating Officer Arnaud Deboeuf last week. Deboeuf told union officials they had until March to improve quality and reduce absenteeism, or face the potential closing of the plant, which currently employs 5,500 workers.

UAW Local 140 President Eric Graham joined management’s threats and denounced workers for the “unacceptable level of defects” at the plant and for taking time off.

Fiat Chrysler, which later merged with PSA to form Stellantis, added the third shift in 2012, exploiting the massive concessions handed over by UAW officials who were later convicted of taking millions in company bribes. Most workers on the midnight shift are so-called supplemental employees (SEs), who start at \$15.78 an hour, are forced to work 10-12 hour shifts, and can be fired for the slightest infraction, including missing work to care for a sick child. To add insult to injury, they are forced to pay dues to the UAW.

A company spokesman claimed the cutback was due to the microchip shortage and that the return to two-shift production was needed to “improve production efficiency.” In fact, the brutal action is a shot across the bow to Stellantis and all autoworkers. It is aimed at intimidating workers who are determined to win

substantial gains in next year’s contract battle, including major wage improvements, ending the two-tier wage system and immediately rolling over temporary part-time workers into full-timers.

On Thursday, Will Lehman issued a statement, titled “Mobilize the rank and file against Warren Truck job cuts!” that declared:

As candidate for UAW president, I am outraged by Stellantis’ decision to eliminate the third shift at the Warren Truck Assembly Plant. This is an act of corporate terrorism which every worker must oppose.

I campaigned at Warren Truck in August, and spoke to midnight shift workers whose jobs are under threat. Many are single mothers who are now losing their incomes as the winter approaches and as the cost of heat, electricity and other expenses continues to surge. Others quit full-time jobs with vacation time and other benefits because company, city, and UAW officials claimed their jobs were secure.

In response to the job cuts, UAW Local 140 President Eric Graham declared, “No one is being laid off.” This is a lie, and he knows it. In a letter to the state of Michigan, copied to Graham, the plant manager says the move “may result in a job loss” which “are considered to be permanent.” It continues, “Affected employees who are represented by UAW Local 140 will not have

bumping rights...”

Hundreds of supplemental and temporary workers may lose their jobs on the third shift or be bumped off from other shifts. The UAW bureaucrats may consider SEs as “nobodies” who can be tossed out like garbage, but these are our brothers and sisters, and we must defend them.

The statement continued:

My campaign for UAW president is aimed at building a mass movement of the rank and file to stop this type of corporate terrorism. I am the only candidate for UAW president who is advancing a workers’ agenda and a socialist agenda. I am not concerned with the privatized profits of the corporations and the payouts to the corporate executives, shareholders and UAW bureaucrats. My only concern is with the welfare of workers—SEs, second-tier, legacy and retirees.

If the companies say they need fewer workers to build cars, trucks and electric vehicles, what they really mean is they require fewer hours of labor. If that’s the case, then the rational solution is to reduce the number of hours we work, from 40 to 30 hours, with no loss of pay, rather than cutting jobs. The company has pocketed more than enough from our labor to secure the jobs and living standards of the workers who build these vehicles.

To stop the competition between workers to see who is going to work for the worst pay and conditions, and to protect all jobs, we must build rank-and-file committees to transfer power from the corrupt UAW apparatus to workers on the shop floor. It is time for the autoworkers in Detroit and other cities to draw a hard line: No to corporate terrorism. Yes, to the right of every worker to a secure and good paying job! To help carry forward this fight, support my campaign for UAW president.

For assistance in forming a rank-and-file committee, contact my campaign at willforuawpresident@gmail.com

midnight and morning shift workers at the plant.

“This is terrible,” one worker said. “They are putting us out just before the holidays and not giving us any info. It’s already tough out here and it’s going to get tougher. Everything is going up. There are also a lot of single moms here and this is going to hurt their children.

“It was the TPTs [temporary part-timers] who kept the plant running during COVID and we’re the first ones to be kicked out. I quit a parts supplier to come here because I thought this is the Big Three, not just a supplier, so it’s got to be better.

“They’ve been working us like crazy and you can’t enjoy your family life. A lot of workers have two jobs just to survive and they have no time to sleep, no time to be with their families. I won’t accept that.

“The CEOs are making millions and workers are coming in at 3 a.m. and not leaving until 3 p.m. And you can get \$15.50 working at Kroger instead of taking the physical and mental abuse here.”

Another SE said, “It’s like we don’t have a union, they only work for management.”

Many full-time workers also denounced the job cuts. One said, “You can’t have temporaries and never roll them over to full-time and having them working next to someone making twice the wage, and expect not to have high absenteeism. Why come here when you can make the same thing at McDonald’s?”

Another full-time worker said, “The union bends over backwards to do whatever the company wants. Graham was praised by the manager for issuing that ass-kissing letter. They don’t give workers job security or decent wages and then they have the nerve to demand better ‘quality.’”



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Also on Thursday, supporters of Lehman spoke to