

Detroit area Stellantis workers issue statement opposing indefinite layoffs at Belvidere Assembly

Joint statement Mack Assembly and Warren Truck Assembly workers
15 December 2022

Members of the Mack Assembly Rank-and-File Committee along with workers at Warren Truck Assembly call for all Stellantis workers and autoworkers everywhere to stand with our brothers and sisters at Belvidere Assembly against the threat to indefinitely “idle” the plant, which we know means closing the plant.

Workers in Detroit know the terrible impact of plant closings. Our families and communities have never recovered from round after round of plant closings since the 1970s. Once you shut down a plant it affects everything. Families are torn apart. Autoworkers’ jobs support other businesses too: hospitals, gas stations, restaurants. Jobs will be cut throughout the community in a ripple effect.

We warn workers at Mack and Warren Truck and all other Stellantis plants that these job cuts are a threat to every one of us. We know the corporations do not care about ourselves or our families. We have had people die from heart attacks on the line and they just kept running. They won’t stop the line for anyone, because they say it costs millions. They don’t care about people, only profits for the shareholders.

The UAW is trying to help carry out the cuts, not stop them. All the while they keep hiring more TPT workers because they don’t have to pay them profit sharing and bonuses.

The same thing is happening to workers at Warren Truck where workers are being blamed for absenteeism and quality issues that are management’s fault. Workers are tired and burned out from endless overtime and understaffing. The plant has been shut down for

hours because management didn’t pay suppliers. The Mack plant is also constantly running. We are not robots or machines, we are human and deserved to be treated as such.

A brother at Warren Truck recently told us what happened after the third shift was eliminated in October. “WTAP has sent over 300 supplemental employees out of the plant to various other plants permanently. WTAP had also decreased supplemental hours to 3 or 2 days a week. Rumors are circulating that upper management is trying to make WTAP a supplemental-free plant. I am a supplemental employee and I am quite tired of the lies. As the sole provider for my family, I can’t even afford gas to come to work now. I have given almost two years to this company only to be kicked out the door.

“The supplementals I keep in touch with have met with various results. The ones who went to sequencing plants were met with 60-hour work weeks and others who went on to major plants (Sterling Heights, Mack, and Jefferson North Assembly plants) are being sent home due to no work available situations. WTAP has also been playing with our hours, switching days and hours worked from week to week so that we can’t even attain a second job to keep ourselves afloat.

“Clearly WTAP is retaliating, knowing the other plants are full and have no room for extra employees.”

This is nothing less than corporate terrorism and we will not accept it. They say that the reason they are slashing costs is to make workers pay for the development of electric vehicles. But the real reason is

that they want to squeeze more profit out of the workforce. The same thing is happening everywhere. Ford, GM, VW, Nissan and Toyota are all preparing cuts to make workers pay.

Management sees us as replaceable. But management has to know we will fight back. If we come together and decide we won't come to work they can't operate. We will not accept this.

We support the call by Mack Trucks worker and UAW presidential candidate Will Lehman, who said in a statement in defense of Belvidere workers, "Such attacks are unconscionable, as all the auto companies have made record profits for years. What gives them the right to sacrifice our jobs and our livelihoods at their altar of profit? We cannot accept such corporate terrorism any longer and it's high time we fight back, even if the UAW does nothing to fight for us. An injury to workers at Stellantis is an injury to all workers in the auto industry and beyond. We need to link up with our fellow workers at Belvidere and build a rank-and-file movement to fight back for our jobs and lives."

We must organize to fight because the UAW will not. Stellantis will try to use the layoffs at Belvidere, Trenton Engine and other plants to blackmail us just like General Motors did in 2019 when they announced the closure of five plants, including Lordstown and Detroit-Hamtramck Assembly, right before the start of contract negotiations. The UAW used the threat to jobs to sell out all of our demands. Then the UAW claimed it achieved a "victory" because they only agreed to four out of five of the plants closing in the contract.

Former UAW President Rory Gamble bragged in 2019 that the contract with Stellantis "achieved substantial gains in job security provision," but since then the UAW has allowed Stellantis to eliminate thousands of jobs at Belvidere without any opposition. There were 5,000 jobs at the plant in 2019 and there will be zero in less than three months unless workers take a stand. That shows what the promises of the UAW and Stellantis are worth. Nothing!

We reject the attempt by UAW VP Cindy Estrada to pit us against our brother workers overseas by calling for shifting production from Canada, or Mexico or China

to the US. Our brother workers in other countries are not responsible for the layoffs—it is Stellantis management, which is also laying off workers in Canada, Italy and other countries. We will not fall for their strategy of divide and rule. The auto companies have a global strategy and so must workers.

We call on our brother workers at Belvidere to follow the example of workers at Chicago Assembly, Mack Assembly and other factories by establishing a rank-and-file committee independent of the UAW apparatus to begin mapping out a fight against the closure of Belvidere. This committee joining with rank-and-file committees at other plants could become a power center for organizing a fight back against the attack on jobs including railroad workers, teachers, Amazon and health care workers. In this fight we extend you our full support. An injury to one is an injury to all!



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact