

Unite to fight job cuts and concessions! Build the Warren Truck Rank-and-File Committee!

Warren Truck Rank-and-File Committee
23 April 2023

The following is a statement by the Warren Truck Rank-and-File Committee, which workers at the Stellantis assembly plant in suburban Detroit just founded. To contact the committee, call or text 248-919-8448.

Fellow workers:

The Warren Truck Rank-and-File Committee (WTRFC) has been founded to give workers a voice and the power to fight for our interests. We are building the WTRFC in solidarity with our fellow autoworkers at other Big Three plants and at the auto parts plants who are building these committees because the UAW is working for management instead of us.

Stellantis made \$18 billion in profits off of our labor last year. It is rewarding us with job cuts and abuse. The third shift has already been cut, and CEO Carlos Tavares has threatened to close our plant. Now 240 workers are being laid off, along with hundreds of workers at Sterling Heights Assembly Plant (SHAP), the Toledo Assembly Complex, Dundee, Trenton and other plants. The Belvidere plant was closed, and more than 1,200 workers were forced to uproot their families and travel hundreds of miles to keep their jobs.

But this is just the tip of the iceberg. All the auto companies plan to close plants and cut tens of thousands of jobs as part of their transition to electric vehicle production. Instead of defending us and fighting the companies with us, the UAW is keeping this information from us even though half the jobs in industry could be cut.

For months, both management and the UAW have complained about absenteeism and the shortage of workers. Now, they are insisting there are too many workers and must lay us off.

These cuts will not be “temporary.” Once the union helps management pile more work on us, the layoffs will become permanent. UAW Local 140 officials bragged that they gave the company “input in a cost-cutting plan,” and the 240 job cuts are just the beginning.

We will not accept further layoffs and plant closures, which would be a disaster for our families and communities. We are organizing now ahead of our upcoming contract expiration this September to get in touch with other autoworkers to prepare a fightback. We will no longer accept concessions, and we will fight for an improvement in the conditions in our workplace.

By squeezing more out of fewer workers, corporate executives get to stuff more money into their pockets. The same week the layoff notices went out, company shareholders voted to raise Tavares’ pay by 20 percent to \$25.6 million. We know from the past that a portion of company profits is also used to bribe UAW officials.

What is the purpose of our committee?

The election of Shawn Fain and Rich Boyer for president and vice president will not change a thing. They are preparing another sellout deal this summer. According to Fain’s team, workers have “unreasonable expectations” for the upcoming contract, and we will have to wait “years” to get back COLA and the other concessions the UAW handed the company. But we will not fall for their claims that this is the best contract we can get and their phony signing bonuses.

If there is going to be a fight to end exploitation and the toxic atmosphere in the plant, rank-and-file workers are going to have to fight for it. We have the right to organize and defend ourselves. The Warren Truck Rank-and-File Committee (WTRFC) will be the place that workers can freely talk to each other, without harassment by UAW and company spies, where workers can exchange information and expose and fight the conspiracy of the company and the UAW against us. It will be the way that workers can put power back in the hands of rank-and-file workers on the shop floor and away from the UAW apparatus. It will be the place where workers can formulate our demands and link up with workers at other Stellantis plants and at GM and Ford, to prepare an all-out strike in September to shut down the industry and stop the flow of profits to the auto bosses.

Workers have enormous power. We are the ones who build these trucks and produce the profits. But the UAW tries to tell us we are powerless and that we have no choice but to accept whatever management wants. That is a lie. If we unite full-time and temporary, first- and second-tier, hourly and skilled, from the Detroit metro area and from Belvidere, Dundee and every

other area, we will be able to fight for what we need, not what the companies and the UAW says is affordable.

What does the committee demand?

We demand massive wage increases to protect us from inflation and the restoration of COLA. We demand the abolition of the two-tier system and the restoration of the principle of “equal pay for equal work.” All temporary workers must be rolled over immediately with full pay and benefits. We also demand good pensions and benefits for all active and retired workers.

Three years ago, we took matters into our own hands when COVID was spreading in the plant killing our brothers and sisters, including Catherine Pace, Lorenzo Seldon and other paint shop workers. We joined thousands of workers at Jefferson, SHAP, Toledo Jeep, Windsor and other plants in wildcat strikes in defiance of the UAW which shut the industry and saved lives.

Management and the UAW are more concerned with profits than our lives. That is why our committee demands workers’ control of line speed and health and safety issues, so we can build the best and safest products. We also demand the full release of information about the toxic pollutants from the new paint shop, which can poison local residents and plant workers.

We need more time off. The company is telling us we can’t use our accumulated PAA days and that taking our kids to the doctor or getting a medical procedure will no longer be considered an excused absence. We have a life outside of this plant, and we demand enough paid days off to recover from the physical and mental stress of the plant.

We need longer breaks. We do not have enough time to get from our spot on the line, to our lockers to collect our belongings, to eat, use the bathrooms, and get back to our place. We demand an increase from 12 minutes to 20 minutes on each break.

We must have clean, working bathrooms. In solidarity with the janitorial staff, our committee insists that the number of support staff be increased. They must be hired as full-time Stellantis workers, not low paid contractors, and be paid the same wages so that our facilities can function. We should not have to bring our own personal cleaning supplies, toilet paper and hand soap to work.

We demand rank-and-file representation in all interactions with the company since we are not being represented by the UAW officials in the plant and local hall.

The company is on a rampage, firing workers for taking medical leave, threatening workers for taking PAA and medically excused days, and relentlessly harassing and threatening SEs. Our committee demands an end to this, and

the reinstatement, with full back pay, of all workers who have been unjustly suspended or fired due to misrepresentation by the UAW.

Many workers are suffering, self-medicating, and taking medical leave from the stress and pressure of the job. Our insurance changes mid-contract without warning, and we rely on it to get the help we need. We insist that workers be provided with fully paid mental health support and the necessary time off to recover.

What is our strategy?

We are building the Warren Truck Rank-and-File Committee as part of the growing network of autoworker committees in Detroit, Toledo, Lansing, Chicago and other cities, along with similar committees that have been built by railroad, health care, education and other workers across the country. We stand in solidarity with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), which is coordinating the work of these committees across national borders. We know that we work for a global company, and that workers in Canada, Mexico, Italy, France and other countries are fighting the same enemies as us.

We are preparing ourselves for this summer’s contract fight by linking up with workers throughout the auto industry. We also reject the UAW’s outdated strategy of picking a “target” company. We demand that workers at GM, Ford and Stellantis all go out on September 14 to win the demands we need.

We are fighting to unite all workers and oppose every effort to divide us over racial, age, sex, religion, ethnic or national background or any other artificial division the powers-that-be use to divide us. We, the workers, must unite against our common oppressors and put an end to our oppression.

Now is the time to fight not only for ourselves but for the next generation. Millions of workers in the US and all over the world are fed up with corporate exploitation and inequality. We urge you to join the Warren Truck Rank-and-File Committee (WTRFC) and the growing national and international rank-and-file movement. Get involved in the committee and contact us at 248-919-8448.



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