

A warning to all autoworkers: GM Flint Assembly cuts hours of temporary workers in countdown to contract battle

GM Flint Rank-and-File Committee
24 July 2023

The following is a statement by the GM Flint Rank-and-File Committee calling on workers to mobilize against the drastic cuts in working hours for temporary workers at the Flint Truck Assembly plant. To contact the committee and get involved, email gm.flint.rfc@gmail.com or fill out the form at the end of the statement. Sign up for text message updates on the Big Three contract fight by texting AUTO to (866) 847-1086.

Brothers and Sisters,

General Motors is driving temporary workers at the Flint Truck Assembly plant to the point of destitution. Many temporary workers have been reduced to just one or two days of work a week. Many of our co-workers are being forced to take on second or third jobs or leave the plant altogether.

One temp worker on the chassis line told our committee, “I had my hours cut to just one day. Management made me go down to Saturdays only, but we haven’t worked on Saturday for weeks! This isn’t just me; they’ve cut the TPT [temporary part-time] hours for nearly everyone else on our line. I had to get a second job and have to drive half an hour away cause I need money to live and can’t pay my bills. I’ve been late on my rent twice. We are being given no reason. Management and the union said they’re doing this all over the plant. But that’s not explaining anything!”

Another temp worker reported, “Last month my rent increased by \$150 to \$700, so I had to move. My new apartment is \$650, so I’m still paying \$100 more plus I had to shell out \$1,600 for the first and last month and a security deposit. I had to take out a \$1,000 loan! Meanwhile, my hours have been cut to two days a week. On top of this, food prices are going up drastically.”

International President Shawn Fain, Vice President Mike Booth and Region 1D Director Steve Dawes have

not issued a single word of protest let alone done anything to oppose this. After workers complained about the abuse of temps on the Local 598 app, the UAW chairman replied that he “didn’t like the randomness, favoritism, and the up and down of TPT hours,” but made absolutely no proposals to stop it.

This is further proof that there are two opposing forces in the union: first, the rank-and-file workers who produced GM’s \$9.9 billion in profits last year with our blood, sweat and tears; and, second, the army of union bureaucrats who live off our dues and enjoy salaries that are five, six and seven times more than an ordinary worker, let alone a part-time worker. These people do not “represent” us, they represent the company. Their main job is to stamp out our struggle for decent wages, secure jobs, benefits, and safety.

The timing of these cuts is not a coincidence. In the run-up to the expiration of our contract, the company and the UAW bureaucracy want to create as much economic desperation as possible in the hopes they can get workers to swallow another rotten contract by dangling another signing bonus in front of them. We say: Beware! As Clarios workers know from their recently betrayed 40-day strike and as veteran workers know, the bigger the (heavily taxed) signing bonus, the bigger the sellout.

By attacking temps and cutting their hours, management is seeking to weaken and divide all of us. Remember what used to be the First Commandment of the labor movement: “An injury to one is an injury to all!” The UAW bureaucrats might spit on that tradition but the GM Flint Rank-and-File Committee is deadly serious about defending it. Temps and full-time workers share the same interests, work the same jobs and face the same unsafe conditions—and we must defend each other!

Our committee demands that all temps’ hours be

reinstated so that workers are not being starved of income in the run-up to a potential strike.

Fain claims he wants to abolish tiers and restore COLA. As workers say, “He talks a good game, but it’s a dog and pony show.” Fain was on the UAW-Chrysler Negotiating Committee in 2009 that agreed to the elimination of COLA, the vast expansion of the hated two-tier system and the exploitation of SEs (Supplemental Employees) and TPTs (Temporary Part-Time).

While Fain has been talking tough and staging photo-ops ahead of contract “negotiations,” the UAW president was elected by less than 3 percent of rank-and-file members in a fraudulent election last fall. The new leaders of the UAW showed their true colors by selling out the 40-day Clarios strike and sanctioning the handling of scab batteries at the assembly plants, including ours.

It has recently come to light that the UAW bureaucracy has reinstated the policy—suspended during the 2019 GM strike—whereby striking workers who take an outside job paying more than \$500 a week will not get a penny in strike pay.

While temps’ hours are being slashed at GM Flint, Stellantis workers at Warren Truck, Jefferson, Kokomo Engine and other plants have been put on “critical status,” which allows management to impose seven-day work schedules of up to 12 hours a day. By sanctioning this, the UAW is allowing Stellantis to stockpile vehicles in advance of a potential strike.

Most important, Fain held a private White House meeting with President Biden last week. What transpired has not been disclosed. However, Biden is a highly experienced political representative of big business, who outlawed a strike by 110,000 railroad workers last year and imposed a pro-company contract that the workers have previously rejected. Biden, who is also intervening in the UPS talks, is working with the union bureaucracies to prevent any strike that 1) undermines the profit interests of the corporations and 2) interferes with the war against Russia and preparations for a bigger war against China.

The Big Three and the Biden administration have a strategy to make workers pay the full cost of the transition to EVs through drastic cuts in jobs, wages and conditions. The UAW apparatus is working to accommodate them in order to collect union dues from impoverished workers at EV facilities.

Rank-and-file workers must have a strategy of our own!

A struggle must be waged now to build up momentum

for a genuine, not phony, fight to eliminate all tiers, along with the demands for no layoffs or plant closures and bringing back COLA and fully paid pensions for all. Our committee, which is part of the Autoworkers Rank-and-File Committee Network and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees, also calls for:

- An end to all tiers and “progression” wage schemes
- Transfer of all temporary and part-time workers to full-time status, with full pay and benefits
- Rank-and-file control over line speed and safety.
- Live-stream all negotiations! No backroom talks, no closed-door deals

We urge workers to join and build the GM Flint Rank-and-File Committee to prepare an all out strike by all Big Three autoworkers, and to link up with broader sections of workers in the US and internationally, from the striking actors and writers and the Canadian dockworkers to the UPS and Yellow freight drivers. We urge you to read and distribute the statement “What autoworkers need to win the 2023 Big Three contract battle” and join the fight to transfer power and decision making from the UAW apparatus to workers on the shop floor. The outcome of this struggle depends upon what workers decide to do. Make the decision to join the movement for rank-and-file power!

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