

“No money for anything but war”: US autoworkers speak out on layoffs, Gaza genocide

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15 December 2023

Anger is growing among autoworkers in the wake of the announcements by Stellantis, Ford and General Motors of thousands of layoffs and job cuts, which themselves followed within a few weeks of the United Auto Workers securing ratification of its sellout contracts with the Big Three.

The cuts include 3,600 workers at Stellantis’ Toledo Jeep Complex in Ohio and its Detroit Assembly Complex-Mack plant in Michigan. Hundreds of workers are being laid off at Ford as the company slashes production of F-150 electric pickup trucks at its Rouge Electric Vehicle Center. General Motors recently announced over 1,300 job cuts at its Lake Orion and Lansing Grand River plants. Another 900, or 25 percent of the workforce, will be laid off at GM Cruise, a subsidiary focused on autonomous “robotaxis.”

Autoworkers are increasingly voicing the feeling that the UAW knew in advance about the impending jobs cuts, but concealed the information in order to get the contract ratified. While UAW President Shawn Fain, backed by most of the corporate news media, hailed the contracts as “historic,” in fact they set the stage for a jobs massacre as the auto companies transition to electric vehicle production and seek to put the cost on the workers.

Workers told a WSWs reporting team that visited the Stellantis Warren Truck Assembly Plant in the Detroit suburbs that many temporary workers, or “supplemental employees,” were only scheduled for three days a week.

Many workers expressed anger at the announcement of thousands of job cuts only a few weeks after the ratification of the national contract. The contract, which

abandoned all the central demands of workers, had been passed largely based on the promise that temporary workers would be made full time. Now thousands of temps are being laid off.

A worker at Warren Truck said about the announcement by Stellantis of job cuts, “That was not supposed to happen. They are using and abusing TPTs [temporary part-time workers]. After they get rolled over they are going to lay them right off.”

Another said, “This is supposed to be a record-breaking agreement and then they have layoffs.”

A 24-year-old veteran at the plant who asked to remain anonymous said he voted no on the contract and thought it was a sellout. “It is not only the TPTs, they are working all of our hours. A few years ago they eliminated the third shift, and what is happening at Toledo will happen here.”

“It was all a hoax,” a young worker with five years said about the UAW’s claims that it had won a “record” contract.

“I heard there are more job cuts that are coming after the new contract,” a worker with 13 years told the WSWs. “It’s horrible the way the UAW and the company lied about rolling over the supplemental employees. Now the SEs aren’t getting any work and they need it. They have bills to pay too.”

“These are rich men’s wars but it’s working class kids that fight them”

WSWS reporters explained that the corporate-

controlled political establishment was waging a war on two fronts. While the ruling class is spending billions on wars in Ukraine and Gaza, workers were being made to pay through attacks on jobs and wages.

Earlier in the week, Fain had posed for a photo op outside the White House, where he postured as an opponent of the Gaza genocide, but advanced no concrete action to end the massacre of women and children by Israel with the full backing of the Biden administration. By contrast, Mack Trucks worker Will Lehman, who had run for UAW president against Shawn Fain, has called for UAW members to halt all production of weapons and equipment intended for the Israeli military.

Asked about the genocide in Gaza, another Warren Truck worker said, “This country is always at war. They are always bombing someone or another.”

“We need to stop this,” said a young worker, who denounced the fact that billions of dollars were going to fund the massacre of children in Palestine. Asked about the UAW and Fain keeping its members producing equipment for the Israeli military, she responded, “What did you expect? He is with Biden.”

The worker added, “The government should not be backing Israel and giving them a green light to murder people. They’re targeting journalists so they can black out any information from Gaza. People are protesting all over the world to stop this. With the layoffs and inflation, they’re giving billions of dollars to support the violence against women and children.”

A veteran worker whose son is in the Marines said, “I’m scared to death. There’s no money for anything but war. These are rich men’s wars but it’s working-class kids that fight them. I’ve never seen Biden’s or Trump’s sons killed in any wars.

“The company and the union promise the workers one thing and do another. We were supposed to get our raises and COLA right away, but they are delaying it.

“Fain did what all the other union leaders did—sell us out. I had some wishful thinking about him but boy was I wrong. The SEs were promised to be rolled over in 90 days. But they can be laid off on their 89th day, get hired back and work another 89 days and get laid off again. And according to the contract, they can’t roll over any SEs if there are full-time workers on layoff.”

Asked about the layoffs, a worker rushing into the plant said sardonically, “The job cuts are a reminder

that it’s Christmas.”

Another veteran worker said, “We were supposed to get our 12 cents an hour cost of living right away but now they’re saying we’re not getting it until February. The \$5,000 signing bonus is being paid out over seven weeks and getting taxed 42 percent. With the first raise, which also came late, the UAW took out extra dues money.”

A GM Factory Zero worker in Detroit also spoke about the layoffs. “We have heard about the layoffs. Lake Orion is the main one. They are moving people around to different plants.”

Speaking about the contract vote, she said, “The ‘yes’ vote edged out at my plant, but the majority of senior workers voted ‘no.’”

She said the promise to convert temp workers to full time under terms of the new contract had been a major issue. “I am not a temp worker, but I am still confused by the language. They say they are going to roll people over [to full time], but with the layoffs coming, no one is going to be rolled over soon. It’s crazy.”



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