

As layoffs loom, Stellantis Toledo Jeep worker says temp workers “are outraged and they have plenty to be angry about”

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Autoworkers at Ford, GM and Stellantis are now confronting the disastrous consequences of the labor agreements the United Auto Workers signed last fall. When the contracts covering 145,000 autoworkers expired on September 14, UAW President Shawn Fain launched a phony “Stand Up Strike” in which only selected plants across all three companies would walk out while the majority of the workforce stayed inside the plants to continue production. After a month-and-a-half, the UAW announced settlements that union officials claimed were “historic” deals, which would end tiers, abolish the abuse of temporary workers and create thousands of new jobs.

Within weeks of the contract ratification, Stellantis announced the layoffs of thousands of autoworkers, along with Ford and GM. In a further blow, Friday was the last day of work for 550 supplemental employees (SEs) at Stellantis auto plants in Detroit and across the United States. In a July 13 letter to local union presidents, UAW Vice President Rich Boyer admitted even more job cuts are on the way, declaring, “there will be a significant reduction of roughly 1,600 SEs that will take place within the next few months, if not in lesser time.”

The 5,200 workers at the Stellantis’ Toledo Assembly Complex were among the first to take to the picket lines. Now they face as many as 1,200 layoffs, including 900 SEs, and are seething at the betrayal by the UAW.

Justin, a young worker at the Toledo Assembly Complex gave the World Socialist Web Site his thoughts and description of conditions under the new UAW contract.

It is almost a joke. One of the biggest things the union was pushing was hiring the temps full time. What they are doing is hiring them in Toledo, but they are not going to

work in Toledo, or at least any time soon with them not starting this third shift on GL (Gladiator Line). Now they are talking about getting rid of a shift on the Gladiator.

The TPTs (Temporary Part Time workers) don’t know what’s going on. They’re not getting any answers from the union and there is mass confusion. They are outraged and they have plenty to be angry about. The union canceled the night shift local meeting because a guy was calling out the committee, and they shut down the meeting.

We only have about 900 TPTS, so that means 200-300 full-time will also be laid off. If one TPT works, they can’t lay any full-time off, which means there would not be one TPT in the building. Remaining a TPT while waiting for full-time would mean you are on the street. What option would you go with? That’s why we say it is a joke. We’ll have everyone full-time. That is a joke. They had it all figured out.

We were the first they called out on strike, so you would think we would be the first to ratify, but we were the only production plant to turn the contract down.

I know plants like JNAP (Jefferson North Assembly Plant in Detroit) were so hungry to go on strike—I am sure they were anxious to stand next to us and join the strike. They had the money in their pockets, they were not hurting financially, so you would think they would be the first to vote it down. They were seeing the same videos we saw on Facebook, the same lies.

And they staggered the votes. I feel we would have more “nos” if we voted first. Some felt it was going to pass anyway, “so why vote?”

Another factor was the tiers. That was a divide. Some of those with 20-30 years said this was the best contract we have seen. But the tier two had seen we can move mountains by getting people together and were more gung-

ho on getting more and knew it could happen. The UAW came and looked us in the eye saying this is the best that is going to happen.

(UAW Vice President) Rich Boyer was trying to make us pass the contract because he knew we would be the ones who stand up. I remember when Norwood Jewell came in 2015 to Savage Center (in Toledo). He had to step down off the mic because we were booing him so hard. He was laughing and said, “you guys just don’t get it.” Then he went to jail. Who is laughing now?

We felt the contract should have been null and void after the corruption was found out. Changing a few things and giving us a few things from a corrupted contract is an easy win.

We probably had one of the biggest turnouts we had at the vote. Most of our people live in Detroit, but this time more people came from outside Detroit than the last time. It is about a two hour round trip. In spite of all this, people voted it down. That scared the sh-t out of them. Now it’s like we are at war.

The media is making it seem like we got a good contract. They are not seeing what is going on right now. The layoffs are all over the news, at Ford and GM too. You are saying he (Fain) did not know that? I had thought he was honest. Is there a smoking gun on that one?

Now that he got the contract passed, none of his Facebook Live posts are about us. Now he is trying to get Toyota, Honda and Tesla.

Toledo is going to hurt from this contract. They are taking jobs from parts suppliers like Syncreon; they never renewed their contract. They will slice those jobs in half and bring them in shop. More people will be on the streets after this contract.

When they first launched Gladiator they said they had set it up that way because they were going to add more trucks. In fact, jobs were cut and now we are not getting another truck.

I am happy for Belvidere. The UAW said, take this truck out of Toledo, give it to Belvidere, and we will get this contract signed for you. [As part of the UAW-Stellantis deal management agreed to reopen the Belvidere, Illinois Assembly plant idled last year. As a result of the closure many workers had to relocate to Toledo Jeep and other Michigan-Ohio area plants. -Ed]

Our quality of life is harder now. We are doing the same work with fewer workers. When you go home, you are sore. The work is crazy now. It has never been crazy like this. We could look forward to better jobs once. Now they have done away with all that.

This new attendance policy is bullsh-t. They are no longer accepting any doctor’s notes or emergencies of any kind for you, your spouse or dependents ... The only thing covered under the new contract are colonoscopies with a five-day notice, and they will use one of your vacation days for it, and you’re only allowed two colonoscopies during the term of this contract.

For temps the turnover is crazy. Some people don’t last a day. We are doing 30 percent more work per job now. You have to be like a robot when you do these jobs. You can’t even have a sip of water.

COVID ripped through Toledo in the last week or two. We had two cases after our Christmas party.

When it gets humid in summer, the AC starts overflowing and forming a puddle on the roof. There are dead sea gulls and their excrement. When it overflows it comes down on us, like a mist, and makes a puddle on the floor. There is algae growing from it sitting in the sun all day. It is disgusting. They don’t even listen when we say something.

We came back to work to reap the benefits of the new contract. But new fathers are being screwed out of two-week paid paternal leave, the promised car lease program is a fraud, and the company is cutting 20-30 percent of the jobs, writing up workers for everything and creating a hostile work environment. The TPTs were promised they would be hired in and now they’re losing their jobs.

How do we hold the company accountable? You would think the union would.

If you would include inflation, from 2007 to now, we are making less. When I was growing up everyone there had boats and campers; they could afford these extra things because of how much they were getting paid. We are living paycheck to paycheck—that is how it is. Who has money for a boat or camper? Working at Jeep used to mean something. It set the standard for the working class.

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