

“They are messing people’s livelihoods up”: Stellantis Warren Truck workers denounce mass firings of temps

James Langley
19 January 2024

The Autoworkers Rank-and-File Committee Network and the World Socialist Web Site are holding an emergency online meeting this Saturday, January 20, at 1 p.m. Eastern / 12 p.m. Central to discuss how to organize to stop mass layoffs in the auto industry. Register here.

Friday afternoon, members of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality at Wayne State University campaigned at the Stellantis Warren Truck Assembly Plant in Metro Detroit to build for Saturday’s emergency online meeting, “Stop the mass layoffs in the auto industry!”

In recent weeks, a growing number of major layoffs have been announced by the auto companies, including thousands at Toledo Jeep and Detroit Assembly Complex Mack plant. Stellantis escalated the attacks last week, summarily firing over 500 supplemental employees (temporary workers), including 171 at Warren Truck.

The cuts at Stellantis are part of a growing wave of layoffs and other cost-cutting measures throughout the global auto industry.

On Friday, Ford Motor Company announced the details of its plan to slash production at its Rouge electric vehicle factory, which builds the F-150 Lightning pick-up. Ford will reduce operations from two shifts to one, impacting 1,400 workers, more than half the plant’s headcount. Ford has claimed that 700 of the affected workers will be transferred to the Michigan Assembly Plant, which is adding a shift. Hundreds of others will be forced to either transfer to plants much farther away, take early retirement buyouts if they are eligible, or, in all likelihood, simply quit and attempt to find other work.

For those suddenly without a job, social devastation is an imminent reality, including the threat of eviction, lost healthcare coverage, nonpayment of heating bills, and even homelessness, with fired workers sleeping in their cars in subzero temperature recently reaching out to the WSWs.

Following UAW President Shawn Fain’s “historic” deal with the Big Three, it has taken less than a month for the real implications of the contract to become clear.

“They lied to everybody”

Speaking to the students and youth from the IYSSE and facing the cold, Warren Truck workers spoke out against the firing of temporary workers and other layoffs.

“Trust me, I’ve been laid off for nine months. I get it,” one said. “I have been working here for two years. In April 2023 I got fired. They took my insurance off after a month. We go through a lot, and such an experience really changes your life.”

Asked about the role of the UAW in passing the last contract, he responded: “They lied to everybody. They knew about these layoffs. They just wanted to pass the vote. We have to figure something out.”

Another worker, a young TPT worker said: “The UAW used us to pass this vote. What they did was some BS. They were supposed to fight for us and they are not. They didn’t even get our demands; now they are getting the TPTs fired. That is all they do, just

watching them get fired. They are messing people's livelihoods up."

Another worker with five years at the plant but a UAW member since he was 19 years old said: "The UAW has always been pulling the same thing, taking advantage of those most vulnerable, the TPTs. They used them to get the vote."

Another worker said: "This is the same old crap, when [former UAW President] Dennis Williams was in there, [Bob] King a few years ago. Just like every politician, once they get into office they change their story. Now Shawn Fain is doing the same thing.

"These layoffs could happen to anyone. They could happen to me. I've got over 15 years in there, you know and it just keeps getting worse. They keep throwing things at us."

Workers at other plants also spoke to the WSWS about the growing wave of layoffs on Friday. A GM Lansing Delta worker said, "GM and the UAW are not talking about the firings with us. We asked about this at the informational meetings. It's the same thing we've seen in contracts before. Every time they increase wages they offset it with firings. They presented the contract with no firings; now they're saying they didn't know about it.

Responding to the claims by the UAW and the media that the 2023 contracts were "historic," the worker, replied, "'Historic,' no one believes that!"

As workers received notice of their termination last week, the UAW has refused to provide information or assistance. Notably, at Warren Truck's UAW Local 140, union leaders decided to cancel a meeting at the last minute, fearing an outpouring of anger over the attacks on workers' jobs.

One IYSSE member, Nate, reflected on his discussions with workers at Warren Truck Friday. "As we were passing out flyers, I noticed how people were willing to talk about their issues and concerns regarding the firings. Despite being in the freezing temperatures, they were still willing to speak with us candidly about their concerns.

"The workers' growing consciousness on this issue comes with the understanding that they could be at risk of losing their job at any given moment."

The IYSSE is fighting to turn young people towards the working class as the force that can put a stop to inequality, poverty, imperialist war and the threat of

dictatorship.

As the ruling class seeks to cut costs and boost profitability, the union bureaucracies, in alliance with the companies and the state, are seeking to prevent opposition within the working class from developing on a socialist basis.

Both workers and youth are drawing their own conclusions.

Youth must turn to the working class, and workers must fight to build rank-and-file committees as centers of independent action. Saturday's meeting will bring together temporary and full time workers in the auto industry and other sectors to discuss the urgent need for workers to organize themselves independently in order to successfully fight for the reinstatement of fired workers and prevent further layoffs.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact