

As anger boils over Stellantis mass firings, UAWD faction covers for Fain bureaucracy

Shannon Jones
25 February 2024

To join the Rank-and-File Committee to Fight Job Cuts (RFC-FJC), call or text 248-919-8448 or fill out the form at the end of this article.

With anger boiling over the mass termination of supplemental (temporary) employees (SEs) by Stellantis, a faction of the United Auto Workers apparatus closely aligned with UAW President Shawn Fain has launched a petition campaign whose aim is to cover up the role of the UAW bureaucracy in facilitating the job cuts.

The purpose of this petition being circulated by Unite All Workers for Democracy (UAWD) is to paralyze the growing opposition and anger against the UAW apparatus by channeling it back into futile protests to management and the very same UAW officials overseeing the cuts. In organizing this diversionary campaign, UAWD is attempting to head off the independent initiative of the fired SEs who recently formed the Rank-and-File Committee to Fight Job Cuts (RFC-FJC).

Stellantis is in the process of firing more than 2,300 supplemental employees out of the 5,219 it employed before ratification of the UAW-Stellantis agreement last November. Fain, UAW Vice President Rich Boyer and other UAW bureaucrats had falsely claimed that SEs would be rolled over to full-time status under the terms of the agreement.

In a statement “No Member Left Behind! Petition Stellantis to Reinstate the Terminated Supplemental Employees,” the UAWD group announced the launch of the petition campaign, which is addressed to Stellantis management. Once 1,000 signatures are gathered, the UAWD, says it will submit the names to the company and “notify the UAW-Stellantis department.”

The absurdity of this campaign is that the very people conspiring to enforce the terminations are now pretending to be organizing some sort of protest action against it.

The group UAWD, backed by Labor Notes and the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), won positions running on Fain’s Members United Slate and has given uncritical support to Fain, presenting his election as a victory for union reform. It heaped praise on the sellout 2023 contract that gave a green light to the present assault on supplemental workers, along with mass layoffs of full-time workers in Detroit and Toledo, Ohio.

The UAWD petition begins by claiming the 2023 contract “made some progress in addressing the abuse of Supplemental Employees.” It says nothing about the role of the Fain leadership, which lied to supplemental workers to get their votes for the

contract. The UAW bureaucrats claimed that SEs would get profit sharing and would be made full-time after nine months of service, none of which was true.

Instead, under the terms of the agreement, the company only had to roll over 1,957 SEs company-wide, plus another 900 at the Toledo Assembly plant. On January 12, 539 supplementals were summarily fired, including at least 100 at Indiana Transmission in Kokomo, Shawn Fain’s home plant. Since then hundreds more have been fired out of the 1,600 SEs UAW Vice President Boyer admitted would be terminated in the coming months.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* warned, these job cuts are only the beginning of a massive jobs bloodbath as the auto companies transition to the production of electric vehicles that require significantly less labor. The cuts are global, with Stellantis also announcing mass layoffs at its Fiat and Maserati divisions in Italy and its operations in France.

Since the jobs cuts were announced, Fain and the entire union apparatus, including UAWD, have made clear they will do nothing to oppose the cuts. In a January 13 letter to local union presidents, Boyer, head of the UAW Stellantis department, echoed the company’s lies that the SEs were being fired because of “poor performance/attendance” before instructing his underlings to “Please inform all the SEs” about the coming firings.

After SEs brought the unjust firings to the attention of their fellow workers and in local Detroit news media, Fain told a reporter the firings were due to “corporate greed” and that the UAW had not agreed to them. But the UAW bureaucrats’ signatures are in black and white on the letter of agreement entitled “Supplemental Conversions” in the contract itself.

In the meantime, the corporate media has reported that supplementals will not get profit sharing this year, although it had been promised in the “highlights” distributed by the UAW at the time of contract ratification.

Since the signing of the 2023 auto contracts, the Big Three automakers have reported bumper profits. Stellantis booked a record \$20 billion in profits in 2023 and celebrated by announcing a large stock dividend and a \$3.2 billion stock buyback to enrich shareholders.

“The shop floor workers are organizing this fight”

In response to the attack on supplementals, Stellantis workers have formed the Rank-and-File Committee to Fight Job Cuts and issued a call to action. In its statement the committee appealed not to Stellantis management or to Fain & Co. but to shop floor workers. It explained that workers were fighting not just management but the pro-company UAW apparatus as well.

“Collectively, we can defend our means of livelihood. Since we have been repeatedly deceived by the UAW bureaucrats, from the International down to the local level, we, the shop floor workers, are organizing this fight.”

The Rank-and-File Committee to Fight Job Cuts (RFC-FJC) has endorsed a demonstration outside Solidarity House, which will be held on Saturday, March 2, at noon that is being organized by a group of supplemental and full-time autoworkers. The workers are demanding the reinstatement of all fired supplementals and the renegotiation of the sellout 2023 contract.

In a statement announcing the protest, one of the organizers wrote, “The company, the union and the government are all working together against the people. The membership is the foundation on which this company produces their wealth. We work hard and receive next to nothing for our time and labor. Brothers and Sisters: There is a war on the working class, and this is happening all throughout the world. Fain said we’d ‘eat the rich’ and here they are stealing right off our plates!”

Workers contacted by the *World Socialist Web Site* expressed anger over the collusion of the UAW with the mass firings of supplemental workers and opposition to the petition stunt being promoted by UAWD.

After seeing the UAWD petition, a recently terminated worker at the Indiana Transmission Plant said, “This is not only to pacify workers, it’s to shut us up with hopes that ‘Oh, they’ll handle it.’”

A member of the Rank-and-File Committee to Fight Job Cuts told the WSWs, “Remember we were the lowest tiered workers, and it was easier to write us off as opposed to fighting for us. But we wouldn’t keep quiet about it. Now, they are circulating a petition to make it look like they are ‘fighting’ for us.

“We want our jobs back. But even if that were to happen, we would be walking back into the same hostile work environment as the full-time workers. The UAW bureaucrats are still corrupt, and nobody has job security. We’ve been trying to bring this point to the surface: If there is no representation, there should be no work. Full-time and part-time workers have to join together to fight for our jobs.

“As far as the company and the union apparatus is concerned, as long as they’re making profits and collecting our dues money, they’re happy. They tried to get rid of us and expected us to keep moving along like little worker ants.

“We are proud to see that a global fightback against job cuts is starting. The Italian Stellantis workers walked out. The Mexican Audi workers went on strike. Workers are starting to unite with each other. It’s terrible that it takes such circumstances, but if we come together, we can conquer all this pain and suffering. It is incredible that despite these hard times, people are uniting.”

A Kokomo Engine worker said of the UAWD, “They’re Fain’s little cheering section. I’m looking at it like they’re getting so

many complaints, being proven to be lies that they’re trying to shine new light on, ‘See, the UAW is trying to help.’ They wouldn’t have to do that if they’d fought for workers and not presented us with this god awful contract.

“Seems like every other week we find out something else we lost that they didn’t advertise or the company violates another part of it that the UAW keeps letting them do.

“We got a person in the plant who makes a shirt now with the saying, ‘They can do that’ because that’s the union’s answer to everything. They never put that stuff in the highlights.”

A full-time worker at the Detroit Assembly Complex-Mack, where 2,455 workers were laid off or fired when the third shift was eliminated at the beginning of February, said that there is massive anger in the plant. “We all realize the union is in bed with the supervisors and management. The UAW officials just tell you what you want to hear; sweet-tongued words,” she said.

Speaking of the mass layoffs carried out by Stellantis, she said, “That was dead wrong. You had people as TPTs (Temporary Part-Time or supplementals) for years. And when you had to roll them over, you let them go. You held people’s lives up. People still have mortgages, car notes, food and kids to feed.

“People need their jobs, and they should be compensated for that. In the contract it said they were supposed to get profit sharing. And now they are saying they are not getting it.

“I am never going to agree with doing someone wrong like that. They have given up everything to get nothing. Some may say, ‘It doesn’t affect me, so I don’t care.’ That’s the wrong attitude because it can happen to them too.”

Expressing agreement with the statement issued by the Rank-and-File Committee to Fight Jobs Cuts, she added, “I am willing to fight. Change needs to happen. They have been getting away with dirty, underhanded things too long without it being challenged.

“They need the workers who come in, even when they are sick, to make their money. They are making billions off the backs of full-timers and TPTs. The only reason you are making those billions is off our blood, sweat and tears.”

We encourage all workers to study the statement, “Unite all workers to stop the job cuts!” and contact the Rank-and-File Committee to Fight Job Cuts (RFC-FJC) by calling or texting 248-919-8448. To get more information and to report conditions at your workplace, fill out the form below.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact