

Stellantis Kokomo workers meet to organize opposition to mass firing of supplementals

George Kirby
26 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.

Stellantis workers are continuing to speak out over the mass firings of temporary workers, or supplementals, by management. On January 12, with no warning from either the company or the United Auto Workers, Stellantis fired 539 supplemental employees (SEs) in Michigan and Kokomo, Indiana and cut off their medical insurance less than three weeks later.

UAW Vice President Rich Boyer, who last year touted the sellout contract at the Big Three negotiated by the UAW as an “historic” contract, has now stated that “we” will be making sacrifices. After the initial firings, Boyer released a letter admitting that another 1,600 SE’s would be terminated companywide. Sounding like a management spokesman, he claimed the dues-paying UAW members were fired due to “poor work performance/attendance issues.”

In response to the mass firings, a group of supplemental and full-time Stellantis workers formed the Rank-and-File Committee to Fight Job Cuts. In an open letter to all workers, the committee said, “We are appealing to every brother and sister, whether you have been terminated or are still working in the plants, to join us in this fight. Full-time workers have a target on your backs too, it’s just a matter of time. Supervisors are writing up workers for the tiniest things, trying to initiate disciplinary action against them. Collectively, we can defend our means of livelihood. Since we have been repeatedly deceived by the UAW bureaucrats, from 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 the UAW Solidarity House headquarters in Detroit, scheduled for this Saturday, which is being organized by a group of supplemental and full-time autoworkers. The protest to oppose the sellout contract, demand the reinstatement of all fired supplementals and stop all job cuts will be held Saturday, March 2, at 12 noon outside of the union’s

national headquarters at 8000 E. Jefferson Avenue in Detroit.

Rank-and-file Stellantis Kokomo workers held an online meeting over the weekend with Will Lehham, a Pennsylvania Mack Trucks worker who ran for UAW president in 2024, calling for the transfer of power from the UAW apparatus to the workers on the shop floor.

“I want to fight back because I’m ticked off with what’s transpired,” a fired Indiana Transmission worker told the WSWs afterwards. “I’m in a position with no job. I saw this coming. I was set to work and they shut one shift down, then all TPT’s (temporary part-time workers) were sent home. Some of the TPT’s hired before the strike are still working and some were flipped to full time. I was training someone but I was fired and they were flipped.”

She continued, “I was told they’re getting rid of more. My coworkers still in the plant said in March another shift from the nine-speed line is going to be cut. This includes the TPT’s who were flipped. Some had a start date from just a week ago and they will be laid off. They don’t have to hire them, that’s what [Stellantis] might do. There’s a grievance supposedly for the firings. I want to see it!”

In the wake of the supposedly “historic” 2023 contract, Stellantis reported profits of \$20 billion in 2023. GM reported profits of \$12.3 billion in North America alone, with Ford making almost \$10 billion.

A Stellantis Kokomo Engine worker, referring to UAW President Shawn Fain, said, “He was on the national Chrysler bargaining committee in 2009 when we lost things. Now, he claims the union ‘got back’ what we lost. But he hid the facts. Two weeks ago, we found out there were no profit-sharing checks for SEs.

“At KEP, we had 597 temps. Of these, 260 were hired and the rest were fired. The day they were fired, badges worked, and supervisors let them work because they needed workers on the line. The next Monday, their badges were turned off and they couldn’t get into the plant. They called HR and found out they were fired.”

The worker shared a Facebook post with the WSWs from

a fired TPT confirming the union-management scheme.

We were lied to yesterday by the Human Resources individual and second shift union steward about them finding out last minute that TPT's (temporary part time workers) were terminated. This afternoon I called Merrill Lynch to transfer my 401K and Roth to my Fidelity IRA account.

What I learned is Stellantis sent the termination paperwork on Feb 2, 2024 to Merrill Lynch. They didn't process it until Feb 8, 2024. We didn't find out until yesterday that we were terminated, so they already knew and had a decent amount of time to update us about our termination.

Angered over the treachery of the UAW apparatus, the KEP worker told the WSWs, "I feel the UAW is a joke. Not one time did they protect, inform, or give any guidance to TPT's. All they wanted was our union dues, but never did anything. TPT's were screwed out of a bonus, and now so conveniently, profit sharing. They literally used us and threw us to the side of the road like trash."

The worker added, "There have to be more layoffs coming. Higher seniority are given the option to go home early and we're told we're 'overmanned' by 10-15 people a day. The TPT's are not forced to work 12 hours now. They were basically forced to work those hours up until the point they were flipped or let go. They worked 12-hour days all summer, all fall, while other plants were on strike. If they send people home, there eventually have to be layoffs.

"There are so many contract violations by the company. The union tells us, 'they can do that.' You hear that phrase so often you can walk up to someone, hear it, and your immediate response is what's the union letting management get away with this time? We've had contract violations since day one. We were forced to work to work 110 minutes before a break when it clearly states no more than 90 minutes."

To cover for the UAW bureaucracy, Unite All Workers for Democracy (UAWD) group, which is a faction of the union apparatus, has launched a petition campaign to reinstate the fired SEs, which is entirely oriented to management and the UAW apparatus. The petition, which is being circulated in the Kokomo plants, says, "When this petition reaches 1,000 signatures, we will deliver it to the company and notify the UAW-Stellantis department."

As the WSWs has stated, the purpose of the UAWD petition campaign '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."

"The older workers will not fall for this," the KEP worker said. "But younger workers with no generational connection will not know about this." The fired ITP worker added, "It's not only to pacify but to shut us up by making us think, 'Oh, they'll handle it.' There's nothing about our firings on the news. People ask me about my job not knowing I was fired. All they put in the news was how 'good' the contract was."

At the meeting Will Lehman explained that the job cuts, which were spreading across every industry and country, were the product of capitalism and the brutal struggle by the transnational corporations to control markets and profits, including for electric vehicles. He ran as a socialist candidate for UAW president because workers could not stop the job cutting or the danger of World War III without a fight against capitalism and uniting their struggles across borders under the coordination of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

After speaking to Lehman, one of the Indiana workers said, "We want to see a future for our kids and grandkids. I was shocked about how they treated employees and wanted to make sense of it. People are confused, we have to lot more to put out there. It boils down to we want the same thing. The younger generation doesn't know that their livelihood has been taken away. We, the working class, have to fight back. It's time we stand our ground all in. We need to help people understand what socialism is."

The *World Socialist Web Site* encourages Stellantis workers to contact and help build the Rank and File Committee Against Job Cuts as your independent voice.

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.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact