

Anger explodes as Stellantis terminates hundreds more temp workers at Toledo and Detroit Jeep factories

Shannon Jones
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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.

Rank-and-file autoworkers erupted in anger on Monday as Stellantis cut an estimated 1,000 more supplemental (temporary) workers at the Toledo Assembly Complex and Detroit Assembly Complex-Mack plants, which build Jeep brand vehicles. These are part of as many as 2,300 supplemental employees, also known as SEs, being terminated in Ohio, Michigan and Indiana under the terms of last year's UAW-Stellantis labor agreement.

Workers were informed of their firing through robocalls. However, some workers weren't even aware they had been terminated until they attempted to clock in on Monday morning and found their badges had been deactivated. Some SEs with as many as six years of seniority were fired, since the UAW had agreed to arbitrarily base the conversion of temp workers to full time at the Toledo plant on Social Security numbers, not hire dates.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has received reports that more than 400 workers at the Toledo Jeep plant called off on second shift Monday night to protest the firings, leading to a temporary halt of production of the best-selling Jeep Wrangler. Management has reportedly called the action a "wildcat strike" and is threatening to take disciplinary measures against workers.

The United Auto Workers has made no statement opposing the terminations or responding to management threats against rank-and-file workers. The *Detroit News* reported on Monday that the UAW Local 12 Shop Chairman Mike Sawaya sent a text message to members stating that 341 supplementals had been terminated and that only 50 SEs remained at the Toledo facility. "They plan to keep that 50 for a little bit then terminate them as well," he stated.

The mass firings were carried out in the most callous way possible, with Stellantis coldly informing workers that the cuts were to "help improve the efficiency, productivity and market competitiveness of our facilities as we implement our DARE Forward 2030 strategic plan."

An undisclosed number of supplemental workers have also been fired at the Detroit Mack plant, which builds the Jeep Grand Cherokee. Last month, Stellantis eliminated the third shift at the Mack plant, cutting the jobs of 2,455 workers, including 750 SEs. UAW officials have also warned workers at the nearby Warren Truck factory that "global management was surveying the plant for downsizing."

The Stellantis layoffs are part of a global jobs bloodbath as the auto companies seek to offload the enormous cost of electric vehicle production onto the shoulders of workers. Layoffs of Stellantis workers in France and Italy are currently being prepared, including at Italy's Mirafiori and Pomigliano d'Arco plants.

The terminations have sparked enormous anger. During the ratification of the 2023 UAW-Stellantis contract, workers were told that supplemental workers would be made full time. It was later exposed that this was a lie. The agreement only required that Stellantis roll over 1,957 SEs company-wide to full-time positions, plus another 900 at the Toledo plant. On January 12, Stellantis summarily fired 539 temp workers, and the next day UAW Vice President for Stellantis Rich Boyer admitted that another 1,600 SEs would be cut in coming months. Stellantis now says it only plans to keep 500 supplementals companywide going forward.

On March 2, just as the new wave of robo-firings began, a group of terminated supplemental workers held a picket outside the UAW Solidarity House headquarters in Detroit to protest the firings and demand the recall of all terminated workers. The action was endorsed by the Rank-and-File Committee to Fight Job Cuts, which is fighting to unite all autoworkers across industries and borders to defend jobs.

There have also been reports of mass firings of SEs on trumped-up charges at the Freud Avenue plant next to the Stellantis Detroit Assembly Complex-Jefferson plant. The workers do sequencing of parts in preparation for final assembly. Many workers from Toledo Jeep were forced to relocate to Detroit, only to be subsequently fired.

One Toledo Jeep worker said, "Some of the SEs got robocalls Sunday and some others showed up to work Monday and their

badges didn't work. The union officials are being tight-lipped and it's real tense inside of the plant. Production is being screwed up because they fired so many people, but it's like they don't care. I saw the SEs organized a protest out in front of the UAW headquarters. I hope other members come out and support them because the companies are cutting lots of jobs."

Another worker reported, "To add insult to injury, some of the workers got to the line and started work on Monday only to have the union escort them out of the building. Some of the same workers later received a call from a supervisor saying, 'You were not on the list, can you come back to work?'"

Speaking about the large call-off Monday night, the worker added, "It was a message to the UAW that it was a shitty contract. The SEs thought they had a fair chance. They were being used as puppets and didn't know it. It was a setup. Everyone now knows [UAW President] Shawn Fain isn't what he said he was."

A former SE at the Toledo Jeep plant described her feelings. "I am upset, I can't describe it. They did us so wrong. I was there 3-4 years. I never missed a day. I never called off. When I hired in in 2020, I thought this was a job I could stay at until I retired. Then we were told that the firings would go by Social Security numbers, not by hire date. Where did that come from?"

"I had to take a pay cut to get another job. It is hard to find work in Toledo that even pays \$21, so I had to take the first job I could get. People have kids, they have bills to pay."

She was particularly angry at the lies workers had been fed by the UAW bureaucracy. "Shawn Fain had a lot of people fooled. We thought he was for us, that we had gotten the corrupt people out. He was named 'man of the year,' but he let us down. He knew what he was doing from the beginning. The strike was just for publicity so they could say they were fighting for us. But, they used us to get the contract passed."

After the layoffs were announced she said, "We were walking around the plant every day asking the UAW what was happening. They said they didn't know? Why didn't they know, they were taking dues out of our checks every month."

She was encouraged by the struggle being conducted by the Rank-and-File Committee to Fight Job Cuts. "I would like to look Shawn Fain in the face and tell him what I think of him."

Anger is also boiling over in Kokomo, Indiana, where at least 385 SEs were summarily fired at Stellantis plants in January. Many workers are blaming the company for the unexpected and tragic death last week of a supplemental worker at the Stellantis Indiana Transmission Plant who apparently took his own life.

"People are saying he thought he was going to lose his house because his wife also lost her job. He was really depressed," a fired Stellantis supplemental worker from Kokomo told the WSWS. "I used to see him in the plant but I did not know him. It wasn't until the day after this death that I found out what was going on. Workers are collecting money for his family."

She added, "People want Shawn Fain out. Workers in my local are unhappy with him and the UAW International. The

local union officials say they want Fain to come here and explain why everyone lost their jobs but the UAW is not calling them back."

"It's very sad for people to put so many years of hard work into Stellantis, helping the company prosper, and then they just throw them to the side and the union doesn't fight for them," a Stellantis Kokomo Engine Plant worker told the WSWS. "I wished Stellantis and the union cared enough to prevent someone from doing something drastic over how they were treated."

Responding to the job action by Toledo Jeep workers, Jerry White, the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for US vice president, posted the following message on X/Twitter:

White wrote:

As SEP vice presidential candidate, I support the stand taken by Stellantis workers against the brutal firing of 341 supplemental (temporary) workers at the Toledo Jeep assembly plant. On Monday afternoon, hundreds of full-time workers called off work to oppose the firings, prompting management to denounce the "wildcat strike." I urge workers throughout the auto industry to prepare collective action against any management reprisals and to demand the immediate reinstatement of thousands of terminated workers in Ohio, Michigan and Indiana.

The firing of the Toledo SEs, many of whom are single parents and have worked as temps for years, epitomizes the callous indifference of the capitalist system towards the working class. It also exposes the treachery of the UAW bureaucracy, which told these workers they would be converted to full-time positions under the 'historic contracts' signed by UAW President Shawn Fain and hailed by President Biden last year.

Autoworkers must organize the fight against job cuts independently of the UAW bureaucracy and link up with workers fighting layoffs at UPS and other companies. US workers must join with their brothers and sisters across national borders to fight the global capitalist war against the working class. To take this forward, SEP presidential candidate Joe Kishore and I are fighting for the expansion of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.



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