

UAW secretly agreed to remove limits on forced overtime, leading to 70 hour work weeks at Toledo Jeep

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Autoworkers: Tell us what working conditions are like at your plant by filling out the form below. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

Workers at the Stellantis Toledo North Assembly complex are speaking out as the United Auto Workers is helping management enforce a mandatory seven-day, 10-hour work schedule to make up lost production of the Jeep Wrangler due to parts shortages.

According to UAW Local 12 officials in Toledo, management’s authority to impose mandatory overtime to make up for production was granted in the 2023 national auto contract, “which removed any restrictions or limits on management’s ability to schedule overtime.” Further, a review by this reporter of the contract reveals language that bans “collusive” or “concerted” action on the part of workers to refuse overtime.

This further exposes the phony claims of UAW President Shawn Fain, the Biden administration and pseudo-left promoters of the union bureaucracy like Labor Notes that the 2023 was an “historic” win.

The brutal, mandatory 70-hour work schedule follows close on the heels of the layoff of 341 temporary or supplemental workers at the plant. The layoffs, part of a continuing wave of job cuts on the part of Stellantis, have sparked demands for action by rank-and-file Jeep workers and a movement for the recall of UAW Plant Chairman Mike Sawaya.

In an anodyne statement announcing the mandatory schedule, the UAW said the overtime was necessitated due to the company’s loss of 2,270 units because of parts shortages. In fact, the “shortages” were due to management’s refusal to pay parts suppliers, who are demanding additional compensation because of rising

costs.

Workers contacted by the WSWs were particularly incensed by the fact that in the days before the announcement of the forced overtime, Stellantis laid off the last 50 supplementals at the Jeep plant. Now the company is seeking the recall of some supplementals, but skipping over the ones recently fired.

The worker, who was recently converted to full time, said, “You can’t say you are overstaffed and then work people 7–10s. The 341 supplementals that we laid off are now being called and asked to come in as summer replacements for 60–90 days. They will force them to work seven days a week, use them and then fire them.

“They are laying off the last 50 temp workers at Jeep. They would have hit nine months in August. It seemed like they would have kept them to make it at least look like they were honoring the contract, but no.

“No one is going to want to work for a company that never rolls anyone over to full time. Most of the TPTs [temporary part time workers] they asked to come back have said ‘no’ because they know they will be used, abused and fired all over again.

“No one wants to be in emergency status because Stellantis does not pay its bills,” said the Jeep worker who spoke to the WSWs anonymously. “Stellantis wants cheap parts and cheap labor. They are bringing in work from [parts supplier] Syncreon in house, but they want to add it to our existing jobs because they won’t hire people.”

She said that under the 2023 contract Stellantis had supposedly agreed to hire an additional 8 percent on top of the existing workforce as “floaters” to serve as replacements for workers on leave. “They never did, they fired them.” She added, “The UAW is not

representing us at all. We should have struck over the firing of the TPTs.

“I think (Stellantis) wants to run Toledo into the ground so they can close us. We tried to get a petition going to remove Mike Sawaya, but they got it shut down.”

Workers noted that the agreement by the UAW to permit mandatory seven-day scheduling stood in marked contrast to UAW President Shawn Fain’s bogus claim to be fighting for a 32-hour workweek and better work-life balance.

“The UAW said they paid lawyers \$45 million to review the contract,” one worker said. “Were they hired by the company?”

In the midst of the escalating attacks on autoworkers, Fain is continuing to be hailed as a great labor leader by the Biden administration and the corporate media. Fain was named by *Time* magazine as one of the most influential people of 2023 and received a fawning endorsement by Biden.

Fain was also a featured speaker at the recent Labor Notes conference in Chicago, where he gave a warmongering speech wearing a hoodie carrying the logo “Arsenal of Democracy.” The phrase, first coined by Roosevelt, referred to the World War II role of Detroit as a center of US military production and where the UAW enforced a ban on strikes.

Under conditions where the US government is massively escalating its involvement in wars across the world, and even preparing for a war against China, the use of this phrase can only mean that Fain is offering up UAW members as an industrial army for world war.

The effort to use the 2023 sellout contract in auto to promote Fain is wearing thinner and thinner, with almost weekly layoff announcements by Stellantis as well as by Ford and General Motors. After laying off an entire shift, number 2,400 workers, at the Mack Avenue plant in Detroit in February, Stellantis cited “productivity improvements” to justify the layoff of 57 more workers last week. Stellantis also laid off an additional 199 workers at its Sterling Heights Assembly Plant (SHAP) citing its efforts to improve “efficiency.”

In response to a question from rank-and-file autoworkers about the layoffs during a Facebook livestream last week, an event called to celebrate the UAW’s victory in the unionization vote at VW in Tennessee, Fain expressed mock indignation at the

cuts, calling the company “pathetic.” He then pointed to the recent 56 percent pay boost awarded to Stellantis CEO Carlos Taveres, who took in \$39.5 million in total compensation in 2023 compared to \$24.8 million in 2022.

What Fain did not explain is why he would be surprised by that, or what he proposed to do besides waving his finger.

Rank-and-file Stellantis workers want to fight the brutal speedup and job cutting, but this requires a fight against not only management, but the pro-corporate UAW bureaucracy. No amount of pressure will force Fain and the rest of the highly paid apparatus to fight for the interests of workers. Instead, workers must take matters into their own hands by building rank-and-file committees, democratically run by workers themselves, to organize resistance to layoffs and overwork.

The Jeep worker commented, “Fain talked about organizing the South and only one minute about Stellantis. That is the first mention from Fain, but what is he doing about it?”

“They speed up the line and think we don’t notice. We call the union to come clock it and they never show up. It definitely seems like the union is in the company’s pocket and the International hates Toledo Jeep and never has our backs. They are just letting the company run us into the ground.”

“We voted on our local contract in March after being given just two-day notice and just the highlights. ... We should be voting to strike with the local turning it down. We have not had a local agreement since 2015!”



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