

After strike vote Warren Stamping workers back broader fight

Shannon Jones
9 May 2024

Workers at the Stellantis Warren Stamping plant in suburban Detroit told a *World Socialist Web Site* reporting team Thursday that the strike vote this week over health and safety issues reflected broader concerns over deteriorating conditions and management attacks, including the mass firing of temp workers.

On Monday, workers at Warren Stamping voted by 72 percent to authorize the UAW to call a strike over accumulated health and safety grievances. These include lack of maintenance, hazardous work areas and lack of safety equipment.

“They haven’t ordered cardboard in 3-4 weeks” one worker told the WSWS. “We used to get in trouble for not putting cardboard down. Now, we can do it without cardboard. They are being cheap.

“The bathrooms are terrible. The presses aren’t being fixed, parts are not being ordered. A lot of downtime is incurred, which they blame on the workers. That’s how they [justify] layoffs”

“But then we have the CEO (Carlos Taveres) walking away with a \$39 million contract. They want to put more money in the shareholders pockets.”

Another worker said, “There are oily spots on the floor, leaks in the ceiling and they don’t issue gloves. If they do, it’s sparingly, ‘Here’s two for you,’ etc. There used to be gloves anytime.

“Of course, the leaks in the ceiling means water when it rains. The fans need to be repaired badly. It’s not even hot yet and it’s already bad in there. Those affect health because people can fall out. They have exhaust fans built into the walls to suck out the hot air, but none of them work. Instead they are blowing hot air.”

Workers who spoke to the WSWS said the strike vote over health and safety reflected growing anger over many issues, included the mass firing of temp workers and deteriorating conditions in the wake of the 2023

contract. One worker noted that workers had also recently voted to strike over local contract issues as well. “We haven’t had a local contract in 20 years,” he reported.

At Warren Stamping, 34 temporary workers were terminated in January as part of hundreds of terminations of temp workers company-wide. Mass layoffs have hit the Mack Avenue Assembly Plant in Detroit (2,400), and also the Toledo Assembly Complex. In total over 2,000 temp workers have been fired by Stellantis in the wake of the ratification of the 2023 contract. To get the contract ratified, UAW President Shawn Fain falsely claimed that current temp workers with more than nine months would be promoted to full time status.

Cuts have hit the other Detroit automakers as well. Ford recently eliminated a shift at its Rouge Electric Vehicle Center in Dearborn, Michigan. This week the UAW revealed that all 145 temporary workers at the GM parts distribution center, Customer Care and Aftersales (CCA), in Burton, Michigan, outside of Flint, were being laid off.

The toll on workers from the deteriorating work conditions was tragically highlighted by the April 17 death of 46-year-old Tywaun Long at the Ford Rouge complex in Dearborn, Michigan. After collapsing on the assembly line it took emergency medical responders nearly 30 minutes to reach the scene, too late to revive the worker. Workers told the WSWS that Long had complained of not feeling well before he collapsed, but supervisors had denied his request to be relieved.

A Warren Stamping skilled trades worker spoke on the 2023 national auto contract, “There have been things that haven’t been delivered that we were promised.”

Asked about the layoffs the worker said, “A lot of

people feel that if you are going to cut the work force, slow down some of the lines or give us a little bit more breaks.”

As for the claims by Biden and Fain that the UAW 2023 agreement was a “record contract” the worker said, “It was a record contract, because we hadn’t had anything for 20-30 years. But inside that contract there was a hidden agenda. Now, its ‘ok, we won’t fix anything, and lay off the low-level people and make the upper level people work harder’, which isn’t fair.

“They are going that route to put more money in the shareholder pockets.”

The WSWS campaign team also distributed copies of the statement “The working class must take up the fight against the genocide in Gaza and in defense of democratic rights.”

The WSWS campaigners noted the upcoming strike vote by UAW Local 4811 covering 48,000 graduate teaching assistants at the University of California. The strike vote was called in response to the immense anger over the brutal police attacks on anti-genocide protestors at UCLA, part of a wave of repression of pro-Palestinian student protests initiated with the support of the Biden administration.

A Warren Stamping worker said of the arrest of more than 2,000 students nationally, “There is a First Amendment.” Adding, “The arrests are unconstitutional.

“They should give Israel an ultimatum for a ceasefire.” He said, “If we do have a war, its not the rich who will fight the war, it is the middle class and poor.”

Speaking of the “choice” workers are presented between two pro-war candidates, Biden and Trump, the worker said, “A lot of people don’t vote because they think the system is rigged. They are making it hard on the worker. Then when they do a tax cut for the rich, we have to pay for it. They say it will trickle down and it won’t affect the middle class, but it always does.”

About the war drive underway by the entire ruling class, another worker said, “It’s not the rich kids that get sent to war. I wish the world was more peaceful. We are the ones who pay the price.”

In a statement on the strike vote, Jerry White, the Socialist Equality Party’s candidate for US vice president said:

Workers at the Warren Stamping plant have voted overwhelmingly for strike action against unsafe conditions, job cuts and the overloading of their jobs. These conditions have only worsened since the sellout agreement backed by the UAW bureaucracy last year.

Warren Stamping workers are expressing the anger of workers across the country, in fact, across the world, over the demands they sacrifice their health and well-being for corporate profit.

Next week, UAW members at the University of California are voting for strike action to defend students and their own members for protesting the genocide in Gaza.

Rank-and-file workers want to fight but the biggest obstacle is the UAW apparatus, which is aligned with Biden and the pro-war Democrats. Warren Stamping workers should build a rank-and-file committee to take the conduct of this struggle into your own hands and demand strike action by all UAW members against capitalist exploitation, war and the attack on democratic rights by both big business parties.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact