

Following Warren Truck layoffs Detroit Stellantis workers demand real fight to defend jobs

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Are you a Stellantis worker or an autoworker from another company? Fill out the form at the end of the article to join the fight against job cuts by building the Network of Autoworkers Rank-and-File Committees.

Workers at Detroit-area Stellantis plants are infuriated and disgusted by the failure of the United Auto Workers to mount any real defense of jobs in the wake of the layoff of 2,450 workers at the Warren Truck Assembly Plant and a steady toll of layoffs at other factories.

The impact of the job cuts has been devastating on workers, their families and the broader communities. Workers at other area Stellantis plants with lower seniority now face the threat they could be bumped out of jobs.

On nearly a daily basis the company is sending out hundreds of robo-calls and text messages informing workers that they are out of a job. Single mothers and other young parents are having their income ripped from them, leaving them without any means to feed or care for their children.

In the face of this, the UAW bureaucracy is carrying out an impotent public relations campaign demanding Stellantis “Keep the Promise” based on the false claim that the 2023 sellout contract prevents such cuts. In fact, the UAW was well aware that Stellantis planned to slash thousands of jobs after the contract ratification, including the mass firing of temp workers who were induced to vote “yes” on the contract by the false promise of being rolled over to full-time positions.

Further, the 2023 contract, like previous corporatist deals negotiated by the UAW, carried an all-purpose escape clause for management, stating that promises of future product investments, such as the reopening of idled Belvidere Assembly Plant, are contingent on “market conditions.”

Seeking to deflect massive rank-and-file anger and to cover up their betrayals, UAW President Shawn Fain has staged a series of protest rallies and called for a series of strike votes, threatening to call out one or two parts distribution facilities. At the same time, Fain and the UAW apparatus are pushing the same American nationalism that divides the working class and has produced nothing but disaster for them.

In denouncing the “foreign owners” of Stellantis, unfair trade deals and the shipping of “American jobs” to Canada and Mexico, Fain is promoting the same filthy nationalism as the fascistic Republican vice-presidential candidate JD Vance, who has repeatedly visited the Detroit area. At the same time, the UAW president is collaborating with Biden and Harris to suppress working-class opposition to the US-

backed Israeli genocide and American imperialism’s expanding wars in the Middle East and against Russia and ultimately China.

At a rally in Belvidere, Illinois Friday, Fain joined Democratic Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders to promote the campaign of Harris and Walz, issuing nationalist denunciations of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (NAFTA 2) enacted under the Trump administration as a “free trade” deal that “hurts American workers.” In fact, the USMCA was passed with near-unanimous Democratic support as part of stepped-up trade war directed in particular against China.

On Wednesday, the UAW posted a statement on its X/Twitter account declaring, “Two UAW locals at Stellantis have already passed strike authorization votes and more locals are on track to hold strike votes soon. A strike at one or more Stellantis facilities could begin within weeks.”

If the UAW bureaucracy were to call a strike at Denver or the Los Angeles aftermarket parts distribution centers, it would have even less impact on Stellantis than the bogus “stand up” strikes last fall. The entire operation would be designed to cover the tracks of the UAW bureaucracy, which has already signed off on the massive job cuts at Warren Truck and other plants.

Socialist Equality Party candidate for US vice president Jerry White issued the following statement on the Stellantis layoffs.

Among workers there is powerful support for a real fight against job cuts, not the phony publicity stunts of the UAW bureaucracy. But that requires transferring decision-making and power from the UAW apparatus to the workers on the shop floor by building the Autoworkers Network of Rank-and-File Committees. In opposition to the nationalism of the Fain & Co., Stellantis workers must unite with their brothers and sisters in Canada, Mexico, and in Italy where workers are set to strike on October 18 to fight as many as 12,000 job cuts.

If the global corporations have an international strategy, then workers must coordinate their struggles across national boundaries by building the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) to unite autoworkers worldwide, including the thousands of VW and Audi workers fighting job cuts in Germany and Belgium.

The mass layoffs at Warren Truck, and those spreading throughout Detroit, Toledo, Kokomo, and other cities are the brutal face of capitalism, a system that Harris and Trump

defend. It is a system of exploitation that enriches the capitalist owners and condemns the working class to economic insecurity, poverty and war. Joseph Kishore, the SEP candidate for US president, and I, insist that all workers must have the social right to a good-paying and secure job. This right must take precedence over the “right” of the corporate-financial oligarchy to own and control these vast industries. Stellantis and the entire global auto industry must be transformed into a public utility, collectively owned and democratically controlled by the working class.

“We need to make a living and take care of our families”

A recently laid off worker at Warren Truck with five years at Stellantis told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “With SUB (Supplemental Unemployment Benefits) pay you end up getting about 80 percent of your pay. It’s spread over three weeks because you get your unemployment and have to wait a week for your SUB pay. It hurts, you go from living one lifestyle to making just enough money to scrape by.

“They sent out a memo saying we could be sent to any plant in southeast Michigan, about 18 plants. But each of the assembly plants in the Detroit area has been laying off. I think there is rough room for only 900 people, so a lot of people are going to be without a job.

“There is a rumor they will be retooling to build a hybrid version of the Wagoneer next year, but it is only a rumor. It is always the blue-collar worker taking the hit. It seems like Fain is just trying to get a position in politics and not concerned about what is happening to us. Fain is definitely looking for a job after this.”

A *World Socialist Web Site* campaign team also spoke to Stellantis workers at the Sterling Heights Assembly Plant (SHAP), a few miles north of the Warren Truck plant.

A supplemental worker who had been recently promoted to full-time status told the WSWS he just received a layoff notice. “It looks like there is not a solid future here. We need to make a living and take care of our families,” he said.

“The UAW just put out a notice that they are laying off 40-50 people. They are doing it in spurts. The first week it was 14. The next week it was 40 something. They are shrinking the numbers down slowly. They will probably be cutting a shift.

Another worker said, “The 2,400 workers who lost their jobs at Warren Truck is a disgrace. Two contracts ago, we were promised money for Warren Truck to keep a product there and we were lied to. I was forced to come to SHAP, and we were told if we didn’t, we would lose our jobs. The Warren Truck workers were not prepared for what was happening and the [UAW] did not put anything in place to protect them.”

Commenting on the claims by Fain and US President Joe Biden that the 2023 agreements were “record contracts,” the worker said, “These were not record, historic contracts ... I walked the picket line for retirement benefits and health care packages, not for the kind of stuff that is going on right now.

“I know a guy who works across from me who is about to have twins and he doesn’t have a job. It’s sad that the union failed to protect these people.”

The worker added that he was opposed to Trump and Harris and complained that the “UAW is promoting people who are not for us.” Biden, he said, had handed the auto companies billions of dollars in tax breaks and subsidies, which took away the leverage of workers

during their contract battle. Asked how Fain could claim Harris was “pro-worker” when she supported Israel’s genocide of the Palestinian people and the expanding wars in the Middle East, he said, “It’s all about money. It’s all about oil.”

He concluded, “We got our own problems. We got homeless. We got a hurricane down there with kids dying in the water. Mind your business. Worry about what is going on at home.”

Asked what it was like for young workers to try to raise a family with no economic security, he said, “It’s damn near impossible. The cost of living is terrible. Then it’s mentally draining because now you go to wake up not knowing if you are going to get a robot call or text message telling you not to come to work. Every day I come in and my badge works, it’s a blessing for me.”

Asked about Fain’s promotion of the UAW-Stellantis contract, the worker said, “He’s superstar. He did all that for publicity. The highlights, they have not stuck to any of that in the contract.”

The worker cited the UAW agreeing to the firing of 550 supplemental employees (SEs), also known as temporary part-time workers, in January, after Fain and other union bureaucrats promised they would be converted to full time. In fact, the UAW leadership signed off on the termination of at least 2,400 of the company’s 5,219 SEs, according to letter by then UAW Vice President Richard Boyer.

“They fired some 590 people. I got shipped out here from JNAP (Jefferson North now Detroit Assembly Complex-Jefferson) after I got rolled over and it’s my home plant now. Right now, we are the only plant in operation. So, you know, it’s time for Fain to go.”

Another skilled tradesman said it “could be me next” when workers losing their jobs Warren Truck bump out lower seniority workers at SHAP. He denounced Fain, saying, “He knew about the supplemental workers going,” he said, referring to the firing of thousands of SEs the union bureaucracy sanctioned in the agreement. Workers losing their jobs, he said, “don’t have anything and are starting all over from zero. But Fain knew what was coming and he basically lied to those people.”

Asked what he thought about unifying Stellantis workers around the world to defend jobs, including Italian workers who are scheduled to strike October 18 to fight the elimination of 12,000 jobs in the country, the worker said, “I’m for that.”

A veteran skilled trades worker at Warren Truck said, “They are trying to shake out the older people getting them to retire, particularly the legacy workers vested with a pension. “[Stellantis CEO] Tavares is arrogant. He is pissing everyone off. It’s time to wake up to the fact that these capitalists, the one percent, are not our friends.

“Everyone wants us to be frightened and uncertain. The UAW is not in touch with the members. People are beginning to see Republicans and Democrats are two wings on the same bird. Workers need their own independent organization outside the UAW and the Democratic and Republican parties,” he concluded.

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