

Ford Workers Rank-and-File Committee meeting condemns UAW complicity in factory police raids

George Kirby
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On Sunday, March 2, the Ford Workers Rank-and-File Committee, affiliated with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), held a meeting titled, “No police, no dogs, no undercover agents in the auto factories! Build rank-and-file committees to defend workers’ democratic rights.” The meeting opposed security and police sweeps in Ford factories, which are conducted under the pretext of seizing drugs and firearms while being fully backed by the United Auto Workers (UAW) bureaucracy.

Will Lehman, a Mack Trucks worker in Pennsylvania who ran as a socialist candidate for UAW president in 2022, opened the meeting by denouncing Ford’s raids as a false concern for safety, citing past company negligence that led to worker deaths.

Lehman recalled the 1999 Ford Rouge explosion that killed six workers and the still unexplained events surrounding the 2017 death of Jacoby Hennings at the Woodhaven Stamping Plant. He also referenced the recent workplace death of Tywaun Long Jr. in 2024. He condemned the UAW leadership for failing to protect workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, pointing out that only wildcat strikes forced temporary shutdowns.

Lehman linked the police measures to broader attacks on immigrant workers and mass firings under Trump, emphasizing that the workplace raids mirrored the aggressive ICE crackdowns. “Trump’s mass deportations and workplace ICE raids are meant to instill fear among immigrant workers and make them more vulnerable to corporate exploitation. Ford’s police raids have the same goal—intimidation and control. They want to divide us along racial and national lines to weaken our collective fight,” Lehman stated. He warned that the growing police presence was part of a broader strategy to suppress worker dissent and maintain corporate control.

Lehman pointed to the growing opposition among workers to the UAW bureaucracy, noting that strike authorization votes have consistently been in the high 90 percent range, and contract rejections are becoming more frequent. “Workers are showing that they are willing to fight back, but the UAW leadership continues to stand in the way of real resistance. The overwhelming rejection of sellout contracts is a sign that workers are ready for something different, and the rank-and-file committees are the path forward,” Lehman stated.

Tim Rivers from the *World Socialist Web Site* noted the political

significance of the raids, connecting them to the 2023 UAW contract struggle and Bill Ford’s threats against striking workers. He shared workers’ comments expressing outrage over constitutional rights violations and the UAW’s complicity.

One Michigan Assembly Plant worker stated, “I want to speak about our constitutional rights. Far as I’m concerned, there’s no such thing as an illegal immigrant. All the workers in the United States, Canada and everywhere—we’re all people. The raids against immigrants, in fact, everything that Trump has done since he got in is illegal. They’re violating the Constitution of the United States, which provides unalienable rights to everyone here, whether they were born here or not.

“Trump is ripping up those rights, and people need to understand that they want to scare us and keep us in the dark. What you are writing on the *World Socialist Web Site* is the truth.”

Another Ford worker said, “The UAW is supposed to be there to counsel and defend workers, but it’s doing the opposite. They’re harassing women in the plant to extract sexual favors behind closed doors. Now they’re laying off more and cutting hours since Trump came in to launch a trade war and started firing people. That’s what’s behind the raids with police dogs.”

“Look at everything that’s going on,” another Dearborn truck worker said, “there are these wars and dictatorships. I’m reading the history of the 20th century.”

During the discussion, a Detroit Stellantis worker condemned surprise locker raids under the guise of drug enforcement, emphasizing the union’s failure to protect workers. “The union should be defending us, but instead they’re siding with management. They label some of us as ‘non-value added,’ just to justify harassment and firings. They talk about safety, but their real goal is to make us fearful and compliant.” Another worker pointed to how management and the union bureaucracy have become indistinguishable: “The higher up you go, the more they start thinking like management. It’s a hierarchy where they forget about the workers on the floor.”

A retired nurse likened the situation in the auto plants to corporate eavesdropping on hospital employees, describing increasing surveillance and management listening in on private conversations.

Other speakers explained that the capitalist system and both political parties had produced a corporate and financial oligarchy,

which could only impose its will on the masses through authoritarian measures and an unrestrained dictatorship in the factories.

Chief among the oligarchs was Elon Musk, the world's richest man who Trump has put in charge of firing thousands of federal employees and gutting Social Security and other programs, which tens of millions rely on.

WSWS reporter Chase Lawrence said Ford's police-state tactics mirrored the high security and surveillance regime in Musk's Tesla factories. Musk, who travels with his own massive private security team, employs such methods to prevent workers from taking collective action against low wages, high injury rates and toxic exposures.

Jerry White, the labor editor of the WSWS, drew historical parallels between the highly secretive Ford Global Security Task Force and the tactics the auto company employed in the 1930s. Henry Ford, who like Trump and Elon Musk, was an avid admirer of Adolf Hitler, constructed a paramilitary force of some 3,000 spies, strikebreakers and goons in his infamous Ford Service Department to intimidate and attack union organizers and socialists in the 1930s. Today's surveillance methods serve the same purpose—silencing dissent and preventing workers from organizing effectively.

The left-wing militants and socialist workers who led the Flint sit-down strikes and other mass struggles that established the UAW waged a relentless struggle against the KKK, the Black Legion and other forces that tried to divide the working class along racial and ethnic lines.

"Today, the auto companies no longer need to rely on private thugs and spies because they now use the UAW bureaucracy to police the shop floor, suppress dissent, and enforce management's dictates," White said. "That is why rank-and-file committees must be built to transfer power from the corrupt UAW apparatus to the workers on the shop floor."

Speakers from Germany and the UK emphasized the global nature of these attacks, noting mass layoffs at Volkswagen and warning that US trends often spread internationally.

German WSWS writer Dietmar Gaisenkersting stated, "There have never been such massive attacks in the car industry in Germany after the Second World War. Volkswagen has announced 30,000 job cuts, and the union leadership has done nothing to stop it. The largest shareholder, Porsche SE, built its fortune by collaborating with Hitler, forcing tens of thousands into slave labor. Today, these same financial interests are attacking workers worldwide." He called for the building of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) to coordinate the struggles of workers across national borders to fight these corporate attacks.

The meeting concluded with the unanimous adoption of a resolution condemning Ford's police-state tactics and calling for the expansion of rank-and-file committees to resist corporate repression and assert workers' democratic rights.

The resolution declared:

This meeting of the Ford Workers Rank-and-File

Committee unequivocally condemns Ford Motor Company's escalating police state tactics under the fraudulent pretext of ensuring workplace safety. The searches, conducted with police K-9 units and backed by the United Auto Workers (UAW) bureaucracy, are an outright violation of workers' democratic rights.

No corporation has the right to violate the Fourth Amendment, which protects against unreasonable searches and seizures. If Ford and the UAW truly cared about workers' well-being, they would address the real dangers: forced overtime, job overloading, unsafe conditions and the neglect that led to tragic workplace deaths such as Tywana Long Jr. in 2024. Instead, they conspire to suppress workers through surveillance and intimidation.

The auto executives have been encouraged by Trump's workplace ICE raids, the witch hunt against immigrant workers, and mass firing of federal employees to bring back the days of absolute industrial tyranny in the plants. The historical role of corporate security and police as enforcers of exploitation, from Harry Bennett's union-busting "Service Department" in the 1930s to today's industrial surveillance, proves that these measures serve only the interests of the corporate elite.

The attempt to divide workers through fear and scapegoating must be resisted with collective action based on the principle: An injury to one, is an injury to all! We call for the unity of all workers—regardless of nationality or immigration status—to oppose these attacks by Ford Security, police and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

We call on all workers to establish and expand independent rank-and-file committees to fight back against corporate repression, enforce workplace safety and take control over hiring, firing and working conditions. These committees must reject the collaboration of the UAW bureaucracy with corporate management and assert the power of workers over their own workplaces. Only through organized resistance can we defend jobs, restore lost wages and benefits and prevent the destruction of our democratic rights.

We demand:

No police, dogs, or undercover agents in the plants!

End ICE raids.

Defend democratic rights for all workers.

No layoffs.

Build rank-and-file committees in every plant.



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