

# As layoffs hit Stellantis plants and parts suppliers, UAW President Shawn Fain defends Trump trade war policies

Shannon Jones  
8 April 2025

*Autoworkers: tell us what you think about the tariffs and the UAW's support for Trump! Fill out the form below; all submissions will be kept anonymous.*

The impact of President Trump's tariff war against virtually the entire world has already been felt by Stellantis workers across North America, who face thousands of layoffs.

Starting this week the company has paused production at its Windsor, Ontario van plant for two weeks, impacting 4,500 workers, and imposed a one-month shutdown on its Toluca, Mexico facility, impacting some 2,500 workers. At the same time, 900 US Stellantis workers in Michigan and Indiana who build components for those factories are also being laid off.

Another 1,000 workers are set to be laid off April 14 at the Stellantis Warren Truck plant outside Detroit due to a shortage of engines for the Ram 1500 light truck, which is assembled at the factory. Those engines are produced in Saltillo, Mexico, however, Stellantis claims the cuts are not due to the tariffs.

Thousands of workers at Canadian auto parts supplier plants are off the job due to the layoffs in Windsor and at Warren Truck, according to an industry spokesman. Flavio Volpe, CEO of the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association told *The Canadian Press*, "Anyone who supplies Windsor and Warren isn't working right now," said. "There are probably 10,000 to 12,000 people who aren't working because of this."

Automakers, with the collaboration of the UAW, are attempting to squeeze more production out of workers in response to the tariffs. There have been a series of tragic deaths in auto plants including the death early Monday of 62-year-old skilled tradesman Ronnie Adams at the Stellantis engine plant in Dundee, Michigan.

Last week another worker, Chad Foor, had a stroke

while on the line at the Stellantis Kokomo transmission plant. According to the workers' wife, Chad's supervisor would not let him leave the line when he started having memory loss.

Hundreds of Stellantis Kokomo workers were also laid off this week due to the tariffs.

With workers fearful for their jobs and global equity markets crashing, United Auto Workers president Shawn Fain continues to embrace Trump's tariffs, claiming they were in the interest of US workers.

In remarks broadcast Monday on National Public Radio, Fain claimed Trump's tariffs would help reverse the long term decline in auto jobs. "We've sat here for the last 30 plus years, with the inception of [the North American Free Trade Agreement] back in 1993-94, and watched our manufacturing base in this country disappear," he said.

At the same time he demagogically dismissed the threat of economic collapse and depression caused by the expanding global trade war: "Where was JPMorgan [Chase], all these people, when the companies were jacking up prices and price gouging the last three and four years?" he said. "Where was their outcry then? As long as the stock market's doing good, that's all they care about."

There is staggering hypocrisy in these comments, given the UAW bureaucracy has helped destroy millions of autoworker jobs in the US through sellout contracts since the late 1970s. Fain himself is implicated in thousands of job cuts since the 2023 contract was pushed through on the basis of lies, following a phony "standup strike" which did little to impact production.

Fain himself has said nothing about the current round of layoffs at Stellantis, just as the UAW did nothing to oppose the mass firing of temporary workers and the elimination of shifts at the Stellantis Mack Avenue

assembly plant in Detroit and Warren Truck in the wake of the 2023 contract sellout.

For decades the UAW has used anti-foreigner demagoguery to deflect the anger of workers over concessions and job cuts away from the union bureaucracy and against brother and sister workers in Asia and Latin America. One tragic product of this was the death of Chinese-American draftsman Vincent Chin, who was beaten to death in 1982 by a Chrysler foreman and his unemployed son who thought Chin was Japanese.

Fain's presentation of Trump's ultra-right economic policies as a boon to American workers is false. In reality, the global trade war and breakup of global supply chains it will unleash will lead to massive job losses in the US as well as massive cost of living increases.

Fain and the bureaucracy even claim that converting "excess capacity" for military production—as trade wars lead inevitably to World War III—will mean increased employment for workers. In reality, such a conflict threatens the extinction of human civilization.

A number of workers at the Stellantis Toledo Assembly Complex contacted by the *World Socialist Web Site* that they were disgusted with Fain's support for Trump's tariffs. "I am tired of all the constant uncertainty over our jobs," one worker said.

Another said in response to Fain's support for Trump, "He is not for us, all he cares about are his billionaire friends. He is cutting taxes for them, not for us."

A Detroit area auto parts worker said, "Fain is worse than Trump. He thinks these tariffs are a good idea. How can they be a good idea? It is supposed to raise 25 percent on all the parts and supplies. These vehicles are built all over the world.

"The capitalists want the working class divided. In the US they have Labor Day, but in all the rest of the world they had May Day. They changed it in the US to keep us separate from other countries."

There is no such thing as an American car. Workers are tied together in a highly integrated global system of production. The task is to free the productive forces from the stranglehold of the capitalist ruling classes around the world and put the enormous potential contained in global production to the betterment of mankind, not private enrichment.

Fain's occasional claims to oppose workers of different countries being pitted against each other in a race to the bottom ring totally hollow under conditions where he cheers on the destruction of thousands of jobs in Canada and Mexico due to tariffs.

For their part, the bureaucrats heading the Canadian auto union Unifor are responding to "America first" nationalism with "Canada First" nationalism. Unifor President Lana Payne has embraced the counter-tariffs imposed by the Canadian government and is endorsing a "Buy Canadian" campaign.

In recent comments to the *Detroit Free Press*, Payne said that US-Canada tensions should be instead directed against China. "The other big problem here that's being ignored while the U.S. is fighting with its neighbor is that we have capacity that has been created in China that dwarfs the entire North American industry," she said. "We're going to be even further behind, and five years from now, much more vulnerable to the incredible industrial capacity China has built up."

The genuine interests of rank-and-file workers cannot find expression through the UAW bureaucracy. The support given by Fain to the fascist Trump is further demonstration of that fact. The defense of jobs and living standards requires a rank-and-file rebellion against the whole pro-company UAW apparatus and the building of rank-and-file committees in every factory and workplace.

These committees, democratically run by workers themselves, will be a forum where workers can decide and act for themselves outside the control of the UAW apparatus.

These committees working through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees must forge links with workers in different factories and industries both in the US and globally. Such international unity is the only effective means of confronting the transnational auto giants.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)**