

Mobilize to stop GM layoffs at Factory Zero in Detroit – Build Rank and File Committees

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Are you a GM Factory Zero worker? Fill out the form at the end of this article for assistance in building a rank-and-file committee to fight the layoffs and defend every worker's job.

With the final day of work fast approaching for 1,140 workers slated for permanent layoff at General Motors Factory Zero in Detroit, the United Auto Workers leadership is maintaining a complicit silence. Though the sprawling assembly plant is less than five miles from the UAW's national "Solidarity House" headquarters, UAW President Shawn Fain and his underlings have not called for any action to oppose the layoffs or even scheduled a rank-and-file meeting.

GM is slashing production by half at its flagship EV plant that straddles the border between Detroit and the enclave of Hamtramck. These job cuts, which GM now calls "permanent," are cascading through supplier plants in the Detroit area, leading to hundreds of additional layoffs.

This is part of a brutal wave of downsizing in the auto industry since the supposed "record contract" negotiated by the UAW in 2023. This includes the mass firing of thousands of temp workers and layoffs at major plants in the Detroit area and throughout the country.

"It is time to draw the line and defend the right to a secure job and living standard," said Mack Trucks worker Will Lehman, a leading member of the International Workers Alliance of Rank and File Committees (IWA-RFC).

Lehman continued:

The GM Factory Zero layoffs are another devastating blow to Detroit and the surrounding region. This attack slashes family incomes in a city already wracked by high poverty and unemployment. While UAW President Fain spoke of a "just transition" to EVs, these layoffs again show that management and its political allies will throw workers away the moment profits demand it.

The new mayor of Detroit Mary Sheffield, who has

been promoted by the unions, boasts about the corporate driven "comeback" of Detroit, but she had said nothing and will not do anything to defend GM workers.

But workers are not responsible for falling EV sales, Trump's decisions to end tax credits, his trade war measures or the danger of another economic recession—and we must not be the ones to pay for it! GM is spending billions on executive salaries, stock buybacks and its new headquarters in downtown Detroit. The stock market is booming, the financial oligarchy is looting society, and Elon Musk could be the world's first trillionaire.

If our livelihoods are to be protected it is up to shop floor workers ourselves to take action. I urge workers at Factory Zero to immediately establish a rank-and-file committee to organize a fight to stop the layoffs. Workers must demand an immediate membership meeting, led by the most trusted and militant workers, to map out a strategy to defend every job. This includes organizing immediate strike action and mass protests to rally workers throughout the Detroit area to demand no layoffs, the shortening of the workweek with no loss of pay and democratic control over production.

Instead of fighting to defend our jobs, Fain has joined the fascist Trump in pitting American workers against our brothers and sisters in Canada, Mexico and globally. At my plant in Macungie, Pennsylvania where the UAW sold out our strike in 2023, the UAW is colluding with management's job cutting while they tell us that Mexican workers are taking our jobs. Fain blames "unfair trade," not capitalism for the closure of the CNH plant in Burlington, Iowa.

We will not win just as American workers. We need to reach out to our co-workers in the US and globally if we're going to defeat the transnational corporations.

A veteran Factory Zero worker told the WSWs, “I don’t understand the lack of communication,” by the UAW. “They’re doing this on purpose. If we don’t make 1,850 in hours, GM gets part of our profit sharing back. They’ll be getting a huge chunk of our bonus next March. That’s how I see it. With all these layoffs, they are lining their pockets.”

This is not the first time GM has threatened closure of this plant, which GM built in the 1980s on top of the historic Poletown neighborhood whose residents were evicted. In 2019, the factory, then known as Detroit-Hamtramck Assembly, was one of several plants GM threatened with closure. While the Detroit plant was spared under terms of the 2019 contract, the UAW signed off on the closure of the Lordstown Assembly Plant in Ohio at the cost of thousands of jobs.

The layoffs at Factory Zero will have a ripple effect on supplier plants and small businesses in the area—Avancez in Hazel Park is laying off 143 workers; Dana Thermal Products has closed its plant in Auburn Hills cutting 200 jobs; Autokinition is cutting 133 jobs, and Yanfeng another 192.

As part of the same EV downsizing Ultium Cells Ohio faces 550 indefinite and 850 temporary layoffs, while Ultium Cells Tennessee will see 700 temporary reductions.

Underscoring the collaboration of the UAW in imposing the layoffs at Factory Zero, UAW Local 22 officials told a WSWs reporter they could not give any statements and directed all questions concerning the upcoming layoffs to the UAW international. As of this writing Solidarity House had not responded to the inquiry from the WSWs.

According to a report by MSN, the Factory Zero cuts will have a particularly heavy impact on the adjacent Detroit enclave of Hamtramck. The author states, “Economic modeling suggests Factory Zero’s impact could reach \$425 to \$550 million annually in regional losses.”

The report warns that in the city of Hamtramck local businesses could “lose \$456,000 to \$684,000 monthly in worker spending, totaling \$5.5 million to \$8.2 million annually.” Municipal revenues could “drop \$4 to \$5 million, including lost taxes and reduced sales revenue. The city’s fragile economic ecosystem faces cascading consequences from a single plant’s operational reduction.”

“Average compensation at Factory Zero reaches \$60,000 annually. Supplemental Unemployment Benefits cover 50 to 75 percent of wages for the first year, then decline. After two years, income falls to \$362 weekly under Michigan unemployment insurance, creating a 62 percent reduction for many families. This income collapse risks mortgage and rent defaults across the community,” the report stated.

Enormous anger over job cuts under conditions of the escalating cost of living is building. Videos of Factory Zero

workers speaking out against the cuts published by the *World Socialist Web Site* on social media have gained hundreds of thousands of views. This underscores the potential support GM workers would win if they took independent action to defend their jobs.

Dan posted, “I retired from GM in 2019 with 37.5 years, I was laid off the 1st time with 1 year seniority. Called back to work 5 years later, worked 3 years, laid off again. 2 years later got called back to work in a place called Saturn in Tennessee...”

“We were called GM gypsies going from one plant to the other just to work for a year or two and have the rug pulled out from under you again just when you thought alright I’m back making good money and benefits for you and your family!”

Another worker commented: “I’m praying for my brothers and sisters. I work at Stellantis we went through layoffs last year from September until October and then again right before Christmas time. I know the feeling over the years I’ve been laid off since I worked there. I’m grateful for my job but I don’t put all of my trust in any company in today’s economy. You have to have multiple jobs or incomes. I wouldn’t be surprised in the next few years as we get closer to the end of our contract that these companies replace half of the workforce with AI and robots. I’m hoping our people in all of the Big Three prepare for that.”

Patrick posted “It’s disgusting firing loyal people at Holiday time just to save a few bucks.

Candace added, “GM’s making tons of money, but they don’t care about their workers just as long as they’re making money”

Another wrote, “I wouldn’t work for GM if they paid me a million dollars! I just saw an old man who retired from there back in 99 and they took his pension from him because they were having financial issues, which had his health insurance tied to it and his wife died because of it. Then took all of his life insurance and left him with only \$10,000.”

A fight to oppose the layoffs will win tremendous support in the working class. But this requires independent organization and leadership. Workers who want to take up the fight to build a rank-and-file committee to defend jobs, should fill out the form below.



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