

“The union lets them get away with everything”: GM Factory Zero workers denounce UAW complicity, call for fight against mass layoffs

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Autoworkers: Take up the fight against layoffs! Fill out the form at the end of this article to speak out against layoffs and learn more about joining the Autoworkers Rank-and-File Committee.

General Motors workers leaving the Factory Zero plant in Detroit Wednesday afternoon denounced the layoffs and the complicity of United Auto Workers in the destruction of their jobs. With the permanent layoff of 1,140 workers at the assembly plant scheduled for January 5, workers spoke about the hardships they are facing and expressed support for a fight to defend their jobs.

The layoffs come as General Motors recorded \$14.9 billion in profit in 2024, raised its shareholder dividend, and spent \$6 billion on stock buybacks. Despite falling EV sales due to Trump’s elimination of consumer tax credits, Wall Street still expects GM to make \$12–13 billion in 2025. The layoffs are part of a restructuring operation driven by investor demands for automation, consolidation and the destruction of thousands of jobs in the global auto industry.

Supporters of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) distributed the statement “Mobilize to stop GM layoffs at Factory Zero in Detroit—Build Rank-and-File Committees.” It calls on workers to form independent committees capable of organizing a real fight, unifying workers across plants and borders and breaking out of the isolation imposed by the union bureaucracy.

A young worker spoke with anguish about the impact on her life. “In January, I’ll be laid off indefinitely. I’m mad about it. Right now, my boyfriend is paying for things. I’m pregnant and trying to move but I can’t. I need to verify my employment to get a new place but I can’t with the layoffs.”

She continued, “The union lets them get away with everything—I don’t see why they take money out of our checks because [the company] does anything they want.”

Asked about Trump’s attempts to blame immigrants for the worsening conditions confronting workers, she said, “It’s the rich that are doing this to us, not immigrants. Trump is crazy.”

Far from defending workers, the UAW apparatus has not held a single membership meeting, proposed no fight and is maintaining total silence as workers confront the destruction of their jobs. Factory Zero sits less than five miles from Solidarity House, but UAW President Shawn Fain and Local 22 officials have already sanctioned the layoffs. To oppose the Factory Zero layoffs would cut across the UAW bureaucracy’s alliance with Trump and his trade-war agenda. Fain has embraced Trump’s tariffs and promotes the lie that workers in Canada, Mexico, and other countries must lose their jobs so workers in the United States can keep theirs.

A veteran worker described the constant instability imposed on autoworkers. “I’m not sure GM even has a plan because things change by the day and by the hour. What we’re told at one meeting, the next day they can change their mind. The last layoff we had, we found out a day-and-a-half ahead of being off for a month. And so, people had no time to plan for it. Now they’re juggling jobs around, and it doesn’t seem like anybody knows what they’re doing.

“I’m still waiting for my home plant to be retooled so that I can go home. I drive an hour to get here every day. I’m coming from Oxford, which is just 10 minutes away from the Lake Orion plant, which has now been down for about two years. And so, I’ve been driving an hour each way to and from this plant.” She said she supported change but did not yet see an organized path forward: “I’m not sure where the first step is, but I’d love to see a change.”

Some workers pointed to the sheer irrationality of the company’s actions. “It sucks that it is around the holidays,” another worker said. “Why is it you get car of the year, and

suddenly we get laid off? One of my worst fears working at GM is being moved out of state. So far, I've only been bounced around the metro Detroit area. I've been lucky."

A young worker referencing the WSWS's widely viewed video interviews with Factory Zero workers described the shock running through thousands of families. "My parents saw it too, and they asked me if I was affected. I told them luckily, I wasn't. But 1,100 to 1,200 other people, who I work side by side with, are losing their jobs. And to tell you the truth, they might be planning to close the whole plant. That's what we're all thinking now."

The above-referenced veteran worker provided a broad view shaped by decades inside GM's brutal restructuring machinery. "This is the seventh GM plant I've worked for. I started at SPO in Pontiac and got transferred to Romulus Engine. Then I was forced to work at Warren Powertrain before being forced to Toledo Machining for seven years. Then I came back to Romulus before being transferred to Pontiac Stamping and then Factory Zero."

He rejected GM's narrative that the cuts stem from absenteeism. "Yeah, that's where it seems to be headed," he said of a possible full plant shutdown. "They blame it on people not coming to work or whatever—but that's not it, this was in the works." He added, "We have a lot of people who travel long ways to come to work," including workers driving from Indiana every day.

On Trump's anti-immigrant agitation, he said, "I don't think that it's the immigrants. It's just his bad policies... giving money to certain people and calling out other people because they didn't vote for him." On ICE raids: "We should be pulling together instead of dividing... I don't know anybody that ever succeeded by being divided."

He was equally scathing toward UAW President Shawn Fain. "Fain is no good. We need to get rid of him next year. He wants to be in the media, to be a celebrity. I heard he has security like GM CEO Mary Barra, if not more. So, what are we doing? Are we working? You're spending all that money, which is not your money but our money, and what about the people that's laid off?" He expressed support for the building of rank-and-file committees to transfer power from the UAW apparatus to workers on the shop floor.

The layoffs at Factory Zero are part of GM's plan to cut production by half, triggering mass layoffs at supplier plants including Avancez, Dana Thermal Products, Autokiniton, and Yanfeng, as well as more than 2,000 job cuts across GM's Ultium battery operations in Ohio and Tennessee. This is a coordinated corporate restructuring, backed by Wall Street and enforced by the UAW.

In his statement on the layoffs, Mack Trucks worker and IWA-RFC leader Will Lehman declared:

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.

He continued:

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... 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.

The fight at Factory Zero is not simply a local struggle. It is part of an international movement of autoworkers confronting layoffs, wage cuts, speed-ups and automation across borders. The only viable strategy is to unify workers, not divide them, and to build rank-and-file committees independent of the UAW bureaucracy and its nationalist program, which subordinates workers' interests to corporate profitability.

To get information about building a rank-and-file committee to fight the job cuts, fill out the form below.



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