HALT PRODUCTION AT SHAP TO STOP MONKEYPOX SPREAD!



BY WILL LEHMAN
Mack Trucks worker and rank-and-file candidate for UAW president

The report of a case of the monkeypox virus at the Sterling Heights Assembly Plant in the Detroit area is very concerning and calls for urgent action by autoworkers.

A whistleblower reported that management announced at a team meeting that there was a confirmed case at SHAP, but now the United Auto Workers and Stellantis are covering it up.

I call for an immediate shutdown of all production until the spread of the infection is isolated and contained, with all workers affected receiving full pay. The companies, which are making record profits based on our exploitation, can afford to take the necessary measures to save our health and lives.

We need to break through the misinformation and disinformation that is being put out by the White House, the UAW and corporate media.

All workers need to be made aware that monkeypox is a potentially deadly virus with a case fatality rate similar to COVID. It can cause disfiguring lesions and excruciating pain that in 10 percent of cases requires hospitalization. The experience of Africa shows that it has a particularly severe impact on children.

The official number of monkeypox cases, 7,500 in the US, is likely an undercount, since testing is a complicated and long process. The vast majority of individuals currently being tested are gay men, based on the false claim that the virus is primarily transmitted through sex. In fact, studies have shown that monkeypox can spread through aerosols that linger in the air like the coronavirus. It can also spread through skin to skin contact as well as contaminated fabric and surfaces. The virus can remain alive for weeks outside the body, meaning all potentially contaminated areas need to be regularly disinfected with appropriate cleaning supplies.

Given this, it is highly probable that there are more cases in the auto plants than the single reported case at SHAP, where 7,000 work. For more than two years, management and the UAW have systematically covered up the spread of COVID-19 in the plants, forcing workers to rely on word of mouth.

Giant auto plants with thousands forced to stand close together for hours on end are primary vectors for the transmission of disease that can infect the entire community. The danger will be multiplied when schools reopen in a few short weeks under conditions where nothing is being done to halt the spread of COVID-19 or monkeypox.

No confidence can be put in the profit hungry Stellantis management or their lackeys in the UAW bureaucracy to deal with this emergency. The last two and a half years of the COVID-19 pandemic show they could not care less about workers' health or lives.

When COVID was first detected in auto plants, it was workers who halted production, not the highly paid UAW bureaucrats. If it wasn't for the action of workers on the shop floor at SHAP and other auto plants, who stopped production as the pandemic spread in March 2020, there would have been no temporary lockdowns or other limited safety protocols put in place. The UAW worked to

prematurely reopen the auto plants before the virus was contained and then steadily removed all the other protocols while covering up its spread.

Now the UAW simply parrots all the corporate and government lies that we must accept mass infection, that COVID will be here forever, killing hundreds of thousands every year and inflicting millions with debilitating “long COVID.”

This means that we workers must act independently to protect the health of ourselves, our families and our communities.

I call for the formation of rank-and-file committees in every auto plant and workplace to oversee health and safety and other workplace conditions.

We need to build a network of rank-and-file committees to link up autoworkers everywhere, including with our brothers and sisters overseas. We cannot allow COVID and now monkeypox to continue to spread in our workplaces and society as a whole.

Medical science has the tools like vaccines, mass testing, quarantine, isolation, and rigorous contact tracing to contain and eliminate these diseases. Workers must not be allowed to continue to die simply to grow the profits of the auto companies and Wall Street.

If you support what I am saying, I ask you to contact my campaign and learn how you can become more involved.

Sign up for information on my campaign: Text WILL to (877) 861-4428.

JOIN THE FIGHT FOR WORKERS’ POWER!

Get involved with the rank-and-file campaign in the UAW elections.

willforuawpresident.org/get-involved