FOR A REAL FIGHT AGAINST OUTSOURCING AND JOB CUTTING AT SHAP! BUILD RANK-AND-FILE COMMITTEES TO LEAD THE BATTLE



BY WILL LEHMAN
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UAW Local 1700 at the Stellantis Sterling Heights Assembly Plant has called for a strike vote May 7 and May 8 over outsourcing. In the past these votes have been used for workers to let off steam and this time doesn't appear to be any different.

Workers at SHAP are right to be angry and ready to fight outsourcing and job cuts. But that fight will go nowhere if it is left in the hands of the UAW bureaucracy. Workers have been down that road before—and it has led to concession after concession.

The Ram 1500 is creating enormous profits for Stellantis, sweated off the labor of SHAP workers. Shawn Fain and the rest of the UAW bureaucracy will do nothing that will interrupt the flow of profits to management because a portion of that gets funneled back to them.

After the UAW-Stellantis deal in 2023 sanctioned the firing of thousands of temporary part-time employees (TPTs), workers at SHAP are reporting that the company is hiring new TPTs while thousands of full time Stellantis workers remain on indefinite layoff. Stellantis has also brought gun sniffing dogs into the plant creating an atmosphere of intimidation.

Last month, Stellantis CEO Antonio Filosa stated he is launching a global cost-cutting plan, called the Value Creation Program, or VCP. He says the initiative will be "ambitious" and focused on North America and Europe, without providing further details.

But workers will pay the price for this cost cutting. It is clear what this means, more layoffs, more forced overtime and more profits pumped out of our labor.

Outsourcing didn't just appear—it was made possible by what the union already conceded. Now skilled trades workers are being targeted, and tomorrow it will be everyone else. The strategy is obvious: divide workers, isolate one group at a time, and drive down conditions for all.

The current contract language sanctions outsourcing and only requires that the UAW be consulted. Language that allows the union to bid against outside contractors for work makes it even worse. It forces workers into a race to the bottom, where the "winner" is whoever accepts the lowest wages and worst conditions. This has never saved jobs. It has destroyed them—tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands over the past decades.

The contracts negotiated by the UAW apparatus are aimed at protecting the apparatus, not the members. They are worked out behind closed doors, and workers only find out what they've lost after the fact. On top of that, Memorandums of Understanding are used to slip in even more concessions between contracts. These agreements are not shields—they are tools used to give things away to management.

The UAW bureaucracy kept this language in the 2023 sellout contract signed by Fain and supported by Rick Boyer, Margaret Mock, LaShawn English and every other UAW official. After this rotten deal led to the firing of TPTs and mass layoffs, Fain launched his phony "Keep the Promise" campaign, which

included a series of strike votes that did not result in a single strike. Belvidere Assembly is still closed and may never reopen. Thousands remain on layoff and brutal speed up and cutting corners on safety has led to the deaths of Stellantis brothers Ronald Adams Sr. at Dundee Engine and Antonio Gaston at Toledo Assembly, along with Gregory Knopf at Ford Sharonville Transmission.

At the same time, Fain has backed Trump's tariffs and sought to divide American workers from our brothers and sisters in Canada, Mexico and other countries. But economic nationalism only leads to trade war and shooting war, as we see with Trump's criminal war against Iran, which has not only driven up gas prices but threatens to drag our children off to war.

If workers want to defend their jobs, they need to take matters into their own hands. That means organizing independently, uniting across all divisions in the US and internationally, and preparing to fight on their own terms—not waiting for approval from a bureaucracy that is already preparing the next sellout.

This means building rank-and-file committees controlled democratically by workers ourselves. We should be the ones who decide when to strike and what demands to raise. Any other strategy can only lead to workers being betrayed once again. It requires a collective struggle led by the rank-and-file not just at SHAP but across Stellantis and the auto industry and our working class brothers and sisters internationally.

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