

UAW keeps autoworkers in the dark about possible strike at Dana, Inc. parts plant in Warren, Michigan

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Dana workers: Join a rank-and-file committee today, and carry forward the struggle against the company and the UAW at your plant!

Workers at the Dana, Inc. auto parts manufacturing plant in Warren, Michigan told the *World Socialist Web Site* that their contract is expiring today, August 18, but that the United Auto Workers has told them nothing about the status of negotiations between the company and the union. According to workers at the plant, the UAW says a strike may be imminent but has provided no further information about plans for how to fight the company.

Roughly 600 people work at the parts plant, located a stone's throw from the major production plants on Mound Avenue in the Detroit suburbs, including Stellantis's Warren Truck and Sterling Heights plants. Dana is a Fortune 500 company, and its CEO, James Kamsickas, made \$10.5 million in 2020. It occupies a critical role in the global auto industry supply chain.

While the company prepares to wring every cent out of the workers it exploits, it continues to hand over massive amounts of money in dividend payments to wealthy shareholders. On September 3, Dana will pay out a dividend worth \$14.3 million—the 10th dividend since 2018.

One worker, Jim, told the WSWs that the UAW “has not told us anything at all. We are totally in the dark. All we have to go by is gossip and rumor. All of the union reps are out of state meeting with the company about the new contract. We don't know what they're negotiating over, we don't know what the demands are. We want to fight, but how can we win a strike if we don't even know what we're striking over?”

None of the union's social media accounts has made

any statement on the contract negotiations. Local 155 employs four officials, each with an income of over \$100,000 paid for by workers' dues. “It's really despicable that they're making this much,” Jim said.

Workers assert there is plenty worth fighting over, including health issues, wages, benefits, ruthless attendance policies, outstanding grievances, COVID safety measures and much more. When the WSWs visited the facility in June, workers on break called the plant a “slave ship” and complained that the work was dangerous, difficult and hot.

Jim said temperatures in the plant rose to 109 degrees Fahrenheit during the summer, with no break. Workers regularly work up to 70 hours a week amid dangerous fumes that give a “rotten egg” smell that could have lasting consequences for their health. “It depends on the shift, but many workers work 65, 70 hours a week. I have worked every day for almost three weeks, 10 hours a day. Some people work longer.”

These are the conditions against which workers fought to build the unions of the late 19th and early 20th century. The UAW, which enforces such sweatshop conditions today, is not a “union” but an enforcer of company diktats. Published NLRB rulings show the union repeatedly fails to respond to workers' grievances.

Jim said the work is “very demanding. It's very hot, very dirty. When coolant runs through the machines, it produces anaerobic bacterial buildups. These chips build up as we work. One time a UAW steward said we should wear devices to monitor the air quality, because anything over 20 parts per million of hydrogen sulfide would be an OSHA violation. But then the UAW never did anything. They have neglected the maintenance of

the machines for so long. Some of the machines are from the 1960s. They expect us to clean them, but there's no safety training or even awareness of what you're potentially being exposed to."

He expressed the widely held view that the UAW and the company have been working for weeks to undermine any potential struggle by workers. "This summer they held two large hiring events, trying to bring on new hires in case of a strike."

The company also reportedly gave a \$2 per hour raise to new hires recently in order to divide older, more experienced workers against their younger counterparts. Workers are livid that it was the company, not the union, which made the request for a wage increase for these workers.

Jim said there are "rumors that all the parts we manufactured recently are in storage in case of a strike," which would mean that the UAW has been helping the company prepare for a strike for weeks. He said, "This is not like the labor movements of the past. The union is just another layer of bureaucracy. And that's not even mentioning the corruption within the union itself."

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, Dana has made money hand over fist while workers have risked their lives. Its share value was \$11.56 in September 2020 but has now doubled to \$23.42. Meanwhile, workers suffered as safety protocols were abandoned.

Jim said, "They totally violate their protocol they claimed they were going to follow. They said if someone on your line gets COVID, they would inform everyone on the line and shut that line down for two weeks. But there were multiple instances I saw where someone had symptoms at work, and they told everyone else to keep working until they got their results. And then even if the results came out positive, they didn't even shut the line down. A few times they shut it down if the line wasn't in great demand."

The company put up a board noting that there had been over 100 confirmed COVID cases as well as "one loss." Workers were deeply insulted by this callous act, which showed that the company merely viewed the death of a coworker as a "loss" to their bottom line.

Workers at Dana are discussing how to prepare for a real struggle against the company. This requires taking the struggle into their own hands, determining democratically what their demands will be and

rejecting the UAW's efforts to use the threat of a long strike as a bargaining tool to help the company. Workers know that a strike is serious business. Jim said, "We want to fight, but the UAW said if we strike, we'll be out for 90 days. They only paid the Virginia Volvo workers \$275 a week."

He said he is confident workers can unite if they build a rank-and-file committee, which shares information, sets demands, *unites* workers across age, shop, wage and race divisions, and directs the conduct of any strike not in the interests of the company or the UAW bureaucrats but in the interests of the workers, achieving massive wage gains, an end to the points-based attendance system, for adequate air conditioning and all other demands.

Jim said, "When the WSWS visited our plant this summer and talked about setting up a rank-and-file committee like the workers in Virginia did, I said yes, we need to do the same here at Dana. We have a very diverse workforce, black, white, Trump voters, non-Trump voters, but when you start talking about conditions at the plant, we all sound like socialists."

The *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Parties are assisting workers everywhere in the building of an interconnected network of rank-and-file committees to organize a united counter-offensive against inequality, exploitation and the homicidal response of the ruling class to the COVID-19 pandemic.



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