

Dana workers furious over union's drive to ram through sellout contract

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Workers at Dana Corporation facilities in the US are furious over an information blackout as they prepare to vote on a new contract agreement brought back by the United Auto Workers and United Steelworkers. The contracts for about 8,500 Dana auto parts workers expired earlier this month.

Even though voting is set to begin at many plants this Sunday, highlights and copies of the contract have only begun to be distributed today. This leaves Dana workers, most of whom will work grueling twelve-hour shifts this weekend that are the norm at the company, with no time to adequately study the agreement that will shape their lives for the next five years.

“What are they going to do, wait until the last minute and force us to hurry up and vote?” a Dana worker in Toledo said. In fact, this is precisely what the United Auto Workers and United Steelworkers intend to do. At some plants, informational meetings will only take place after voting has already started. At others, no meetings have been scheduled at all.

Dana workers who spoke to the *Autoworker Newsletter* expressed their determination to reject any contract that does not address basic issues such as forced overtime, medical benefits and significantly improved pay.

Workers are opposed in particular to being forced to 7-day, 12-hour work schedules for as many as six weeks straight, a policy enshrined in the current contract between Dana and the UAW and USW. A central demand raised by the Dana Workers Rank-and-File Committee, formed in opposition to the treachery of the USW and UAW, is for the reestablishment of the principle of the eight-hour day and the forty-hour workweek, a demand fought for one hundred years ago, but long abandoned by the unions.

“Such is the sorry state of life in the United States in

2021 that we are demanding the 8-hour day and the 40-hour week, just like workers in the 1800s did,” the committee said in a statement. “And all of this takes place in a ‘union’ shop.”

According to details obtained by the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter*, the new five-year tentative agreement provides for pay raises below the current rate of inflation and does not address the issue of grueling 7-day work schedules and lack of time off. At plants across the country, 84-hour workweeks are the norm.

The mood of militancy was expressed by Dana workers in Toledo, many of whom have started wearing orange t-shirts resembling prison jumpers with the slogan “Dana County Correctional Facility” emblazoned on the back.

“There has been no update, even as we go into another mandated weekend,” a Toledo worker told the WSWS. “It’s been three weeks since we’ve had a scheduled day off, and the company shows no sign of letting up, nor does union leadership show any support. Three to six weeks nonstop, if not more, without a scheduled day off is the norm, and has been that way since November 2017. We are broken and exhausted and we ran out of patience a long time ago.”

“We voted to strike a month ago,” another Toledo worker said. “Everybody voted yes. Only one person, maybe two, voted no. Everybody is on board, they are ready.”

“There are things we want and have been asking for that they haven’t said anything about. We are in the worst predicament that we have ever faced, because we don’t know what is going on.”

She explained how the company was fostering divisions as it desperately tries to recruit workers during the pandemic.

“They are giving everyone who walks in a signing bonus after ninety days and then giving them a raise. They are making as much as those who have been here 3-4 years.

“They cut our health insurance during the pandemic while we were on layoff. A lot of people had no insurance during COVID; they didn’t find out until the last minute. When we came back, they were taking hundreds of dollars out of people’s checks, over 50 percent, \$500- \$700 per check for back pay or something. They owe me four weeks of pay for quarantine.

“You can’t have a life [with our work schedule]. Even if we work only eight hours, we work every day. They don’t tell us until the last minute if we have a day off. We have the 19-day rule, but it never applies. We never get a whole weekend off after 19 days. They use the language in our contract to say the plant is critical [status] every time we want a weekend off. So, every weekend is mandatory. They are denying everybody’s [requests for] vacation days. There is no reason given on why it is critical or not.”

At the same time, the unions are pursuing a divide-and-conquer strategy, seeking to isolate workers in each plant and present the passage of the contract at other facilities as all but assured. According to the undemocratic framework for the vote, two-thirds of the facilities across the country must vote down the global agreement in order for it to be rejected.

Union officials claimed to one Toledo worker, for example, that workers at the Fort Wayne, Indiana plant were certain to vote for the contract. When informed of this by the *World Socialist Web Site*, a Fort Wayne worker angrily retorted, “the f*** we are!”

A Dana worker in Lima, Ohio said, “Right now we are only hearing bits and pieces from the union, and they have not even told us the date of the ratification vote.

“I’ve heard that we would get a \$1,000 ratification bonus, but new hires get a \$1,500 signing bonus. It is insulting for us to get less than the new hires. Then you look at the pay scale and it won’t cover inflation over the life of the contract.

“I think the UAW did not handle the negotiations at all. They just walked in and let the company tell them what they were getting. You can see all these former UAW presidents in jail, and you know about the

corruption. Everyone can see all these contracts where they agreed to give up things like retiree healthcare.

“Everything going on now is a real slap in the face. A year and a half ago we were ‘essential workers.’ We were working during the pandemic, and they gave us nothing, no special benefits or hazard pay. Even now Dana does not clean the machines that everyone is touching, just the break room. The way the company acts just shows that they don’t care about their employees.”

The DWRFC is also demanding workers’ control over safety measures and the right to halt production, with full pay for laid-off workers, in the event of COVID outbreaks.

Another worker explained his harrowing experiences with the pandemic. “My daughter got the virus. She has had a long-term impact, high fevers, kidney infections. I told Dana about it, and they tried to fire me because I told them I needed FMLA, but they said I didn’t have enough hours. I took time off anyway and had to fight to keep my job. All I am asking is let me be at home taking care of my kids.

“I got COVID myself and was off for a month; it was pretty bad. I still haven’t gotten paid for that either.”

The *World Socialist Web Site* calls for the broadest turnout starting this weekend to defeat the sweatshop contract proposal by the broadest possible margin. But while necessary, a contract rejection by itself is not enough. Workers must begin preparing now for a struggle by organizing themselves independently of the unions and appealing for the broadest possible support for their brothers and sisters across the auto industry, including at both parts plants and the assembly plants of the Big Three automakers.

Workers who want to participate in this fight should join the Dana Workers Rank-and-File Committee.

Email danawrfc@gmail.com or text 248-602-0936.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)