

Dana workers in Germany declare solidarity with their American colleagues

Our reporters
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Astonishment, outrage, and solidarity. These were the initial reactions of workers at Dana Inc.-owned Spicer Gelenkwellenbau Ltd.'s (GWB) Plant One in the German city of Essen upon hearing of the working conditions their 4,000 colleagues in the United States are fighting.

Dana workers are engaged in a fight not only against the multi-national auto parts maker but also against the United Auto Workers and United Steelworkers union, which have agreed to a contract that further intensifies the exploitative working conditions, including unacceptably long hours and poverty-level wages. With the assistance of the *World Socialist Web Site*, the workers have formed the Dana Workers Rank-and-File Committee (DWRFC) to lead the fight for the defeat of the rotten agreement and the overturning of years of union-backed concessions.

A WSWS reporting team distributed the statement by the DWRFC in front of the Essen GWB plant prior to the beginning of the early shift and returned to speak to workers during the afternoon shift change. The German workers were particularly shocked over the 84-hour work week their US counterparts were subjected to. "That's outrageous," one said. Several workers who spoke to the campaigners agreed that their brothers and sisters in the US had to be supported.

Dominik read the statement from the American workers during the break and discussed it with colleagues. "We were all very surprised, 12 hours a day, seven days a week, that's out of order. I wouldn't do it. But the colleagues there don't have a choice. And they obviously earn far too little. It's an outrage, everyone here sees that."

At Dana in Germany, workweeks are 40 hours or at most 48 hours long, an obviously nervous representative of management who appeared at the

plant gates assured the SEP campaigners.

In reality, workloads in Essen are extremely high. Three years ago, when workers were protesting as part of the bargaining round overseen by the IG Metall trade union, a 53-year-old worker who had worked at the Essen plant for 30 years told the local newspaper WAZ that pressure in the factory to work was considerable.

"We work 40 to 48 hours per week. You don't have much time left for the family," said the worker. Having three or four days off did not make it any better. Workers were less motivated to protest by the demand for higher wages than they were by the call for reduced working hours.

In the auto and parts industries, a brutal global process of restructuring and concentration is taking place at the expense of the workers. This month, the global supplier Faurecia took over the parts supplier Hella.

Dominik said, "I wouldn't even get out of bed for an 80-hour week and low wages. But in the United States they apparently have to. And certainly, if conditions here were the same as in the United States, I would hope we would be supported too," he commented.

Lieven directed a message of solidarity to his American colleagues. "I read about what is going on there. I must say that it's a heap of crap. I hope the colleagues keep their heads up and that everything turns out well for them."

GWB was founded in 1946 and has produced drive shafts at two locations in Essen since 1964. Currently, around 500 workers are employed there. At Plant One, drive shafts for trucks, rail carriages, ships and industrial equipment are manufactured and mounted. Plant Two manufactures special heavy-duty drive shafts for industrial settings.

GWB became part of Dana Corporation in 2000.

Dana is a global parts supplier headquartered in Maumee, Ohio. Its 38,000 workers at 33 plants on six continents produced a turnover of \$7.1 billion last year.

Dominik, Lieven and many others with whom we spoke found it difficult to believe that their colleagues in the United States are working in conditions akin to the 19th century. But workers in the United States 40 years ago would also never have imagined it in their worst nightmares. This is why their struggle is the struggle of all autoworkers and parts workers worldwide—at Dana, in the auto and parts industries and in all other sectors.

Like all multinational corporations, Dana and the unions will attempt to play workers off against each other. Successful attacks by the company in the United States or elsewhere will be used to demand concessions from workers in other countries. This procedure is already well known in Germany. As in every country, it is organized in Germany by the trade unions like IG Metall, which has close relations with the UAW and USW.

The initiative taken by the Dana workers in the United States to organize independently of the unions in a rank-and-file committee is the first step in a common and globally coordinated struggle against the multinational corporations and the capitalist profit system. To take that fight forward, the International Committee of the Fourth International has called for the formation of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees, or IWA-RFC.

To get more information and to join the Dana Workers Rank-and-File Committee, email us at DanaWRFC@gmail.com or text (248) 602-0936?.



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