

Voting continues at auto parts maker Dana as worker anger builds over UAW-USW sellout contract

Marcus Day
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Voting continued Tuesday on a new four-year contract between Dana Inc., a major global auto parts maker, and the United Autoworkers and United Steelworkers unions.

The UAW and USW's pro-company agreement maintains the two-tier wage system, keeps pay at poverty levels, raises health care costs, and continues nightmarish levels of mandatory overtime. Many workers labor for 12-hour days, seven days a week, for weeks at a time without a day off in brutal sweatshop conditions.

Although the UAW and USW sought to conceal their sellout deal as long as possible, springing it on some workers at the same meetings they were scheduled to vote at, workers have exploded in rebellion against the attempted conspiracy, sharing details of the agreements on social media and organizing aggressively for decisive "no" votes.

Where results have been confirmed, the rejection of both national and local contracts has been overwhelming. Workers have voted down the contracts at plants in Danville, Kentucky; Lima, Ohio; Paris, Tennessee; Pottstown, Pennsylvania; Fort Wayne, Indiana; and Warren, Michigan so far. Most of the "no" votes were by more than two-to-one margins, with Fort Wayne's, one of the larger plants, a powerful 90 percent against.

Voting took place at the Louisville, Kentucky plant throughout the day Tuesday and was scheduled to continue into the early hours of Wednesday morning. Plants in St. Clair and Auburn Hills, Michigan and at Dry Ridge, Kentucky are reportedly set to vote on Wednesday. The plants in Toledo, Ohio and Columbia, Missouri are scheduled to vote last, on Thursday.

The Dana Workers Rank-and-File Committee, an independent group founded by Dana workers last month to oppose the union-backed sellout, issued several statements in recent days urging a massive "no" vote and

warning workers to remain vigilant over any attempts at ballot fraud by the UAW or USW. In its statement Monday, the committee demanded the unions immediately call a strike on Thursday if the contract is rejected, and called on workers to elect local strike committees to begin preparations for a broad counteroffensive around demands including an eight-hour day and 40-hour week, a 75 percent wage increase and the abolition of the two-tier wage system.

The language of the full contract, which many workers have not even received, makes clear that the deal is entirely to the company's benefit, and would enable it to sweat even more profit out of workers were it to be enacted. At the same time, the agreement would deepen the integration of the UAW and USW into the structures of management.

Among the numerous side letters in the "global" language, one would grant the company the ability to "adopt alternative work schedules consisting of ten (10) or twelve (12) hour per day scheduling with the approval of the Local Union President/Union Chairperson and the grievance chair and simple majority vote of the employees who are impacted by the alternative schedule."

At the Big Three auto companies where the "alternative" work schedule has been enacted with the assistance of the UAW, the 10-hour-plus days have meant the effective end of overtime pay after eight hours or on weekends, while allowing the companies to run their plants almost continuously.

A St. Clair worker showed the *World Socialist Web Site* a copy of the "highlights" package that the union handed out on Monday. The thin packet is only a few pages long, including a six-page brochure with a few additional typewritten pages stapled together. "This is all they gave. They didn't even give us copies of the contract. We only

got to look at the global contract through you guys.”

A second-tier worker at the Columbia, Missouri Dana factory told the WSWs there was widespread opposition to the agreement: “Columbia is a ‘hell no’ plant.”

She continued, “I think that the company, with the cost of living in this location, they should compensate the new people. There are also older people working here, and they are struggling; there’s heat exhaustion left and right. It was 95 degrees in here this morning. They did move an air conditioner from one part of the building to another, but even with that, people cannot breathe and pick up these heavy units. They’re doing nothing but mandating people to work 12 hours.”

A first-tier worker at the Columbia plant also told the WSWs that the packet showed the contract “is all crap.”

“The big thing right now is overtime, and wages,” he said. “They burn us out pretty good.” Solidarizing himself with second-tier workers, he said they would have to “get what they need. There shouldn’t even be a negotiation over it.”

He pointed to the immense strength that Dana workers wield because of their strategically important position in auto supply chains. “Just our plant alone, we affect three customers [GM, Ford, and Nissan], if we shut Dana down.”

In addition to keeping wage increases below the current 5 percent rate of inflation, the contract would also raise health care costs. Another letter, couched in corporate-speak, states that “the parties [i.e., the UAW, USW, and the company] agreed there is a need for continuing education relative to emergency room utilization,” insisting on the need for “cost-effective” health coverage, in other words, cuts to what the company spends and increases to what workers are on the hook for. The letter states that there would be a \$150 co-pay for ER visits beginning in 2022 as part of this “education.”

Meanwhile, the contract would significantly expand the corporatist labor-management committees that have proliferated for decades throughout the auto industry. The deal would establish a company-union committee to “review benefit administration challenges covering topics such as costs, implementation, and administration concerns,” and another “competitiveness” committee to oversee outsourcing.

Another letter on “neutrality” states that Dana will allow the unions into the plants in exchange for them never doing or even saying anything that “evidence(s), either directly or indirectly, a negative, derogatory or demeaning attitude toward the company. .. or

management generally,” meaning that they will maintain their unconditional deference to the company’s actions.

A Dana worker in Michigan said: “My dad worked at Chrysler for decades. Dana is my first union job, and initially I was very excited to tell him about it. I was eager to put the union sticker up on the back of my car. But the conditions here are so bad it’s like there’s no union at all. I tell my dad about how we have to work 80 hours a week and all he can do is shake his head. He tells me the union is nothing like how it used to be when he started out.

“We need to really build up lines of communication with each other. On the one hand, you have some older people in the plant that are taking a ‘wait and see’ approach. They don’t want to risk losing jobs that they put years of their lives into. But on the other hand, the conditions are so bad that you would be better off flipping burgers in some ways. When’s the last time you heard about McDonald’s making people work 80 hours a week?”

“The pay in these plants is awful,” another worker said. “I’ve been here for years and I’m not even making \$17 an hour. You can make the same kind of money at nonunion parts plants. I even have a relative working as a shift manager at a fast-food restaurant who has a higher hourly wage than me!”

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



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