

“The Dana workers are fighting for all of us. We need to stand together”

US autoworkers voice support for Dana workers

WSWS reporting team
1 September 2021

Autoworkers in the US spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* expressing their support for the fight by workers at auto parts maker Dana Corporation against sweatshop conditions, including grueling seven-day, 12-hour work schedules.

Workers at Dana plants in the Midwest and South have voted down by large margins a sellout contract negotiated by the United Auto Workers and United Steelworkers that maintains near poverty-level wages and does nothing to address excessive mandatory overtime. Workers at Dana have taken the initiative in forming a rank-and-file-committee, which is coordinating opposition among Dana workers to the union-backed sellout of their struggle.

Workers at the Toledo Assembly Complex that builds the Jeep Wrangler and Jeep Gladiator are watching the struggle at Dana closely. The Dana Driveline Plant in Toledo builds axles for Jeep vehicles. Both the Jeep plant and Dana are under UAW Local 12. Workers at the Jeep plant, like workers at Dana, have been enduring seven-day work schedules for months. In a display of contempt for the lives of workers, during a recent bomb scare at the plant management and the UAW refused to evacuate workers in order not to lose production. A search later discovered no bomb.

A Jeep worker told the *Autoworker Newsletter*, “What’s happening at Dana shows how the UAW is willing to bend over for their masters.”

He spoke about the use of “critical plant status” by Dana to impose virtually unlimited forced overtime. “They had critical status for the launch of the [Jeep] Gladiator, but it is becoming more frequently used; it is

garbage.

“When it comes to assembly, I can’t think of any reason we should be under critical status. I understand why they would say that, but it is absolute garbage.

“There are three options, expand or go to three shifts, or go to tag relief, if your replacement doesn’t come in one hour, you can go home. These companies want to be as stingy as possible. It is a joke and embarrassment that the UAW would negotiate a trash contract like that.”

Commenting on the abysmal pay rates at Dana, the worker said, “With inflation coming, it is horrible for everyone. Everything has gone up. Inflation is killing workers, not those with millions.

“With workers at Dana topping out at around say \$20 an hour—they might as well work at McDonald’s at \$15 and get a free meal out of it and not be forced to work every day of the week. Restaurants are offering \$15 to start, no experience. If I can work 40 hours a week instead of seven days a week, I am gone. These companies don’t want to pass on any meaningful incentives to current workers. Workers are being worked to death. Wages need to be brought back to what they should be, counting for inflation.”

The Jeep worker spoke about the massive concessions handed over by the UAW, stripping autoworkers of decades of gains fought for by earlier generations. “Who wants to work somewhere you don’t get a pension? That was the big benefit of having a union. I don’t have a pension and have one week vacation pay stolen each year to cover the scheduled plant shutdown.”

A Ford Chicago Assembly Plant worker told the *Autoworker Newsletter*, “With most of these contracts the UAW is trying to do whatever they can to keep plants running and not let the workers know anything about what’s going on. It’s a shame what the UAW is doing with these contracts now.

“I haven’t heard anything about the Dana contract except from the WSWs. I think the union is censoring it. I think they’re going to try to give us a five-year contract at Ford in 2024.”

The Ford worker supported the fight by Dana workers to build rank-and-file committees independent of the UAW: “These workers have to start sticking up for themselves and do whatever they have to do. I’ll do what I can to help anybody. I hate to have to see other workers go through this with the union. I think it’s really bad that they have to work 80 hours a week, but as long as the union is involved, they’ll try to shove the contract down their throat.”

He warned about the experience of Ford workers in the 2015 contract ratification vote. There were widespread and credible allegations of vote rigging at the Ford local in Dearborn, Michigan. The Dearborn local that covered the giant Ford Rouge complex was the last to vote. With the national agreement heading for defeat the UAW miraculously obtained just enough of a margin of yes votes to secure ratification of the contract, which allowed for a vast expansion of temporary and part time workers.

“Who do you trust? The union’s election committees? Every time we think a contract is not going to pass at Ford, the UAW always passes it after the last local votes. We do need to change. It’s going to take more than just a few people, it’s going to take a lot of people to get the UAW out.”

Auto parts workers at French-based Faurecia have had their own experiences with the UAW using every means to impose management friendly contracts on the backs of workers. The UAW shut down a powerful strike by Faurecia workers in Saline, Michigan, in 2019 just hours after it began, accepting a sellout deal. The UAW was able to obtain ratification of the deal, which it unveiled just 24 hours before a scheduled vote.

At the sprawling factory in Saline, Michigan, 40 miles west of Detroit, formerly operated by Ford, the workforce has been compelled to labor 80 hours a week in the sweltering heat for three weeks running without a

break under terms imposed in the 2019 UAW contract.

A supporter of the Rank-and-File Committee there told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “It’s taking a terrible toll on my body. I hurt all over. I have had to work four straight weekends.” The union concealed the forced overtime provision from the workers when they forced it through.

“Nobody agreed to it,” she said. “But the union pushed it through anyway. They said if they didn’t put that contract through, they were going to end up closing our plant. Some people were fearful, but we still voted it down; and the same with the benefits. You cannot trust the union. What they said we were getting and what we finally did get was totally something different.

“I’ve been following the struggle at Dana on the WSWs,” she said. “I haven’t seen it on the news. I wish them much success. I want them to win. They are fighting a giant corporation just like the rest of us. Dana is wealthy, wealthy, wealthy. They are all over the world. There are more of us than them, but they still have the power.”

She went on to explain that the unions are not telling the truth: “If we join together, we can impose policies that are in the best interest of the working class and not for their profits.

“What they are doing is not normal. It’s not fair. I can soak in the tub and I’m still in pain. My body is so numb I cannot drive home after work. I have to get in my car and go to sleep before I can drive home. I’m afraid that I’m going to have an accident.

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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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