Dana workers issue statement: ??After defeating this contract, we have to prepare for the next stage to win our fight

Dana Workers Rank-and-File Committee
2 September 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

This week, we Dana workers stood up across the country and shouted "No!" to the sweatshop contract proposed by Dana, the UAW and the USW. The tentative agreement has been voted down in plant after plant, in many cases by more than 90 percent. Our coworkers at Toledo, Ohio voted the global contract down *unanimously* yesterday, 435 to 0, and in Columbia, Missouri the vote was 97 percent "no." No matter how the UAW and the USW try to spin it, this contract is being shot down by the overwhelming majority of workers and virtually every plant.

The company and pro-company unions thought they could force us to work for five years with no pay increase, more mandated overtime and higher copays. We said: "not this time." This time, we are uniting and organizing ourselves so that our demands are met. We want an 8-hour day, 40-hour week, 75 percent pay increase, no tiers, safe COVID policies, no speed-ups, no points system, as well as functioning air conditioning and new, clean machines. We want the right to see our families, the right to be healthy, the right to a good living and the right to live our lives.

We have every right to be proud of our solidarity, across different plants, tiers and generations, and in the face of the lies and threats by the UAW and USW officials. The unions tried to isolate us from each other for so long, but we see more clearly now that our conditions are the same, that to win we must act as one, and not let the company and the union pit us against each other.

The "no" vote means the fight is just beginning. We are in a two-front war: against Dana and its bought-and-paid-for unions. We cannot let down our guard. To prepare for the next stage of this fight, we must lay out a battle plan, study the forces arrayed against us and marshal all our forces and allies.

The company-union conspiracy

The Dana bosses are extremely nervous about a strike. The auto industry is already facing a critical labor and parts shortage and the last thing they want is a strike at a critical components manufacturer. This puts us in an advantageous position. But it also means the corporations and the UAW/USW will do everything to prevent us from using our strength and appealing to our brothers and sisters in the auto industry to support us.

In St. Clair, Michigan, 97 percent of workers voted "no," but the company is reportedly trying to get the UAW to force an immediate re-vote on the same contract. This is exactly what the UAW did to the Volvo Trucks workers in Virginia earlier this summer, after they rejected three UAW-backed contracts by as much as 91 percent.

The role of the union

But we know the UAW and USW will do everything to weaken us and try to beat us down. Union officials are berating us, threatening us, spying on us and even assaulting us to try and get us to accept five more years of sweatshop labor. They are nothing but a bunch of thugs who think they can treat us like slaves.

In Lima, Ohio, eyewitnesses report that UAW Local 1765 President P.J. Meyer had to be held back from physically attacking a female worker who asked a question about the contract process on social media. The question was whether the UAW could legally force the contract through by overriding workers' "no" vote. Meyer's angry explosion is very revealing.

One man who witnessed the apparent assault said Meyer

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was yelling so loud at the worker that their entire line could hear him threatening to "whip her ass." The local Vice President reportedly also yelled at workers for talking about the contract on Facebook. Workers report that union executives in Toledo, Ohio and Danville, Kentucky shrieked and shouted at workers until their heads turned blue and effectively ordered them not to speak to one another or read information about the contract published by the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter*.

We workers will not accept this kind of thuggery anymore. We have rights! We have the right to free speech and to information! We will not allow our brothers and sisters to be assaulted by company sellouts simply for speaking their mind. We demand that PJ Meyer be removed as Local 1765 president, expelled from the UAW and fired from Dana immediately.

As the unions try to force us into submission, they are actively conspiring with the company, shamelessly, in full view. By extending the old contract day-by-day, they help the company stockpile products in case of a strike. In Dry Ridge, workers report the UAW appointed *company supervisors* as strike captains. They are forcing us to work mandated overtime and accept speed-ups. Workers in Fort Wayne learned from supervisors that there is no specific order to fill on overtime this coming weekend, they just want inventory. The company and unions are trying to get us to break our own backs scabbing on ourselves. Adding insult to injury, Dana and the USW mandated them on *Labor* Day.

The path forward for Dana workers

Therefore, we demand the UAW and USW set an immediate strike deadline and immediately cease extending the old contract day-by-day. We know Dana makes billions and that its CEO James Kamsickas made $10 million last year forcing us into COVID-infested sweatshops while the corporate and union executives worked from home. They can afford to meet our demands.

We need a strategy for victory. Strikes are serious, and if there is to be a strike, we want to win it. To win, we must have unity within every plant and between every plant so that we all act as one. We must have a way to rapidly disseminate information across the entire Dana workforce so that each of us knows what is happening, everywhere, all the time. We must have a way to democratically discuss our demands and our strategy. If we can do so, we will have tremendous power and we can overcome the fear that comes from feeling isolated.

We must appeal to the workers at GM, Ford, Stellantis, Deere and other companies to back us if Dana tries to run production with strikebreakers. All autoworkers have a stake in a joint fight to overturn decades of UAW-USW backed concessions and fight for decent wages and working conditions.

The Dana Workers Rank-and-File Committee (DWRFC) calls on workers to speak to those they have confidence in about developing a rank-and-file strike committee comprised of trusted men and women who have never held union office. These rank-and-file strike committees must begin preparing their plants for strike action *now*. Make preparations to be able to get information across every shift, every production line, every corner of the shop floor. Get every worker on the same page. Keep out spies from the company and union as well as their stool pigeons.

Local strike committees should send representatives to a national strike committee which is responsible for making sure all plants act as one.

We are fighting not only one company, but an entire system. Behind Dana stands the major auto companies, behind the major auto companies stand the banks, behind the banks stand all of Wall Street. These corporations have deindustrialized our home states, foreclosed our homes, destroyed our infrastructure, funneled opioids into our communities, and sent us to die in war.

The time has come to reverse decades of attacks on the working class. Our committees must build support for our struggle in the working class as a whole. We have powerful potential allies. We must reach out to workers at the other parts plants and major assembly plants, as well as to the teachers, the nurses, the coal miners, and to Dana workers across the world. We must establish lines of communication with the major production facilities for GM, Stellantis and Ford, where many of our friends, relatives and neighbors work.

Our success in this struggle will depend on whether we have democratic control of this process or whether we let the UAW and USW force through the company's contract. There is no time to delay. To contact the DWRFC about organizing a new leadership for the struggle at Dana, email us at danawrfc@gmail.com or text at (248) 602–0936.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

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