

UAW and USW leave Dana workers in the dark after massive repudiation of pro-management contract

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Now that Dana workers have decisively rejected a pro-management contract negotiated by the United Auto Workers and United Steelworkers, a determined mood is taking hold among workers to demand a contract that addresses their needs. However, since the vote, representatives of the UAW and USW have kept a low profile, giving no indication that they plan to set a strike deadline or seek improvements in the contract.

A worker at the Dana Driveline plant in Toledo, Ohio said of the unanimous 435–0 contract rejection vote at their plant, “People think we have a chance now with everyone coming together and doing the right thing.”

Another worker wrote, “It’s not just a contract we’re negotiating, It’s a movement and ain’t no telling where we headed in the coming days, weeks and months ahead.”

The vote to reject was decisive. As of this writing 12 plants had rejected the contract and the results at four others were unconfirmed. In addition to Toledo, Auburn Hills, Michigan voted 96 percent “no”; St. Clair, Michigan 97 percent; Warren, Michigan 56 percent; Fort Wayne, Indiana, 90 percent; Pottstown, Pennsylvania 78 percent and Paris, Tennessee 83 percent. Lima, Ohio, Danville, Louisville and Dry Ridge, Kentucky and Columbia, Missouri also voted “no” by wide margins. Henderson, Kentucky, Lugoff, South Carolina, and Crossville and Humboldt, Tennessee did not report results.

A video statement supporting the fight of Dana workers by Marcia Walters, the widow of Dry Ridge, Kentucky Dana worker Danny Walters, has been viewed hundreds of times. Danny Walters died after suffering a seizure at Dana on the evening of June 1-2 of this year. Nobody from the UAW or management

informed Marcia Walters, who was out of town at the time, of her husband’s condition. This led to him dying unattended at home.

In a statement to the WSWs, Marcia said, “This has to stop, there can be no more Danny Walters. I want to use my voice for the people that work there.

“Demand reasonable hours so that you can have some kind of life outside of work. I will forever use my voice for you.”

The vote to reject the agreement, which did nothing to address 7-day, 12-hour workweeks and abysmal pay levels, is only the first step. While Dana workers are in a powerful position, given the disruptions to the global supply chain, there is no time to lose.

The Dana Workers Rank and File Committee issued a statement Thursday night demanding the setting of a strike date and which issued a set of demands corresponding to the needs of Dana workers, not the profit requirements of management.

Workers are determined to end a low-wage regime at Dana that has been cemented by a series of concessionary contracts imposed by the UAW/USW since Dana emerged from bankruptcy in 2008. In the distant past, Dana workers, like other auto parts workers, enjoyed near wage parity with Ford, Chrysler and GM.

Through its betrayal of a series of strikes, including the AP Parts strike in Toledo in 1984–85, the UAW was able to impose a series of substandard contracts, slashing pay for auto parts workers to promote greater “competitiveness” for the major auto companies. This was followed by the spin-off of the parts operations of the Detroit automakers, which one after another declared bankruptcy, robbing workers of pensions and

hard-won benefits.

In 2007, Dana offloaded its retiree health care obligations onto the UAW for pennies on the dollar, resulting in a massive cost saving for the company. The deal, which involved handing the union-controlled retiree healthcare trust fund and \$780 million in stock and cash, lead to cuts for retirees, but gave the UAW control of a huge investment vehicle. The Dana agreement paved the way for similar deals with the major Detroit automakers. The contract also froze pensions and imposed a two-tier structure. None of these concessions were ever restored even as the company returned to profitability.

The Dana Worker Rank-and-File Committee advised, “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 UAW and Dana have been extending the contract day-by-day, shamelessly abandoning the old principle of “no contact no work.” In Dry Ridge, Kentucky workers report that the UAW has even been appointing supervisors as strike captains.

From the start of the contract struggle the UAW and USW have done everything possible to try to divide and confuse workers. The unions never revealed to workers what its demands were or even seriously sought workers’ input. When the contract expired in mid-August, the UAW and USW did not set a strike deadline. Talks continued in secret while the company hired more and more temporary workers in order to increase production in case of a strike.

When the UAW and USW finally announced a tentative agreement, it withheld details until just hours before ratification votes, giving workers almost no time to study the deal. However, their dirty tricks could not hide the fact that the contract maintained the right of the company to impose virtually unlimited forced overtime and did nothing to provide meaningful raises or eliminate the hated tier system.

At informational meetings called to supposedly explain the contract, union officials refused to answer questions and browbeat and intimidated workers who pushed for answers.

In the wake of the stunning rejection, the unions have

maintained their silence and have provided no word if negotiations will resume if a strike takes place. Workers report that in St. Clair, Michigan, where only four workers voted in favor of the deal, management, and at least some officials within the UAW, are calling for a re-running of the contract vote.

A worker at St. Clair complained about the voting procedures on the contract, which was held in the plant, not a neutral location. “You just checked your ‘no’ and walked away.” There was no privacy in the voting since it was held out in the open without any screens.

Reflecting the inhuman conditions that Dana workers confront and the utter contempt of management for their health and safety, workers in Fort Wayne, Indiana report that they have been sprayed with the toxic cleaner, Aspen One Step, supposedly to prevent the spread of COVID. While spraying the work area, management insisted on keeping production going, leading to workers becoming ill. Workers report that Aspen carries a warning label citing the dangers of ingestion, inhalation or eye or skin exposure.



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