

“We’re fighting for our lives”

Big Three autoworkers support Dana parts workers

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Autoworkers at plants for the Big Three automakers, General Motors, Stellantis and Ford, are speaking out in support of the Dana Inc. workers as they take on the company and the United Auto Workers (UAW) in their contract battle.

More than 3,500 Dana workers across the US rejected a sellout contract by a more than 9-to-1 margin earlier this month, but the UAW and the United Steelworkers of America (USW), the official bargaining agents at several other Dana plants, are trying to punish workers by keeping them on the job on an indefinite day-to-day extension.

Their aim is to string the Dana parts workers out long enough to complete the changeover for new model vehicles over the next month, for which billions of dollars hang in the balance not just for Dana but the entire US auto industry. Dana Inc. plants produce critical components for many of the most profitable Big Three plants, and the UAW is deliberately sabotaging this strategic position. The workers are fighting back by building the Dana Workers Rank-and-File Committee to share information, develop a national strategy and establish lines of communications with other autoworkers.

Upon learning of the fight at Dana, many workers at the Big Three drew similarities to their own bitter experiences with the UAW’s treachery, including the 2015 contract, which was rammed through under dubious circumstances and which expanded the use of temporary workers as a low-wage “third tier” in the plants; the 2019 nationwide strike at General Motors, which the UAW shut down, as well as the ongoing corruption scandal which has led to the imprisonment of two of the last four union presidents.

Dana workers labor in modern-day sweatshops, standing for hours on filthy shop floors and working for weeks at a time before getting a single day off while COVID-19 spreads in plants unabated, conditions which were “bargained” for by the UAW and USW. Similar conditions are being brought into the major assembly plants of the Big Three. Earlier this week, Stellantis invoked a clause in a side agreement with the union to put its Sterling Heights Assembly Plant (SHAP) on critical status, allowing it to force people to work every week for seven days a week for the next three months.

The *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* is campaigning for the broadest possible unity of Dana workers with

autoworkers at the Big Three. Only through a joint struggle can the UAW/USW’s sabotage at both ends of the automotive supply chain be defeated.

Worker from Ford Dearborn Truck Plant

“I know at Dana they work 12 hours just like us. You don’t have energy or time to do anything. You no longer have a life. They have no representation [from the UAW]. They [UAW] get paid to do nothing. At this point we need to think about why we need them. Every plant you go to complains about the UAW. We need to start something new. The new people coming into the plant get hurt by the unions.

“Government and unions don’t represent us, so we have to take it back. Public officials govern for 1 percent of the planet. It’s getting old. It’s been getting old for thousands of years. It’s like slavery took a new form, instead of just blacks it’s everyone now. It’s coming to a head now.”

Worker from Stellantis Jefferson North Assembly Plant

“I have friends who work in these parts plants, and it’s absolutely insane. If this can go on in a union shop, imagine the non-union shops? They’ve got it even worse, so now it’s even more fire in the furnace.

“Jefferson is a Jeep plant. We are dependent on Dana. We build four-wheel drives.

“The Dana committee [DWRFC], these guys are on the right track. After years and years of basically being sold out, their statement of their goals is exactly what is needed. They are asking for fairness and for dignity. They’re doing a job. It’s just a job. It’s a way to make money to do what we want to do—we didn’t sell our souls. We have to remind management that this is a job! Working here does not define who I am. I’m a human being, and I expect to be treated like one. That’s all the Dana workers are

asking for—nothing more and nothing less. It's just basic human decency.

"They've got to do something. Their elected officials have left them hanging, just like all the rest of them, so they have to do something.

"Stand strong. Some people might think this is just a money grab. They think, 'Oh, these guys are just unhappy workers who just want more money.' The truth is, no. We're fighting for our lives.

"You work in these plants, and they're poisoning us on a regular basis. Health and safety is a joke anymore. Everybody's seen it for years and years. OSHA has had its legs cut out from under it. And we're at the mercy of the corporation. All this talk about how 'We care about you' is a lie.

"The truth is, they have to stand strong. It's about people, not about anything else—It's about people's lives.

"Dana might be the straw that breaks the camel's back for waking people up. Because if Dana goes out on a strike, it's going to grind the whole industry to a halt. People are gonna start asking, 'What the hell is going on here?'"

Worker from Stellantis Toledo North Assembly Plant

"Dana workers are going to get sold out by their union officials unless they all walk out. It's going to happen. They *will* be sold out by the UAW.

"The union is not going to come up with a contract that Dana workers will agree to. I mean, 435 'no' votes to 0 'yes' votes [at Dana Toledo]?! In order for the UAW to get a 'yes' vote out of this, there's going to have to be drastic changes. But what the UAW is going to do is make one small change [to the contract] and say, 'We'll give you an extra holiday,' or 'We'll give you your birthdays off paid,' something stupid, to say 'Look, it's a different contract, vote on it,' or, 'Look, we've come at you with 15 contracts.'

"But all those little things are not changes that will affect us in the way it needs to—it won't raise any safety concerns, nothing like that. Then it will get kicked up to [the] International, then [the] International is just gonna say, 'Get back to work.' So unless Dana workers continue to stand strong—I know it's not easy to do, I know it's scary to do, it sucks—but they have to stand strong.

"If Dana workers can stand up against the UAW, at this small, recently established local union [in Toledo], then the Local 12 Jeep unit—we have over 6,000 people at our plant, it's the largest local in all of the UAW—we will support.

"I have no faith in the UAW, not just from what they did to us [at Jeep] but also because of what they did to the Toledo nurses strike. They screwed them over. I was on the picket lines every day. I would get off of work and go straight to the picket, sit with them in the cold for four or five hours and talk to them. These nurses saved my life, straight up. I have been saved by nurses more times than I care to even think about. So the way the UAW treats people who literally save lives, that shows what they'll do to

everyone at Dana, and what they really think of Dana workers.

"They think all they do is build axles. They think they can just get any dummy off the street to do [Dana workers'] jobs. They think we're all ignorant morons. They think we're just too ignorant to know any different. But Toledo Dana workers voting 100 percent 'no' shows that, guess what, we're not as dumb as the company and the union think. So, as long as they stand strong, they have the support of the Jeep unit, I can guarantee it. And I'll spread the word to some of the other local units I know, including the nurses, and I guarantee they're gonna stand with you too. Because we're all sick of the UAW—totally sick of it. They're selling us out left and right and have been doing it for years, and the proof is finally coming out.

"Who's to say that the people who are in charge of the UAW now, who were appointed by the ones who were in charge then [in 2015], are going to do anything different? They'll do the exact same thing.

"I'm impressed by the DWRFC. Every effort we had of trying to get something together at Jeep was met with termination by the UAW. I know for a fact about two people [who were fired] because of them trying to take action against the company and union for the betterment of the people.

"If Dana workers can keep their committee together, they're going to come out on top, because the company is going to have no other recourse. If they can stand strong, then we can see at places like Jeep, GM, or Ford that this little company of 430 people stood up against their oppression, then the 6,000 at our plant, or the 4,000 at another plant, can do it. So we can all get our committees on good solid footing and use Dana as an example of how they did it. It's really impressive that they were able to do not only that, but to get the info out there and get such a resounding 'no.'

"When I first read about the 'no' vote there, I thought it was a typo. But then I realized it wasn't, and I was like, 'Wow, you gotta be kidding me!' I got goosebumps, I yelled out an audible 'yes'! I'm excited about this stuff—this is our lives, our livelihoods, our safety.

"I know what it's like. At Jeep we did 90 days, 12-hour days. They were 'nice' and gave us a couple Sundays off every once in a while, but it was rare.

"They need to stand strong, and we need to get these committees at these other plants and locals and really, really start standing together to effect change, not just at one particular plant but at all of them. In Mexico, and Europe, and everywhere."



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