USW, UAW delay “negotiations” in attempt to crush workers’ fight against Dana

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On Tuesday, the United Steelworkers (USW) posted an announcement it claimed was an “update on next steps in reaching a ratifiable contract with the company.” According to the unsigned document, the USW and United Auto Workers (UAW) say they will not meet with the company to discuss the global agreement until October 7.

The delay serves only one purpose: to give the company time to modify its machines and production lines for the new 2022 vehicle models before any strike takes place. The timing of the talks laid out in the memo is a confirmation of the warnings made by both the Dana Workers Rank-and-File Committee and the *World Socialist Web Site*, who have warned that the unions were seeking to drag out discussions for an additional two to four weeks in order to give the company time to complete the changeover.

Workers report that model changeover is currently taking place at several plants. As one Dana worker explained, “We must understand how important and how critical this time is for Dana due to the model change. Model change is when you can hurt them. This is the perfect time to hit the company hard. In 3–4 weeks, this will be over, and they can run new parts.”

Dana workers must not allow the USW and UAW conspiracy to succeed! The outcome of their struggle depends on carrying forward the will of the workers, who voted 90 percent “no” on the sweatshop contract. The mood among workers is for a strike, and Dana workers have never been in a stronger position. Due to just-in-time delivery methods and the global parts shortage, companies like Ford, GM, John Deere, Stellantis and Caterpillar are all desperate for the parts Dana workers produce.

But the UAW and USW have kept workers on the job for 38 days past the expiration of the old contract on August 18. Dana has likely made roughly tens of millions of dollars in profits in these 38 days, while workers are getting infected with COVID by the dozens as the Delta variant rages through the plants.

The statement announcing the delay is an insult to workers’ intelligence. It informs workers that while global negotiations will supposedly begin October 7, they “should be resolved by October 10th.” But if these are genuine negotiations, how do the UAW and USW know exactly how long it will take to conclude them, when workers rejected the last offer by 90 percent? This again confirms that there is already a deal and that the announcement of “negotiations” is simply a charade.

Furthermore, the announcement gives the company potentially even more time to delay as necessary to complete the model change and fill remaining orders, noting that the October 7-10 dates “are still tentative due to obtaining a meeting place.” Of course, the announcement does not explain why the officials cannot meet with the company on Zoom or the telephone. The purpose of the delay is merely to trick workers into staying on the job.

The announcement also spells out why the UAW and USW have a financial interest in keeping workers on the job by extending the old contract. “We took this step to retain our right to take any grievances filed during this time to arbitration and prevent the company from discontinuing automatic dues collection.”

The first of these reasons is a cover for the second. One high-level official inside the USW/UAW told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “We haven’t been able to get a grievance to arbitration since, it’s been close to a decade.”

The real aim is to ensure automatic dues collection. At 2.5 hours wages per month and assuming an average

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wage of $20 per hour for roughly 3,500 workers under contract, that means Dana workers have forked over $225,000 in dues payments to the UAW and USW in the time since the old contract expired.

Dana workers responded with extreme hostility to the announcement that the UAW and USW were delaying until after model change is complete.

One worker from Warren, Michigan, said he understood that no negotiations were going to be taking place: “I can’t imagine they’re going to accomplish much during those ‘negotiations.’ It took them how long to come up with the TA in the first place and now expect us to believe they’re going to get something done over what is essentially a weekend?”

“It’s bulls---,” said another worker from Fort Wayne.

A veteran first-tier worker from Columbia, Missouri, said, “That is a real slap in the face.” A second-tier worker from the Columbia plant asked sarcastically, “Did [the memo] note where the $2 million that went missing from Warren, Michigan went?,” in reference to the revelations this week of an embezzlement scheme at UAW Local 412. “The UAW is horrible and should be replaced at this point.”

Workers at Dana confront not just corrupt union officials and exploitative plant managers, but a class of corporate executives, managers and shareholders who dominate both the Democratic and Republican parties and who control the government. This class—the capitalist class—makes its profits by intensifying the exploitation of the working class at Dana and all workplaces. In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, which has unnecessarily killed 700,000 in the US and almost 5 million across the world, 3,200 billionaires increased their wealth by 13.4 percent to $10 trillion.

Dana workers are in a very powerful position, but they must transform their potential power into action. This means breaking the stranglehold of the UAW and USW and expanding rank-and-file strike committees in each plant to share information and create mechanisms for democratic discussion and common action. Workers at each plant must elect representatives to a national strike committee to ensure information flows between all plants and that all plants act as one.

To contact the Dana Workers Rank-and-File Committee, email DanaWRFC@gmail.com or text (248) 602–0936?.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

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