

“This is the same as the first contract, with ‘sprinkles.’”

Dana auto parts workers speak out against sellout agreement by UAW and USW unions

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Auto parts workers at Dana Incorporated are continuing to vote on the second tentative agreement (TA) brought by the United Auto Workers and United Steelworkers unions.

Since voting began over the weekend, the global and local agreements have been ratified in St. Clair, Michigan; Lima, Ohio; Dry Ridge, Kentucky; Pottstown, Pennsylvania; and Danville and Paris, Tennessee. Both agreements were rejected in Louisville, Kentucky. Voting continues Monday at the plants in Warren, Michigan and Toledo, Ohio. The contract passed at Warren, but results were not available as of this writing for Toledo. The UAW has claimed that the contract passed in each of the plants that ratified it by an overwhelming margin. Voting is at other plants through Wednesday.

However, even according to the unions’ own self-serving “highlights” packets, the new agreement contains wage increases, which will be largely eaten up by inflation, with the option for management to implement an Alternative Work Schedule for weekend shifts, potentially saving the company millions in overtime pay.

The contract was also clearly designed to split young and old workers against each other by establishing a new top rate for second-tier workers, \$22.50 an hour after four and a half years, which will represent a cut in real wages for older workers but a small pay increase for newer workers, assuming a 5 percent rate of inflation.

Although the contract appears likely to be ratified, this is not a vote in favor of the contract but a vote of no-confidence in the unions, who have made as explicit as possible that they have no intention of waging a

struggle.

At the Fort Wayne, Indiana plant during an informational meeting, workers took a video of widely hated USW District Rep John Doust threatening workers with financial destitution in the event of a strike. “You don’t get no stipend [strike pay],” he told angry and frustrated workers, explaining that the USW would only provide funds to striking workers based on need if they came to the union, cap in hand, with copies of their bills. “It might help with electric bill, gas bills. ... That’s how the strike and defense fund works.” Workers at the meeting denounced the USW bureaucracy for “stealing the money” from workers, while union officials pocketed hundreds of thousands of dollars. “We all earned what we got,” Doust retorted.

Other signs of opposition emerged at other plants. Dana workers in Auburn Hills, Michigan, reported that several high-seniority Tier 2 workers walked out of an informational meeting yesterday and boycotted the contract vote after discovering that they would not be bumped up to the Tier 1 in the new contract as they had been promised. According to one worker, they will be kept at the lower rate even though the new contract allows the company to reclassify the 10 most senior Tier 2 workers as Tier 1.

Commenting on the vote and the union’s “dog-and-pony show,” one Paris, Tennessee worker said, “I think people were tired of waiting and wondering what was going to happen and the talk of striking, only to find out that it wasn’t going to happen, and [the union] just caved.”

A worker from Pottstown said, “Dana and the UAW’s strategy was to draw things out, let us feel

doubt and fear and then offer us a s****y contract. The second one was the same as the first but with ‘sprinkles.’

“The people [with] under five years seem happy because they’ve been offered what they should have had from the start. Now the fact they are getting the same pay as people at Walmart is being called a ‘win.’ It’s not a win, it’s just better than it was before. I was talking to some people, and they said ‘at least you’re getting \$3,000’ to sign it. More like \$1,800 after taxes.”

He described how the union played on workers’ financial hardships and created diversions in meetings. “They sucked tremendously. There was no communication. They were telling us about parts of the offer which were absolutely unrelated to the things we are concerned about. They do not have our best interests in mind.”

A worker from the Danville plant was disturbed by the absence of any provisions in the contract relating to COVID-19. “It doesn’t address the COVID issue. Now if they make us take off for COVID, we go without pay. I guess it just wasn’t important for them.”

A second-tier production worker from Fort Wayne voiced her opposition against the union sellout. “The second go-around was no different than the first one. There were no major changes, and it seems so ridiculous that we have a union who we are paying. Yet somehow, I almost guarantee you, that Dana is paying them more than we are paying in dues to get [the union] to work for the company. And I say that based on interactions I have seen.”

A legacy, or high seniority, worker from Fort Wayne, which votes later in the week, opposed the TA. “Fort Wayne is possibly a no vote. Just the local agreement has no gains. We wanted a three-year contract, but instead they came back with a five-year contract. I remember guys like [USW District 7 Director Mike] Millsap were going around the plant saying it was the ‘best we’re going to get.’ In my 30-plus years of working, every contract we lost something. ... The bankruptcy [in 2006] was caused by management not labor.” Speaking in support of his lower-tier coworkers, “I would take zero dollars if the new hires would get top pay first day.”

Another production worker spoke on the negotiations. “They were not negotiating. Absolutely not. There is no

way in hell that they’re going to tell me that for two months this is all that they got? In two months?! Mind you, while they’re away at these conference meetings, the union is using our money that we pay in union dues to go and come back with BS like this.”

While workers in the remaining plants should mobilize for the broadest possible “no” vote, the experience of the second contract shows that the unions will not respond to popular pressure from below except to redouble their efforts to enforce a sellout. This demonstrates the need for workers to develop new alternative organizations to oppose the policies of the union and develop their independent initiative.

This only underscores the need to continue building the Dana Workers Rank-and-File Committee (DWRFC), which played the key role in organizing opposition to the first tentative agreement and breaking up the unions’ information quarantine between plants, allowing workers across the country to share information and discuss a common strategy.



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