

Fort Wayne auto parts workers reject sellout USW contract as voting at Dana draws to a close

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Workers at auto parts maker Dana, Inc.'s Fort Wayne, Indiana plant rejected a sellout contract by the United Auto Workers and United Steelworkers in voting on Wednesday. While the national agreement appears to have been ratified, having been passed at more than half of the plants covered in the contract, workers at Fort Wayne defied a campaign of intimidation and fear-mongering by the union bureaucracy, becoming the second plant to reject both the national and local agreements. While workers at Fort Wayne confirmed the contract had been rejected, the results were not available as of this writing.

Fort Wayne was a center of opposition to the original tentative agreement (TA) two months ago, and its rejection of the first TA by more than 90 percent early on in the voting had a galvanizing effect on plants which voted afterward. Workers at the plant in St. Clair, Michigan, who had told the *World Socialist Web Site* that they were determined to best Fort Wayne's margin of defeat, rejected the deal by 145 votes to 4. The Toledo, Ohio and Sterling, Illinois plants both rejected the first contract unanimously.

Determined to avoid a repeat of this, the UAW and USW bureaucracy made the decision to have Fort Wayne vote last on the second TA.

"We're fighting for future generations in my opinion," one veteran worker said. "When I first hired in, I thought 'life will be great now.' Boy I was mistaken. Dana as well as the USW suck."

The response of the unions to the vote is yet to be seen. In an attempt to split workers by jurisdictional lines, some union officials had threatened that in the event of the contract's rejection, USW plants such as Fort Wayne would be called out on strike, while the

UAW would force workers at its plants to remain on the job, effectively forcing workers to act as strikebreakers. Rumors, which have not been substantiated, were swirling inside the Fort Wayne plant Wednesday night that the USW might call some sort of job action at the plant, which the union would keep isolated from the other plants.

However, sentiment for strike action among workers is high. "I would say yes [to a strike]," one worker said. "[But] we're waiting to hear how the district USW reps are going to try and screw us on this."

In fact, opposition remains high at all Dana plants, in spite of the contract's passage by relatively high margins, and workers from other plants greeted the "no" vote at Fort Wayne with enthusiasm on social media. That the national agreement has apparently passed is not the result of any real support for the deal, which contains paltry wage increases which will be canceled out by inflation and a new Alternative Work Schedule which will eliminate significant amounts of overtime pay.

Rather, the vote was a vote of no confidence in the UAW and USW, who, after stalling for time for nearly two months with interminable "negotiations" with the company after the first contract was rejected, rammed through the second contract as quickly as possible, without even giving workers copies of the full agreement. Through a campaign of intimidation, including open threats of violence and collusion in the firing of militant workers, the unions made clear that they would do everything possible to sabotage the struggle at Dana. Under these conditions, not yet seeing a clear way forward in a fight against both the company and the unions, many workers reluctantly voted to

accept the deal.

Dana's third quarter financial results make clear that the company is making money hand over fist, which could easily be used to finance significant wage increases. Earnings last quarter for the company were \$210 million, up from \$201 million at the same time last year, and total revenue increased year-on-year from \$1.99 billion to \$2.2 billion. The basis of these profits has been the regime of continuous overtime enforced with the support of the unions, with many workers going for weeks at a time without a single day off.

That the UAW and USW claim the new agreement, in which second tier workers will top out at \$22.50 in 2026, shows that these unions were not negotiating for over two months. Rather, they were conspiring on how to "sell" an agreement that had already been worked out in advance. The position of Dana workers to win major gains is made stronger by the massive labor shortage confronting Dana and the rest of corporate America.

Indeed, a leaked photo of a time clock in the Louisville, Kentucky plant makes clear that Dana is secretly paying temporary workers \$25 per hour. According to one full-time worker, numerous temps informed him that they had to sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) prohibiting them from disclosing their pay rate, no doubt because it would produce an uproar in the rest of the plant. An inside source at Fort Wayne also alleges that Ford is demanding that the plant hire additional workers at \$25 per hour to fulfill its parts orders.

Although all of this was concealed from workers, there can be no doubt that it was well-known to the UAW and USW, which helped to conceal this from them in order to help ram through its concessions contract.

This only underscores the need for Dana workers to establish new organizations, independent of the unions, which function as scabs and company spies and not as "unions" in the traditional sense of the word. This is why Dana workers, with the assistance of the *World Socialist Web Site*, took the initiative two months ago to form the Dana Workers Rank-and-File Committee (DWRFC), which became a pole of attraction for the opposition among their coworkers.

One worker from Fort Wayne expressed his gratitude: "[The second rejection] may not have happened

without your help." But the fight is not over. Dana workers must consolidate the DWRFC as the center of opposition and work through the immense lessons of their struggle. These lessons must be imparted to other workers who are also confronting union treachery, including the 10,000 striking John Deere workers.



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