

# Auto parts workers talk next steps as unions announce ratification of contract at Dana

George Kirby  
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The United Auto Workers and United Steelworkers union officially declared the ratification of a sellout contract Thursday at auto parts maker Dana, which contains wage increases which barely keep pace with the rate of inflation. The final total across all 18 plants, according to a memo circulated by the USW at the plant in Fort Wayne, was 2,378 to 884, a 72 percent margin.

The contract did not pass due to its popularity, but because the UAW and USW, which defied overwhelming sentiment for a strike and employed every dirty trick in their arsenals to intimidate and discourage workers, made clear that they stood on the side of management against the workers. Workers responded with hostility to the deal. “Everyone is upset about it,” a production worker said. “They knew they [the union] were going to do what they wanted anyways, without our support anyways. I definitely think there should be a strike. This was pushed through by scare tactics. People [were] scared that they won’t be able to survive a long strike.”

Workers at Fort Wayne rejected the local contract by a 291 to 281 margin. The USW has not yet indicated what it intends to do at Fort Wayne, but the memo declares, “Since our local agreement was turned down, we are waiting on direction from our international on what the next step is.”

Several different alternatives exist. The union may simply attempt to unilaterally impose a local deal at Fort Wayne, or keep workers on the job while it engages in interminable “negotiations” with management, much as it did for nearly two months with the global agreement. Another possibility is that the union might call a token strike at the plant, while isolating it from workers at other facilities. The plant manager at Fort Wayne, furious at the local contract’s

rejection, allegedly threatened workers that the company will be “pulling jobs out of Fort Wayne” in response to the no vote.

In the same memo, demonstrating its role as an HR contractor for management, the USW encouraged workers to invite friend and relatives for walk-in interviews to apply for jobs at the Fort Wayne plant. Surprised by the call by the USW for walk-in interviews, a Fort Wayne worker sarcastically said, “I love it that they are doing walk-in interviews.” She said, “That’s insane. Normally we don’t even do direct hires. Just wow about all of it.”

A source at Fort Wayne reported to the *World Socialist Web Site* that Ford, one of the plant’s major customers, is demanding the plant hire additional workers to fulfill its orders for the automaker, including by hiring temps at a \$25 hourly rate. The revelation came as a leaked photo of a time clock in Louisville, Kentucky, confirmed that the company had been secretly hiring temporary workers at \$25 per hour, making them sign non-disclosure agreements to avoid an uproar among the full-time workforce.

The critical role over the past two months, which saw workers firmly reject the first contract by a 90 percent margin, was played by the Dana Workers Rank-and-File Committee (DWRFC), which sought to organize opposition among workers and provide direction independent of and in opposition to the corrupt union bureaucrats, and to appeal for support and unity with workers across the auto industry, including 10,000 John Deere workers who have been on strike for the last two weeks.

A tier-two production worker responded, “I think the rank-and-file committee is the only voice people have outside these unions.” She continued, “It’s the only way we as the workers can expose their dirty tactics

they use to make us take dirty deals they know aren't good for the working class. They don't have our best interests at heart and aren't even attempting to cover it up anymore."

The DWRFC met late Thursday afternoon to discuss the lessons of the struggle and plans to continue their work going forward. The discussion at the meeting focused on the critical importance of providing leadership to workers. A representative to the meeting from Volvo said, "Leadership will not come from the UAW because they are the arm of the company. Six months after our contract was supposedly 'ratified' after our five-week strike, we still don't even have copies of the contract. And if you try to fight back, they fight dirty, and try to dig up the skeletons in your closet."

A DWRFC worker responded, "What they call 'leadership' in the union is a sh\*t show. We need better representation, we need new global representation. The rank and file want to unite, and we need it more than ever."



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