

Inflation hitting Dana auto parts workers “like a train”

Dana workers furious over high prices, poor conditions under UAW/USW sellout contract

Our reporters
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Five months have passed since the United Auto Workers (UAW) and United Steelworkers (USW) rammed through a sellout contract for 3,500 Dana auto parts workers across the US, and workers are livid over the fact that the unions are allowing the company to violate the contract without consequence.

Many workers are demanding renewed strike votes and walkouts to not only enforce the terms of the contract but to reopen the contract in light of massive increases to the cost of living that have turned promised “raises” into massive pay cuts. Adding insult to injury, workers are learning that they will not receive profit-sharing checks for 2021 even though Dana reported \$244 million in pretax earnings, a 492 percent increase from 2020. In 2021, Dana paid out roughly \$58 million to shareholders in dividend payments.

These massive profits are a product of abysmal conditions of labor for Dana’s workforce. Under the new contract, workers are learning that conditions are only getting worse as the UAW and USW allow the company to do what it wants, when it wants. Not only did the wage “increases” in the contract get immediately erased by inflation, workers are also learning that the unions are not even holding the company to the terms of the agreement that was reached.

Dana workers spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* about conditions of life under the contract amid record increases to the cost of living and spoke of the need to expand the Dana Workers Rank-and-File Committee and mobilize workers in a real fight against the company and the pro-management USW and UAW. Workers at all Dana plants reported the same anger at the contract and the same resolve to fight.

Warren, Michigan

A tier one worker at Warren reported that workers are livid over the increase in the cost in living and the refusal of the company to pay a profit-sharing bonus.

“I’m hearing we’re not getting profit-sharing per UAW representative but a salary supervisor got a \$5,000 bonus last week. We got screwed so bad on that contract. Nobody is happy with it. No one I talk to is happy with it. People are very upset, everyone says it’s BS that we didn’t at least get a cost of living raise. I also heard it’s the same contract as last contract and that the only changes are what the high lights they gave out before voting.”

Crossville, Tennessee

Inflation is slamming the workers in Crossville. One worker told the WSW, “Thank god my kids are grown. I just have me to worry about, but I have no idea how families [are surviving].”

Another worker denounced the fact that the company is riding roughshod over the contract’s promises over hours and mandated overtime. “We are working a lot of six day weeks and ten hour days” in violation of the contract. “We know it’s BS. Just as long as we meet the goal of what they want out the back door. The goal keeps rising. All about money in their pockets, and we didn’t even get a profit-sharing.”

A warehouse worker spoke on the ongoing mandatory overtime dictated by the company. “As far as the mandatory overtime, nothing has changed. Since last March 2021 we have been mandatory 10 hours a day, 6 days a week, and up until a couple of months ago we were working about 7 days a week. The contract says they can mandate us to work two Sundays a month, but they’re going beyond that. Right now we’re still working Saturdays. And they still haven’t released the full contract!”

Speaking on the United Steelworkers, she said, “Honestly, I thought the union here was going to be good after the last [union elections], but it’s very cliquish. David Davies is our union president, and I thought he was going to do the right thing, but now as I see it, he’s working for management.” Grievances are regularly ignored, she said. “They take my [dues] money and don’t want anything else to do with me.”

On the state of COVID-19 in the facility, the worker stated, “Dana Crossville never took COVID seriously, except for mandating masks. We had one guy who came in even though his girlfriend was positive. They called and told him he was positive for COVID and cleaned nothing afterwards. The union president at the time told me that all I had to do was ask our cleaning lady, but she isn’t qualified to clean COVID.”

Fort Wayne, Indiana

A tier two production worker denounced the USW and the company for the sellout contract, which has thrown many workers into desperate circumstances. The local agreement was rejected by workers in Fort Wayne, and yet it was imposed by the union anyway.

“A lot of people are really struggling, myself included. You have to work 70-80 hours a week to get by. Inflation has hit my family like a freight train. After the contract, it’s pretty much the same garbage. There are leaky, dirty, nasty machines and same poorly managed plant. No one

really likes that contract from what I've heard. The wage increase definitely wasn't enough, and the wage 'gains' have amounted to nothing. I saw gas for \$4.25 a gallon this morning. My hours have gone up because I can't afford to only work 40 hours. And yet we get no profit-sharing check!"

A tier one production worker spoke on the union collaboration with management. "Mandates are continuing after the contract" even though the union promised this would end. "The biggest issue with workers is the local contract was voted down by workers."

"Since the new contract many people are getting written up since workers are given only one emergency day off every four months. Already just in my area, four to five people were written up. Some people had kids sick and needed to take care of them but it doesn't matter."

"What's the point of voting if they pushed the contract through anyway. The union is just an extension of management. And no one likes the tier system which they continued in this contract. They make the lower tiers work more."

Another tier two worker spoke on the lack of safety and training for new temporary workers. "Parts are failing. There are new temps training new hire and other new temps. Supervisors have continuously been ordering workers to keep pumping parts out regardless if machines are malfunctioning. The company locked the scrap bin so workers cannot scrap parts. Only supervisors have the key to this. The reason given by the company was that workers could not protest by scrapping parts due to lack of profit-sharing checks. We are told to send out bad parts regardless because the company profits from this. Most workers are still working 12 plus hours including mandates for another two to three additional hours."

Regarding safety, "nothing has changed" with the new contract, the worker said. "We continue to work in unsafe conditions. You can barely walk around slick floors. I've slipped at least 17 times, it happens so often I'm used to it. You shouldn't have to work in a place where you get used to slipping. There should be safety. The floor pools with essentially dirty crude oil and liquid sandpaper. The company has the means of cleaning it but they don't since it is not convenient for them. It goes from a puddle to a lake. After a month when it spills into the hallway the company has someone clean it up. They don't care if we workers walk in it every day."

"An incident this last Friday a worker slipped and had his legs crushed by a forklift. I didn't see it, but I know he fell because the floor of the plant is slick. It's rampant in the plant. Some of us carry 50-pound parts and have to worry about falling. It's just like that young woman that fell last year. There's hydraulic fluid that leaks and the company doesn't care."

"There should be a rule if it isn't safe, we don't work. Some people at times have refused to work until their area was cleaned. Around the plant the roof leaks and they drain it with garden hoses and tarps connected to trash cans. There's at least 50 of these all over the plant. We need to halt production that's when things get unsafe. So many people work in this but don't realize conditions shouldn't be this way. In the beginning of the pandemic we were losing people left and right. The pandemic is definitely not over just because the government says. My stepsister had eye complications and pressure [from COVID] with debilitating headaches."

"The union rep at the plant would talk to workers on overtime. If no one volunteered the supervisor would mandate people. Now with the contract the company handles all of it. Supervisors have people come in who are not on the schedule. In fact, the union gets paid the more we work."

Dry Ridge, Kentucky

A worker at the Dry Ridge plant said the imposition of the Alternative Work Schedule (AWS) has not stopped the company from mandating

workers for weeks on end, despite the fact that the "end of mandates" was the main reason the contract was passed at the plant last year.

"AWS [and the end to mandated overtime] was the only reason the contract was voted through. We still don't have contract copies. We are back to 12 hours seven days a week. This started March 27. We are told it is only going to last four weeks, but we all know Dana. They are downsizing also. The 400 line is now going to be ran by 12 people instead of 26 because they got all new equipment and robot welders, loader and unloader, etc. The 500 line also got a new line. Now the 100 line also requires less people to run. Under AWS, I went from bringing home \$1,500 a week to \$586 one week and \$362 the next and back and forth. And we have no profit-sharing this year! And pay has been messed up recently. Always hours 'missed' and a week later to be added to a check and it be taxed more."

Workers at Dry Ridge took to social media to voice opposition to the pro-corporate contract and conditions in the plants.

"I don't want to hear excuses. There's nothing in writing about 'customer demand,' any kind of that BS. We were told at the contract meeting that we cannot be forced to work on our scheduled AWS off days and that International UAW guy said it too!!! That's the only reason why many signed it!!! Period!!!! Maybe we need to vote to strike again. Dana Management is breaking the contract!!!!"

Another worker commented, "People need to stop believing what they say. The AWS turned out to be a way for them to save money after the catastrophe last year."

Pottstown, Pennsylvania

A skilled trades worker at Pottstown spoke out against the tier system that was maintained under the contract. "The tier system is still in place and tier one workers got a \$1 per hour raise for the length of the five-year contract. \$1 an hour until the next contract in five years is not enough," especially considering the increase in the cost of living.

Global movement of the working class

The anger felt by Dana workers is far broader than their own plants. All over the world, workers across all industries in many countries are rebelling against increases to the cost of food, gas and housing that has greatly worsened by the US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine. Protests and strikes against the cost of living are taking place in countries like Sudan, Peru, Spain, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Greece and many others.

Dana workers know the USW and UAW are arms of the company. They need to set up committees in their plants to share information, coordinate common action among themselves, and take matters into their own hands. The contract that was rammed through last year is totally illegitimate. As workers are learning every day, there is no contract. The unions simply let the company do whatever it wants.

Dana workers who are interested in waging a real fight should contact the Dana Workers Rank-and-File Committee (DWRFC) today.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

