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 WSWS, “Thank god my kids are grown. I just have 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
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 run 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 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.”

Dry Ridge, Kentucky

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