

Mass firings continue at Dana as momentum builds for rank-and-file fight back

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According to reports from multiple workers at Dana Inc.'s Toledo Driveline Plant in Northwest Ohio, the transnational auto parts corporation continues to fire workers left and right, putting them out on the street in the midst of the worst cost-of-living crisis in decades. This ongoing assault on workers' jobs underscores the urgent need for the rank and file to organize a common fight against firings and unsafe conditions enforced by the company with the UAW bureaucracy's complicity.

The *World Socialist Web Site* received reports that multiple workers have been fired in the last two days, with hundreds in the plant "walking on eggshells," wondering if they are next. Workers believe the company and UAW are using fear to force them to accept worse and worse conditions, even as corporate sales soar and the company pays out \$57 million per year in dividend payments to wealthy shareholders. The WSWS reached out to Dana for comment, but the company declined to answer.

One worker told the WSWS he was fired on the spot Tuesday when he asked HR for his W-2 wage and tax statement. According to this worker, HR told him he was mistakenly rehired after being placed on a "do not hire" list previously, and terminated him without warning, refusing him the right to even go back into the plant to get his jacket. A current Dana worker who wished to remain anonymous also reported that a co-worker was fired yesterday afternoon after following company COVID protocols in order to protect her co-workers from the virus, which is still killing 18 people a day in Ohio alone. The WSWS has yet to independently verify this firing, which reportedly took place on first shift.

A temporary worker currently employed at Dana Toledo also contacted the WSWS to report that the company is risking workers' safety in order to keep the line going.

"Things are dangerous in here. We have had the emergency stop triggered five times a day for the last five days, at least," the worker asserted.

The temporary worker alleged that "on March 7 we probably had 12 maintenance calls, and our supervisor is telling people to keep the line going. The whole 'safety first' thing they've got here is BS. Our tool press is not working properly, but they won't fix it. This is a machine with 10,000 pounds of pressure and it is not safe." This would indicate that the mass firings are

aimed at scaring workers into accepting the type of unsafe conditions required for higher and higher profits.

The temporary worker expressed anger at the fact that temps receive no representation from the UAW. "My family has been UAW members for generations and my grandpa would be rolling in his grave if he saw how the UAW is today," the worker said, adding, "There are multiple people who are afraid to go to the UAW because they're afraid of being fired. One union rep, Gayle, told me 'I only represent people if they deserve it.'"

As evidence mounts of UAW-corporate collusion against the workers, more and more workers who have been fired in recent years are stepping forward to tell their stories.

Zachary Valerius told the WSWS he was one of the first workers hired at the Dana Driveline. "I was number 157 when I hired in in October 2017 and I was in the 50s when they fired me in January 2020," he said, referring to his seniority ranking.

Valerius, a single father, says he was fired for taking a day off on a Saturday in December 2019 to watch his child's basketball game. He says he had calculated that he would have remained under 6 points after taking the day off, but the company failed to deduct two points that were over a year old. He says nobody from management told him he had "pointed out" for this infraction until a month later when they decided to fire him. This took place after he was placed on a difficult line with lots of heavy lifting after suffering a hernia.

"I wanted to stay at Dana, I made a lot of friends there," he said. "When they fired me, it was heart crushing."

Valerius was present when the UAW attempted to unionize the plant in 2018.

"I was one of the workers who signed the union card to bring the UAW in," he said. "We didn't even know they were trying to get a union, but one day I walked outside and there was a union protest. Rich Crayon was the business agent, he met us in the parking lot and he got enough signatures to walk into that building and represent us. The whole point of getting the union was so we wouldn't have to work seven days a week. They had us working 70 days in a row. But when the UAW got in, they didn't do anything. They backhanded us. They just told us 'Dana can do that.'"

On February 15, 2018, the *Toledo Blade* reported rank-and-file struggle against mass firings and corporate protest at Dana that Valerius witnessed, writing: abuse:

Workers said they were protesting the lack of a union contract and plant working conditions. But the protest actually was connected to an inter-union dispute between the United Auto Workers and the United Steelworkers union (USW) over who was going to organize the plant, labor leaders and the company said.

In other words, the UAW and USW were fighting not over who could make workers' conditions better, but over which bureaucracy would get to rob the workers of their dues. The *Blade* quoted a statement from Dana noting that bringing in the UAW would not threaten profits and that the company was willing to "voluntarily recognize" the UAW. "We are pleased that the two unions have come to an agreement and that the matter was resolved quickly to protect the best interests of our people, our customers, and our shareholders," Dana said.

Valerius said he had a message for current Dana workers: "I signed the card to bring the UAW in. It turns out I paid them dues money for nothing. We wanted help and protection for our jobs and we got none of it. We made a deal with the devil. The UAW are just company men, lower management"

"I stand with you. We are in a new world and we need a new direction for the workers. Walking into a wall over and over again with the UAW and the companies isn't doing it any more."

Keiandre Pirtle, 32-years-old, was fired in December 2022 after he says he filed several grievances on behalf of himself and his coworkers. "I was fired right before Christmas, and I have kids," he told the WSWS. "They ruined my kids' Christmas."

Pirtle explained how the supervisors and union representatives are close to one another. "They are always hanging out together, going out to bars together," he said. When he and several co-workers were sent to a Dana plant in Fort Wayne, Indiana to help keep up production there, they were denied a per diem for meals, which they had been promised. As a result, some workers reportedly skipped meals even while working long shifts. The UAW only paid their per diem after they returned to Toledo.

Pirtle was fired because management said he falsified his time stamp. But he explained that he was told by supervisors to put the time the shift started even though he arrived a couple of minutes late. Many workers report being fired in this way.

Pirtle says the UAW did nothing to help him: "They are firing people not one by one, but in groups. It's crazy. The union is helping the company get rid of people, and they are taking dues out of our pockets!"

He appealed to current and former Dana workers to join the

"At some point you've got to stand for something. I'm not going to let them treat us any kind of way. You barely even know your family working in there at Dana. They can't keep doing this to people. The union is just doing that. We should get rid of the whole union staff. It's all about fighting back."

On March 7, the Dana Workers' Rank-and-File Committee published a mission statement titled, "A call to action to all autoworkers: Join the Dana Workers' Rank-and-File Committee." The statement reads: "The Dana workers' rank-and-file committee's objective is to educate, protect, and unite all autoworkers to organize among ourselves in the fight to uphold our rights."

Its demands include:

- Re-instatement of all workers fired in violation of contractually guaranteed "progressive discipline" policy
- Re-instatement of all workers fired as a result of misrepresentation by UAW officials.
- Rank-and-file committee representation in all interactions with management.
- Rank-and-file democratic worker control over hiring and firing decisions.
- 30 minute paid "know your rights" classes for all workers once a month led by the rank-and-file.

The rank-and-file committee statement calls on all workers to unite to build "a movement of the entire working class" against corporate exploitation, at Dana, Caterpillar, the Big Three, and all other workplaces:

"An injury to one is an injury to all. The company and UAW use tactics to distract and divide autoworkers, many times through our roles and positions at the workplace. But we, as the working class, share the same interests. We come from different ethnic backgrounds, races, religions, nationalities, yet we all share the same oppressor... This committee will oppose all attempts to divide us. We demand all be treated equally for we are brothers and sisters fighting the same fight."

If you are an autoworker who would like to join the rank-and-file committee, text or call 248-602-0936 today.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact