

The rank-and-file struggle against mass firings at Dana

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The mounting opposition of rank-and-file autoworkers to mass firings at transnational parts supplier Dana Inc.'s factories in the United States is a major episode in the emerging global counteroffensive of the working class.

In the last two weeks, workers at Dana parts plants in the United States have used the *World Socialist Web Site* to expose labor conditions resembling the 19th century.

Workers with years of seniority and clean records report being fired on the spot, left to fend for themselves amid the worst cost-of-living crisis in decades. Workers say they are being terminated for speaking out against contract violations, for expressing concerns over safety, for protesting lost wages and for reporting sexual harassment by their superiors.

As a result of the firings, the lives of many workers and their families have been upended. While Dana Inc. pays its CEO \$14 million a year and gives out \$57 million in annual dividend payments to its wealthy shareholders, autoworkers say their cars are being repossessed, they are at risk of losing their homes, and their young children are eating canned beans and going without medical attention. This is the reality of life under capitalism.

Dozens of workers report being fired without warning and without any real disciplinary or grievance procedure. Workers say the company is firing them by ruse, including by having supervisors instruct workers to write that they arrived at work at a certain time and then using this to fire workers for "lying on company documents." Dana has not responded to multiple requests for comment or clarification.

There are a number of critical issues exposed in the struggle of the Dana workers.

First, the extreme exploitation and victimization of workers is driven by the demands of the capitalist market and the ruling class. Dana is a transnational corporation with over 100 factories worldwide. It must increase

exploitation because the major world auto companies demand it, and Wall Street makes the same demands on the auto companies. Dana and all corporations are attempting to make the working class pay for the rising cost of material goods while increasing investor returns.

The escalation of the assault on the working class at home goes hand in hand with the escalation of war abroad. While Dana workers are told there is no money to guarantee basic necessities, the Biden administration, with the support of both political parties, is proposing to spend a record \$1 trillion on the military to finance the war against Russia and prepare for war against China.

Second, the conditions at Dana expose the UAW apparatus as nothing more than a corporate police force over the working class.

Dana workers are ostensibly "represented" by the UAW, which in reality is complicit in the mass firings. Some of the workers who have lost their jobs are third or fourth generation UAW members, whose grandparents and great-grandparents defied company thugs and the national guard to build the UAW in the first place.

Many workers report UAW officials are helping the company point out militant workers to fire. One eyewitness said UAW officials at Dana's Toledo, Ohio plant celebrated when a worker was terminated, and most say that the UAW has not advanced their grievances and has done nothing to help them get their jobs back. For the privilege of this "representation," workers pay an average of \$800 a year in UAW dues.

The UAW bureaucracy is now attempting to prop up its legitimacy—exposed by years of pro-corporate corruption—by holding an "election" about which it refused to inform the membership. It is difficult to find a Dana worker who even knew they had the right to vote when rank-and-file socialist Will Lehman was a candidate in the first round last fall.

Third, the fight at Dana shows that workers are

beginning to take matters into their own hands and fight back. Rank-and-file workers, assisted by the *World Socialist Web Site*, have formed a rank-and-file committee that is demanding the rehiring of all fired workers. But since workers do not want to get their jobs back only to face further abuse, they are also demanding democratic rank-and-file control at workplaces, including over hiring and firing across the company.

Their appeal is not to the UAW bureaucrats who have ignored them for so long, but to their coworkers at Dana and beyond. Over the weekend, Dana workers made a powerful intervention at the nearby Stellantis Toledo Jeep plant, winning broad support for their struggle. This September, the contract for 150,000 Stellantis, GM and Ford workers expires. Currently, 5,000 Caterpillar workers are voting on a contract in Illinois, and contracts for hundreds of thousands of workers across all industries are expiring this summer in the US alone, including 350,000 UPS workers.

Finally, the struggle at Dana reveals the fundamental class divide in the United States and throughout the world. After the initial publication of the mass firings of workers of predominantly African American workers at the Dana plant in Toledo, workers at Dana's plant in Dry Ridge, Kentucky, who are predominantly white, wrote to the WSWS to report similar conditions.

The emerging struggle is bringing together workers of all ages, nationalities and walks of life in defiance of efforts by the company and UAW to pit workers against each other based on job classification, sexual orientation, gender, race and cultural background. The reality is that in many cases, white workers are being fired by white Human Resources representatives with no representation from white UAW officials, and in an equal number of cases black UAW officials help black HR representatives wrongfully terminate black workers.

The fight by the Dana workers deserves and requires the support of workers throughout the US and internationally.

In a committee mission statement published last week and distributed across multiple facilities in recent days, the Dana Workers' Rank-and-File Committee stated its aim was to broaden the struggle beyond Dana, to unite rank-and-file workers across all backgrounds, and to abolish the UAW bureaucracy. The committee is a part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), founded in 2021 as a global network of the rank and file.

The statement says its purpose is to "share our personal

stories with the working class and to speak for those who are too intimidated to speak up in fear of losing their jobs and livelihoods" and to "take the power out of the hands that oppress us: Dana and the UAW, and give power to the workers on the shop floor."

The committee's aims go beyond the walls of Dana's factories or the floors of the auto plants, stating it intends to "fight toward a much bigger purpose: equality at the workplace and in society as a whole. This is a movement of the entire working class."

This is not an abstract hope, it is a strategic necessity. In Greece, France, Sri Lanka, Britain, and dozens of countries around the world, strikes and protests are emerging against spiraling inequality and massive increases to cost-of-living exacerbated by the US/NATO war against Russia.

The United States is the center of world imperialist reaction and the American ruling class is currently pushing the world to the brink of nuclear war against both Russia and China as it recklessly tries to salvage its declining position as world hegemonic power. The entry of the American working class onto the battlefield of the global class struggle will provide immeasurable strength to workers in struggle in every corner of the world.

The WSWS fully supports the Dana Workers' Rank-and-File Committee. We urge workers in the US and throughout the world to share its founding statement and make the struggle at Dana as broadly known as possible.



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