

Dana auto parts workers hold meeting series in Toledo to organize joint fight back with Jeep workers

Marcus Day
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On Thursday, nearly 50 current and former workers from Dana Incorporated, a global auto parts manufacturer, as well as workers from the Stellantis Toledo Jeep Assembly plant, met in Toledo, Ohio, to discuss a common strategy in the struggle against unjust firings, layoffs and corporate exploitation.

The meeting series—co-sponsored by the Dana Workers Rank-and-File Committee and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC)—was titled, “Profit sharing withheld at Dana, layoffs threatened at Jeep, UAW sides with management: The rank-and-file strategy to fight back.”

In calling the meeting, the Dana Rank-and-File Committee outlined a set of common demands for Jeep and Dana workers to organize around and fight for:

- No more layoffs and wrongful termination!
- Re-hire all wrongfully terminated workers with back pay
- Rank-and-file control of hiring and firing
- Roll over all temps now
- No more tiers
- Massive pay increases to keep up with rising prices
- Cost of living adjustments (COLA) to track with inflation

The meetings took place following weeks of growing discontent among workers at the Dana Toledo Driveline plant in northwestern Ohio, who manufacture axles for the nearby Stellantis Toledo Jeep plant. Numerous Dana workers have come forward to speak out against a wave of arbitrary terminations, as well as the miserable conditions at the plant, where it is not uncommon for workers to labor 10-hour days for weeks without a day off.

Simultaneously, workers at the Big Three automakers are facing a growing assault on their jobs, as the corporations seek to intimidate workers in the run-up to this year’s contract deadline with the United Auto Workers. Hundreds of job cuts or layoffs have been announced or are being floated at Detroit-area Stellantis plants, including Sterling Heights Assembly and Warren Truck Assembly. The day after the meeting, the UAW informed Jeep workers at the Toledo Assembly Complex that layoffs were beginning.

In response to these attacks and to organize a fight back, a growing number of workers have been joining the network of autoworker rank-and-file committees in the US, part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

Opening the meetings, a leading member of the Dana Rank-and-File Committee said, “I am speaking on behalf of those that were terminated in the recent months from Dana Toledo Driveline. We believe it was an attempt to cut corporate expenses, while violating the 2021 contract

between the UAW and Dana Incorporated.”

The vast majority of those fired from the Toledo plant, she said, “were wrongfully dismissed, they didn’t receive any type of progressive discipline, or even any type of disciplinary action before receiving direct termination. This would be over things such as having your phone out, or coming to the line a couple minutes late, having your glasses on your forehead. And the union basically did not help reinstate any of the 60 to 80 workers that were terminated within the last few months.”

Explaining how the Dana Rank-and-File Committee came to be initiated, she continued, “After we all got terminated, people started asking questions as to why the UAW wasn’t responding. Why are our officials not answering to our grievances? They’re not even calling us back. They’re not responding to any of us.

“Ultimately, that is how this committee got started. People started asking questions, people started wanting to know answers. And so we went to the *World Socialist Web Site*, we started having conversations, and understood that what took place at Dana was just the start of something that is going to take place at all UAW factory plants and facilities across the Midwest, not just the Midwest, but all across the country.”

The Dana committee has already won a powerful initial response, she explained, and has been working to mobilize workers at Stellantis and other companies in a unified struggle. “The Dana Workers Rank-and-File Committee’s objective is to educate, protect and unite autoworkers to organize among ourselves in the fight to uphold our rights.”

She continued, “This committee is building alliances. This committee cares about the working conditions happening at Jeep, and we would expect it for Jeep workers to join our Dana fight, and be willing to care about our stories and our experiences as well. So ultimately, if Dana Toledo and Toledo Jeep came together, there’s nothing, there is literally no stopping that. Collectively, we do have the power.”

She also explained how she saw the role of the WSWs in the Dana workers’ struggle. “As far as the *World Socialist Web Site*, I think it is very important that people utilize the journalists. The fact that the WSWs just kept publishing articles, kept publishing our stories, encouraged so many workers came forth with their story.

“The WSWs acts as a way for us to voice our concerns without having to be retaliated against or even lose our livelihoods over it. Think of how empowering it is for one of your coworkers to read an article, or somebody at Jeep or Stellantis, that are reporting the conditions that you work inside. That gives you the knowledge that the whole community around you is reading these articles.”

Afterwards, Eric London, a reporter for the *World Socialist Web Site*, gave a summary of the situation facing Dana workers and its connection to the overall assault on autoworkers’ jobs and livelihoods internationally.

“First of all, some of you may be asking the question why didn’t Dana

workers get profit-sharing if it's in the contract?" London said. "Well, that's a good question. And neither the corporation or the UAW has answered it yet. You're making the company a lot of money. Where did this money go, if it didn't go to the rank and file? Well, it went to the shareholders," he explained, including the notorious corporate raider and asset stripper Carl Icahn, whose investment firm owns the largest portion of Dana's shares.

London explained that attacks on jobs and sweatshop conditions Dana workers face are part of a broader restructuring of the global auto industry, as the auto giants seek to impose the costs of the transition to electric vehicles onto the working class. "The corporations are planning to lay off thousands or tens of thousands of auto workers in the next few years. And this is what's going to be in the contract. And the UAW knows it and they're not informing the rank and file about it. The mass layoffs are already getting started."

While the UAW bureaucracy has sought to isolate workers and make them feel powerless, London said, workers were in reality part of a powerful and internationally connected working class, which was increasingly fighting for its interests. "You're not alone, you're part of an international network of rank-and-file committees. It's in education, nurses, railroad workers, there are workers in various industries across the world and of course, autoworkers."

"We need to have change"

In each of the meetings in Toledo, workers who attended forcefully denounced their mistreatment and the indifference of the UAW bureaucracy. "Nothing's getting resolved," one veteran Dana worker said. "Now our union doesn't step in. You have to report to a supervisor with your problems, then HR before a union rep will step in. Things have gotten bad on the line, and there's a lot of bullying."

"We need to have change. Our health has gone to crap. I mean, it sounds ridiculous, but now we've been given days off. We've had weekends off, and I'm assuming because of all this starting [with the rank-and-file committee], which is great. Because for a while there, I mean, your body's lacking vitamins, you're fighting depression. And it just hurts when you go into work. And I feel personally our union has become a group of friends within each other, instead of looking at all the people on the floor, keeping this plant alive."

Another Dana worker said, "We've got a lot of hard-working people there, working seven days a week. And it got worse with COVID, and this and that. And they're treating me like I'm a sack of potatoes, but they've been making how many millions and billions of dollars? If I was a sack of potatoes, how'd they make so much money?"

Pointing to the common exploitation between Dana and Jeep workers, he continued. "My friend's at Jeep, and she's been a temp for four years now. They've been using her, scamming her for four years."

"There's a multitude of problems"

One of several former Dana workers in attendance said, "I'm one of the people who worked there for five straight years and I was fired. Never had any disciplinary actions ever, for 65 months total. No write-ups and I was fired with just one infraction."

"I went to both the local president and vice president on numerous

occasions, and I've went to them actually inside of union meetings, and had to wait a year just for a checkup on the safety of a machine that I work on. And you would go to them constantly and just kind of get the runaround."

"There's a multitude of problems that you kind of just can't get over. You're constantly working. After the workday is over, you have a few hours and you got to get ready to go back to work again."

A number of Stellantis Toledo Jeep workers also attended the meeting, including several temporary part-time workers (TPTs) also known as supplementary employees, or SEs.

"I've been at Jeep almost five years, and I'm still a TPT," one said. "I talked to a union steward. I asked him what's going on with this contract? Are they going to roll anybody over to full time? He straight up told me 'no.' He said, 'Don't even think about it, don't look forward to it at all.' So, I don't know how long I'm going to be doing this, because I can't keep it up. I don't have to keep working for more and more years and not making any type of pay increase. It doesn't make sense."

Another temporary worker at Jeep said: "Not everybody that works at Jeep gets profit-sharing. Temps don't get anything. People don't understand that I don't get a profit sharing check every year. I don't get all of the other bonuses and things that go along with that job. I get all the work but I don't get any of the benefits of that."

"Our contract got negotiated in 2019," she continued. "We've been on a pay freeze since then. So even with all the inflation, we can't make any more money than we are right now, until that contract is negotiated, and even then, you know, we don't know as far as temps go. We may all lose our jobs."

"Rank-and-file committees need to be built internationally"

Will Lehman, a Mack Trucks worker and rank-and-file candidate for UAW president last year, also addressed the meetings remotely. Lehman reviewed the experience of the UAW's national elections, saying the union bureaucracy worked to disenfranchise workers and keep them uninformed about the first-ever direct election of top UAW officers. Meanwhile, he said, the law firms comprising the UAW monitor, nominally tasked with "independently" overseeing the UAW and preventing corruption, had been found to have blatant conflicts of interest and intimate ties with corporations like General Motors and Dana.

"The main point of my campaign," Lehman said, "wasn't the idea of replacing one bureaucrat with another. It's getting the idea out to workers that the strategy that we need to adopt is that rank-and-file committees need to be built internationally, that's the only way we're going to win going forward. The idea that we need to take control of the situation into our hands on the shop floor."



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