

“Now is the time to stand up and fight back”: Striking Dakkota parts workers speak from the picket line

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Work at Dakkota? Fill out the form at the end to tell us what you are striking for and to discuss forming a rank-and-file committee. We also encourage Ford Chicago and other area workers to send in statements of support. Your identity will be kept confidential.

Ford workers: “Why are we building with scab parts?”

Over 450 autoworkers at the Dakkota Integrated Systems parts plant on Chicago’s Far South Side entered their fourth day on strike Saturday against poverty wages and poor working conditions.

Anger has continued to grow at Ford Chicago against the handling of scab parts.

The Dakkota workers, members of UAW Local 3212, voted down One outraged worker said on social media, “So, every part we use is assembled UAW-endorsed tentative agreement by 87 percent last Saturday, after by a scab.” Another asked, “Why are we building with scab parts?” Yet another earlier overwhelming strike authorization vote. On Wednesday, they said, “Where is the solidarity in this? This is embarrassing.”

on strike at noon. But the company had been training temps to work as Another asked, “Why don’t we just go back on strike on behalf of Dakkota?” scab labor in the event of a strike, which the UAW did nothing to stop. Workers at Ford Chicago should take the initiative and organize rank-and-file

At the same time, workers at the nearby Ford Chicago Assembly Plant mass meetings to vote on and enforce a ban on scab-made parts, to enact genuine (CAP), which Dakkota supplies, are growing outraged that they are made solidarity with their brothers and sisters at Dakkota.

to handle scab parts and continue working under orders from the United At the same time, striking Dakkota workers must be on alert against the Auto Workers (UAW) leadership. inevitable next attempt at a sellout by the UAW bureaucracy, which has

In 2023, Dakkota made an estimated \$1.1 billion in revenue, according repeatedly betrayed struggles at the Big Three and in parts plants like Lear and to job placement firm Zippia. The company is privately held and does not publicly release earnings. anywhere.

Dakkota workers at a Louisville, Kentucky, plant also rejected a “last information and mobilize to expand their fight to meet their demands, including a best and final” offer by the company in June. In March, the company 50 percent wage increase, an eight-hour work day, better working conditions and announced its Canadian plant in Windsor, Ontario would be subject to more.

closure, affecting 138 workers.

WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* reporters visited the picket lines Friday, speaking with workers about the issues motivating their strike.

“This strike really opened my eyes”

“When I started the conditions and the benefits and everything was alright,” said a worker. “I started off at \$15 an hour with 12 hour shifts. Then we worked Other striking Dakkota workers spoke on the abysmal pay and working through the pandemic and there were some promises made that were never kept conditions they faced.

feel like we were already in a bad contract. We still persevered and everybody “I’ve worked here for three years,” one worker said. “I’m fighting for better rights, better pay and for our wages to go up with the cost of living. Workers at still came to work and worked hard, but the majority of the people here were McDonalds in Chicago make more than us. I’m a factory worker, a fork-lift

“We want a fair contract. Who wants to come to work miserable because you driver. It’s supposed to be a skilled position, but they don’t label us that so they know that what you’re making isn’t going to take care of what you need to take don’t have to pay us. Your job is not fighting for you, it’s fighting you. care of? I feel like we are two levels behind the cost of living. It hasn’t changed This strike really opened my eyes. They brought temps in day by day just to

since the pandemic for us. In no way. replace our jobs. That was mind blowing. “In the most recent contract, they were offering some things like more vacation The offer we rejected was pennies. It was basically pitiful. When you add up days and time off, stuff like that. But the pay just wasn’t right. It was crumbs. The retro pay, it’s 50 cents for three to four months.”

new people they offered \$17 an hour. And for those of us that have been here they I work about 42 hours a week, 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. And then on the side when I’m only offered us a \$2 increase. That’s nothing.” off, I do Grubhub, Uber Eats and Amazon Delivery. I do that on the weekends.

Speaking on the exploitation of the workers by the company, he added, “Between all the jobs I work, I do 60 hours a week. I’m away from my family and companies are making billions easy. They’re not building the cars, we are. We’re working more than I’m home. I’m a husband and a father. I would get a are the ones putting out 700-800 new cars daily. They’re not doing that. And that better job, but I put so much time here. I was holding out for the next contract to see what we can get. We deserve more. Dakkota is a billion-dollar company. And

Ford is a multibillion company.

“Let’s all stick together. They need us. I heard they’re sending scab support to each other. These companies are trying to take advantage of us. Don’t let your Chicago Assembly. Our brothers and sisters there are saying they don’t want to run you over.”

“Now is the time to stand up and fight back”

Another worker with a year at the plant said, “We’re fighting for a better, fair raise. In order for us to survive now we have got to have two incomes for our families to survive. We should be able to stand on our two feet. That’s why we’re here as one to get a fair contract.”

She added, “A lot of my coworkers are behind on their car notes or they bought a house and they don’t know what to do. They’re getting loans out and getting more in a deeper hole. That’s not right for us. We’re the ones that do the work for these corporations. They should treat us better.”

“The corporations are greedy. They’re making billions. What we’re asking is been there 10 years,” a senior worker said. “Over the years we are actually not for much. These corporations have been stealing from us. They don’t pay through a lot more work but the company is not willing to pay. They are having much. We make the products. Without us they’re nowhere. They need to do more work but for less pay.”

they need to pay us. We should get a 50 percent or more raise, I agree. That \$16-17 they’re trying to give us, four years from now we will be underpaid. We should be over \$30 an hour to survive and be stable with inflation. Criticisms at the factories are frequently unbearable, he observed. “It is always hot there. I have to ask myself if I put gas in the car or do I want a hamburger. They’re forcing us on the AC. There is never anything done for us. It’s always something for the or rent now. You have to choose in order to survive. The company but never anything for us.”

“With Trump and Biden and this and that, it’s a corrupt system. It’s a Democrat or Republican, it’s all corrupt. They don’t speak for us. I do a lot of the loading and unloading every night. I drive a forklift it’s a Democrat or Republican, it’s all corrupt. They don’t speak for us. I do a lot of the loading and unloading every night. I drive a forklift just looking at the upper class and the corporations, not those who still have the fixed it. I have reported it multiple times. It’s actually mandatory that I fill out products like us workers. We’re here on strike to support one another. It’s a paper work for it. So somewhere somebody sees it but no one has fixed it. So I have been time to stand up and fight back, not just at Dakota, but everywhere dealing with it for three months.”

“Don’t let your company run you over”

Veteran workers at the plant also spoke out against the contract and the working conditions they face.

“I’ve had numerous injuries, equipment breaking down,” she said. “I’ve had a wedge compound fracture in my spine. They have cut our workstations down. We have four workstations where we used to have two people. We have family. I’ve got grandkids and a son that just went to college. I need to be able to support my family.”

He was also outraged that the company has hired strikebreakers. “They actually brought in temps and wanted us to train them to do our job. That was a slap in the face. We make one of the most capped parts of a car. We build the suspensions. That’s a safety issue if anything goes wrong.”

“Support us,” he appealed to workers in Chicago and around the world. “We’re trying to get a raise, we’re trying to get a better contract. If you support us, it would be greatly appreciated.”

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strike too. Our contract wasn’t up yet but we went on strike with them. We should support each other. These companies are trying to take advantage of us. Don’t let your company run you over.”

The UAW’s so-called “stand-up” strikes at the Big Three last year did not achieve any of the central demands of rank-and-file workers, contrary to the claims of “historic” agreements by UAW President Fain, Biden, and the corporate media. The companies continued to make massive profits and have laid off thousands of workers in the aftermath of the contract. Just this week, Stellantis announced it would be permanently laying off over 2,400 permanently at the Warren Truck plant in suburban Detroit, intensifying a jobs bloodbath in the auto industry.

“Support us!”

Another veteran worker with 10 years spoke out against the contract and appealed for support from other workers, including Ford workers.

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There have also been layoffs which have impacted the workload of many of the workers at the plant, he said, “which is how we end up doing double work. But it’s for the same pay. It doesn’t make sense.”

The cost of living in Chicago and northwest Indiana has been skyrocketing, crushing the living standards of many workers in the region. For that reason, he said, “We want to see a much better pay increase, a fair pay. I live in Indiana. I watched gas increase 80 cents overnight, and what they are making is not close to what I lost overnight.”

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