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

Andy Thompson, George Marlowe 10 August 2024

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 360 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.

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

The Dakkota workers, members of UAW Local 3212, voted downOne outraged worker said on social media, "So, every part we use is assembled UAW-endorsed tentative agreement by 83 percent last Saturday, after byn a scab." Another asked, "Why are we building with scab parts?" Yet another earlier overwhelming strike authorization vote. On Wednesday, they went, "Where is the solidarity in this? This is embarrassing."

on strike at noon. But the company had been training temps to work 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 Planass 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 maddidarity 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 eatedly 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 between.

By forming rank-and-file strike committees, Dakkota workers can share

publicly release earnings.

By forming rank-and-file strike committees, Dakkota workers can share Dakkota workers at a Louisville, Kentucky, plant also rejected a "lastformation 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 percent wage increase, an eight-hour work day, better working conditions and announced its Canadian plant in Windsor, Ontario would be subject 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 keptoInditions 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 still came to work and worked hard, but the majority of the people here were rathes, better pay and for our wages to go up with the cost of living. Workers at the seniority stage so we were capped at about \$20 an hour.

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 yellower. 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 taken'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

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 "The tween all the jobs I work. I do 60 hours a week. I'm away from my family and

Speaking on the exploitation of the workers by the company, he added, "Thetween 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. Wen 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 theatter 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.

strike too. Our contract wasn't up yet but we went on strike with them. We should "Let's all stick together. They need us. I heard they're sending scab particular 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'townantyoun you over."

use these parts."

"Now is the time to stand up and fight back"

"Don't let your company run you over"

working conditions they face.

employees have."

over. They cut our manpower down.

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.

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."

"Support us!"

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 worker with user with 10 years spoke out against the contract and appealed for for these corporations. They should treat us better. support from other workers, including Ford workers.

"The corporations are greedy. They're making billions. What we're asklinge ibeen there 10 years," a senior worker said. "Over the years we are actually not for much. These corporations have been stealing from us. They doputtipagy 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 neud do mande 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 conditions wit Ithe factories are frequently unbearable, he observed. "It is always hot there. have to ask myself if I put gas in the car or do I want a hambur The I the foodugason the AC. There is never anything done for us. It's always something for the company but never anything for us." or rent now. You have to choose in order to survive.

"With Trump and Biden and this and that, it's a corrupt system I topo a Wohk Hifter operator, 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 speathatohassa Tholyère seat on it that hurts my back. It's been three months and there's been nothing. just looking at the upper class and the corporations, not those how hot ill 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 anthinkepapkerwaishtfer 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 Dakkota, but everywhereling with it for three months."

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 Veteran workers at the plant also spoke out against the contributy and office fing adver a number of years is not what I have lost to gas prices alone. The offer that they are making is not close to what I lost overnight."

"I've had numerous injuries, equipment breaking down," she "SMd.m'Alkbrajurstænough to afford to make it into work so we can keep the company running, but wedge compound fracture in my spine. They have cut our wwerksntattiopasy. dumown bills. So, we are working to keep the company rich, but where is our part? doing four workstations where we used to have two people. IN happer faingiliels. 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 added on the pay freeze, "I'm a master builder here. I've beneuroscaippopedrtafft potants of a car. We build the suspensions. That's a safety issue if anything goes per hour, so going on three years now I have not had a raise. Nomenof us that are

"Support us," he appealed to workers in Chicago and around the world. "We're trying to get a

tion, she said, has been "horrible," adding, "We live in 'Crook GairnstydreCloicago work. If you support us, it would be greatly appreciated."

ning is astronomical here. I'm a widow and my child is grown, but these other here that are single moms, I don't know how they're doing it! To pay for daycare erything else... I don't know how they're doing it."

king on what rank-and-file workers are demanding, she said, "We need to get \$30 r over the four years but I want \$25 right off the bat just to deal with inflation, to gas, because gas has gone through the roof here, everything has gone through the st to pay my bills."

also appealed to workers at Ford Chicago to stand with the striking Dakkota s and refuse to handle scab parts. "I want to thank them for all their help. They've backs 150 percent, and they're not happy about putting those scab parts on those To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

en Ford went on strike," she said of the strike last year, "we went with them. We l off when they shut down CAP. We do the same work they do, so we were on

