

“We are still in the fight”: Less than an hour after striking Dakkota parts workers reject third sellout, UAW bureaucracy announces a fourth

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Work at Dakkota, Ford or in the auto industry? Fill out the form below to get involved with the Autoworkers Rank-and-File Committee Network at your plant.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) is holding a meeting this Sunday, August 25, at 3:00 p.m. US Eastern Time, “For global action to defend jobs at Warren Truck and around the world!” We encourage Dakkota workers to attend. To register, click here.

On Friday night, striking Dakkota parts workers, who supply the nearby Ford Chicago Assembly plant, voted down a third sellout agreement despite threats and intimidation from the United Auto Workers (UAW) that this was the “last, best and final offer.”

Over 450 workers at Dakotta have been on strike for more than two weeks against poverty wages and abysmal working conditions at the parts plant.

The vote was a massive rebuke to the union bureaucracy. A critical factor in the rejection of the vote was the initiative of the newly formed Dakkota Workers Rank-and-File Committee, which issued a statement titled, “Dakkota workers: Vote NO and reject UAW-corporate blackmail! Organize rank-and-file oversight of the vote!”

The latest deal brought back by the UAW that workers rejected included poverty wages for new hires starting at \$16.80. The only change from the last deal was to increase the starting wage for workers with more than 48 months from \$21 to \$22 an hour.

Dakkota workers reported that they immediately celebrated on the picket line when the results were announced.

At 8:50 p.m., the UAW Local 3212 sent a text message that announced the outcome of the vote to members that the third hastily announced vote had been rejected by 55 percent to 45 percent.

But within an hour, the UAW called for a fourth vote on Sunday.

At 9:55 p.m., the union sent another text message that read: “UAW Local 3212: Sunday, August 25, 2024, IMPORTANT MEMBERSHIP INFO MEETING, and VOTE. 11AM to 12PM. DAKKOTA MEMBERS ONLY.”

The bureaucracy, acting on behalf of both Dakkota and Ford, is no doubt extremely nervous that matters are coming to a head and that they are losing control with the development of the Dakkota workers rank-and-file rebellion.

“Everybody’s infuriated!”

A worker on the picket line told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “Everybody’s infuriated! We were trying to celebrate at first. We were making this a big deal.”

She added, “Then they threw this at us! The UAW bargaining committee is worthless. We’re going to write down our demands. We control this now. They don’t control anything anymore.

“We still voted it down despite their previous threats,” she said. “It’s crazy because within an hour, they’re telling us to go back to our normal schedules. Now they want us to have a one-hour meeting on another offer on Sunday? They want 400 people to vote in one hour? There’s no parking. It’s going to be chaos there.”

Another worker said, “I feel like this is coercion! What are we even voting on? How are we voting again, and they have not been to the table? We just voted today. It’s like they want us to vote ‘yes.’ Was there a backup contract, or are we voting on something else?”

Dakkota workers must take matters into their hands and go on the offensive. As the Dakkota Workers Rank-and-File Committee statement noted:

To prevent a betrayal of our struggle by the UAW, it is urgently necessary for rank-and-file Dakkota workers to take control of the situation and enforce their will. We cannot win this fight with a “leadership” controlled by the other side.

The UAW bureaucracy, led by Shawn Fain, is working to prevent a joint counteroffensive of workers facing job cuts at Stellantis and the strike of over 1,000 academic UAW workers at Cornell University.

Dakkota workers must learn from the recent experiences of workers at Lear, Clarios, John Deere and other contract fights where workers have rejected multiple UAW-company sellout agreements by overwhelming margins, until the UAW bureaucracy rammed through deals in the end.

Workers must immediately begin to take control of the strike

Dakkota workers must build the Dakkota Workers Rank-and-File Committee and take control of the pickets and the strike. Workers must discuss their own demands, democratically elect their own leadership

from the pickets and make it known that the UAW “leaders” no longer represent their interests.

Dakkota workers should mobilize to expand this fight and send delegations to Ford Chicago and appeal for a ban on scab parts and utilize social media to mobilize the widest possible support at Ford, the Big Three, as well as parts workers at Lear, Flex ‘N’ Gate, Tower and beyond.

A veteran Ford worker reported that the strike has had an impact. “We’re not working full shifts—not even close,” he said. “We are around 280 cars per shift since the strike. So production has been cut in over half. I fully support the Dakkota workers, and we should not be using scab parts here.”

Workers can win this fight, but they must not take a wait-and-see attitude to mount a rank-and-file counteroffensive for jobs, wages and better working conditions.

“A lot of us are still willing to fight”

Workers at Dakkota spoke out all night against the latest maneuvers by the UAW bureaucracy.

One worker said after the vote:

We are still in the fight. I do believe they’re trying to convince everyone to vote “yes” because it’s so close. They’re trying to threaten everyone to come back Monday. I don’t feel like this is a fair contract for everyone.

“I think we deserve a lot more,” she added. “Coming in the door, we should be making in \$25-26 at least. It could be more. I know they can pay more.

I know the supervisors were saying that if they pay us more they could go bankrupt. I don’t think that’s accurate. They’re just trying to keep the money at the top for the executives, the CEO etc. They get the most of everything. We don’t even get a bonus.

The spiraling cost of living in a city like Chicago, where the average one-bedroom apartment costs over \$2,000, is a major factor in the anger of workers.

She added:

I should not be working 40-plus hours and still only bring home \$400 checks. That’s impossible!

I work two jobs. I work six days a week. I’m going to my other job tomorrow. I need something better, so I can quit my other job. I work downtown on the weekend. There’s no work-life balance. It’s a lot.

She continued, appealing to other Dakkota workers:

Don’t listen to the UAW 3212 leaders. They’re giving us false information. They came back on Thursday and said this is a good

deal. They said it’s the “last, best and final offer”! No, it’s not!

I think a lot of us are still willing to fight for what we want and deserve. I do believe that. But they’re trying to get us to vote again to send us back to work. But what are we voting on? They haven’t even talked to us.

We have to fight back!

“The momentum has shifted ... we have to be aggressive now”

Another newer Dakkota worker spoke about the mood on the picket lines.

He said, “The momentum has shifted after the third vote. Workers were scared it was going to fail. But I can hear them on the phone tonight. They’re rejoicing now. We might just come out ahead.”

He reported that union officials tried to intimidate workers at the union hall during the vote: “I watched how they were acting around the union hall, trying to make us feel afraid. I said I have no questions for you. I’m better educated than you at this point. I don’t need to talk to you.”

“Some people were crying today,” he said of the mood and anger at the hall. “Some were upset. But the union officials know the intimidation is not going to work. They know the low balling is not going to work.”

They’re not asking what we want. They’re coming with these figures. We’ve not seen the union president but once in the last week!

They threatened us at the union hall that they can lock us out now. That they can train those temps better. That we won’t have a job to go back to. I was telling people outside the union hall, do not buy what they are selling. They’re trying to circumvent the process.

They got a few people to flip the other way. I’m doing my best to influence them and rally them. And to get them to not fall into the trap.

He appealed to his Dakkota coworkers:

We can’t take a wait-and-see approach. We have to be aggressive now. They’re scared that if they give us money the other Dakkota plants will follow suit. They’re terrified of this that this is going to hit their bottom line.

It’s like a prize fight now. We’ve got them on the ropes. If we keep swinging, sooner or later they’re going down. They’re nervous about what may come out of this. We need much higher wages, \$26-28 to start. We need paid shutdown times. We cannot live paycheck to paycheck. We have to fight for what we need.

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