

Rebellion at Dakkota: Chicago auto parts workers reject fourth UAW sellout

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25 August 2024

On Sunday, Dakkota Integrated Systems auto parts workers in Chicago voted down a fourth attempt by the United Auto Workers bureaucracy to ram through a sellout contract, defying threats from union officials of a lockout and the loss of their jobs.

The contract was rejected by 54 percent in a snap re-vote on the deal, called by the UAW immediately after workers rejected a third contract on Friday. The defeat of four UAW-endorsed tentative agreements by autoworkers is unprecedented in recent memory.

Dakkota workers marched into an explosive meeting Sunday determined to stand their ground. Workers chanted, “Hell no! We vote ‘No’!” ahead of the meeting, taking with them a recent statement of the Dakkota Workers Rank-and-File Committee calling for a “No” vote and rejecting the UAW-corporate blackmail.

The courageous rebellion by the 450 Dakkota workers on Chicago’s Far South Side, who have been striking for nearly a month against poverty wages, urgently requires the active support of autoworkers and rank-and-file UAW members everywhere.

Workers at Ford, Stellantis, General Motors, along with other parts makers such as Lear and Flex-N-Gate, have a class duty to come to the aid of their brothers and sisters at Dakkota. This includes, in particular, workers at the Ford Chicago Assembly plant, which Dakkota is currently supplying with scab-made parts.

Workers are fighting against horrible conditions, which the UAW is jointly imposing with management. The agreements proposed by the company and the UAW have all contained poverty wages, the latest with starting wages of just \$16.80 an hour and top wages of \$22, rising slightly to \$18 and \$26.50 by 2027.

In forcing workers to vote again and again on the same contract, the UAW bureaucracy is drawing from a

well-worn playbook, used at Volvo Trucks, John Deere, Dana, Clarios and Lear. But the UAW’s utter contempt for Dakkota workers’ democratic rights has been truly extraordinary, even taking into account the decades-long record of sellouts and betrayals by the union apparatus.

At Sunday’s meeting, union officials hardly made any effort to conceal that they were acting as spokespersons for the company, delivering the corporate threats of a “last, best and final offer,” a lockout and the permanent loss of workers’ jobs.

The role of the UAW has been, in effect, to help hold the gun that the company is pointing at the heads of workers, declaring with management, “Surrender, or else!”

Workers, however, have fought back, to the shock of the UAW bureaucrats. A group of the most militant workers has taken the critical step of forming the Dakkota Workers Rank-and-File Committee, which has played the central role in organizing opposition to the UAW’s sellouts.

At a meeting called by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees Sunday to oppose mass layoffs at Stellantis Warren Truck and in the global auto industry, Dakkota workers made a powerful appeal for support.

One Dakkota worker said that a UAW representative “told us that if we don’t go back to work, Dakkota can kick us out and fire us. We still said ‘No’ to that. We are continuing to stand for better wages.

“I want everybody in the auto industry to stand strong with us—all around the world—to let them know they cannot continue doing this.”

Another Dakkota worker said, “The union has no strategy, so us workers are taking it into our own hands

now. We started organizing our rank-and-file committee because our own union reps aren't doing anything."

The Dakkota workers have begun to recognize that they are not just fighting for themselves but for workers everywhere.

The battle at Dakkota is part of a global corporate assault on workers' jobs and living standards. Stellantis has announced it will permanently cut 2,450 jobs at its Warren Truck Assembly Plant near Detroit. The layoffs are part of a jobs bloodbath, which has accelerated following the UAW's sellout of the 2023 Big Three struggle, during which it kept the majority of workers on the job in impotent "stand-up strikes."

The UAW bureaucracy, resorting again to its reactionary nationalism to divide workers, has sought to blame layoffs on "foreigners." At the same time, UAW President Fain is issuing an empty strike threat at Stellantis in a bid to head off explosive independent action by workers.

Last Monday, while the UAW bureaucrats were trying to shut down the Dakkota strike, Fain stumped for the Biden-Harris administration at the Democratic National Convention. While presenting the White House, which infamously banned the railroad strike in 2022, as a friend of workers and even in favor of strikes, he denounced Trump as a "scab."

Workers might have responded: "It takes one to know one!" The UAW apparatus is forcing Ford Chicago workers to handle scab parts from Dakkota, while starving workers on the picket line without strike pay. At the same time, the UAW has pledged over \$1.5 million to the Democrats.

For Dakkota workers to mount a successful struggle, a powerful rank-and-file counteroffensive of autoworkers must be developed immediately:

- **Workers at Ford Chicago should take collective action to stop handling scab parts from Dakkota.** Solidarity actions must also be prepared by workers at Ford Kentucky Truck, Stellantis Toledo Jeep and other plants that Dakkota supplies. Dakkota workers should appeal across autoworker Facebook groups for support, as well as sending delegations to Ford Chicago, Stellantis plants in Kokomo, Indiana, and the auto plants throughout Detroit.

- **Strike pay must be immediately doubled to \$1,000 a week.** The UAW is sitting on a strike fund

estimated at approximately \$800 million, built from workers' dues money, while hundreds of bureaucrats at the misnamed "Solidarity House" headquarters are continuing to receive their bloated six-figure incomes.

- **Autoworkers across the United States and around the world must rally to the defense of Dakkota workers, as part of a global strategy to fight poverty and mass layoffs.** The threats against striking Dakkota workers' jobs go hand in hand with the destruction of jobs by the transnational auto companies who exploit workers in every country. In addition to threatening thousands of jobs at the Warren Truck plant, Stellantis is planning to destroy over 12,000 jobs in Italy, putting 13,000 more auto parts jobs at risk. Similar mass job cuts are taking place by Ford in Europe and GM in China.

Above all, the revolt by Dakkota workers against the UAW bureaucracy must be expanded and rapidly developed. The struggle at Dakkota is demonstrating again that when workers enter into a struggle for their interests, the immediate obstacle they confront is the pro-corporate union apparatus.

The autoworkers rank-and-file committee network must be expanded to every plant. While the corporations relentlessly assert their "right to profit" and cut costs, workers in the US and internationally must begin to assert their right to a job and a high standard of living.



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