

# UAW-Fiat Chrysler deal is a warning to John Deere workers

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*The WSWS urges auto and other workers to sign up for the Autoworker Newsletter and leave your comments. Sign up for the Autoworker Newsletter Facebook page here.*

Deere workers should look upon the recent tentative contract agreement between the United Auto Workers and Fiat Chrysler (FCA) as a warning: the UAW is going to sell you out.

The current contract covering 11,200 farm machinery workers at Deere & Company expires on October 1. Discussions between the UAW and the company, which began in late August, have been shrouded in secrecy, the same method the UAW has used in the auto discussions. It is in this silence that the UAW is brewing up its plans to force another sellout agreement.

The announcement of the tentative agreement between the UAW and FCA has produced outrage among auto workers, who correctly see it as a sellout. It preserves the two-tier wage system, creates the conditions for forcing out first-tier workers, turns health care over to a union-run “co-op” which will be tasked with cutting benefits and paves the way for a corporate restructuring that could lead to thousands of job losses. (See “UAW ‘highlights’ of Fiat Chrysler deal expose corporate-union conspiracy against autoworkers”)

For almost 20 years, Deere workers have had to endure the two-tier system, with the UAW claiming that it was necessary to maintain “competitiveness.” For every contract since it was first introduced, the UAW has issued hollow talk about ending it. In fact, both the company and the UAW see the two-tier system as a permanent feature.

In the last contract between Deere and the UAW, adopted in 2009, instead of raising wages and ending the two-tier system, the UAW offered one-time signing

bonuses along with paltry annual lump sum payments. Workers saw an increase in health care costs and an increase in the probation period for new hires from 90 days to seven months.

The UAW blamed the concessions and the continuation of the two-tier system on the sluggish economy. In an effort to convince workers to back the deal, then UAW President Ron Gettelfinger said, “In a difficult economic environment, the members of the UAW Deere National Negotiating Committee did an outstanding job of representing the interests of active and retired UAW members at Deere & Co.” What a lie!

At the time, UAW officials said they had secured an agreement that there would be no plant closings during the six-year life of the contract. However, the contract did nothing to stop the yearly layoffs of hundreds of workers since. Just this year, Deere laid off over a thousand workers, almost one-tenth of the entire UAW-Deere workforce.

The cuts forced on workers have been funneled into executive pay. According to Bloomberg Business, Samuel R. Allen, CEO of John Deere, took home \$20 million in the 2014 fiscal year. According to Glassdoor.com, a Deere assembly worker makes on average \$18 an hour. Working eight hours a day, every day, it would take approximately 385 years, or 140,545 days, for an hourly worker to make this amount.

One Deere worker in Iowa who recently signed up for the WSWS Autoworker Newsletter wrote, “The CEO of my company makes \$55,000 a day. I work 60 hours a week and barely cover my bills.”

The current contract negotiations are taking place as Deere is reporting declining profits. As with the last contract, this will be used by the UAW and Deere to force even more concessions.

At the beginning of the negotiations, top UAW

officials already signaled their plan to reach an agreement that expanded company profits. “Starting with today’s handshakes we are committed to work as hard as we can to get an agreement in which our members can be proud of [sic], *the company can feel good* about and our customers can continue to reap the benefits of UAW-made quality products,” said UAW Vice President Norwood Jewell. (Emphasis added)

As with their relationship to the Big Three auto companies, the UAW functions as a tool of corporate management and a business in its own right.

To fight for the defense of their interests, the WSWS urges workers at Deere to begin now to form independent rank-and-file committees to wage a struggle against the UAW, its corporate masters, Wall Street and the pro-business parties of the Democrats and Republicans. The struggles of Deere workers should be connected to the fight of autoworkers against the sellout agreements that the UAW is trying to force through.

We urge workers to contact the *World Socialist Web Site* and subscribe and become a supporter of the Autoworker Newsletter.



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