

Growing suspicion among workers after UAW claims Deere contract was ratified

Eric London, George Gallanis
6 October 2015

The United Auto Workers is giving workers every reason to be suspicious of its Sunday night announcement that its proposed six-year contract covering 11,000 workers at farm equipment manufacturer John Deere was ratified.

What emerges through the UAW-corporate information blackout is a picture that increasingly smells like Florida on election night in 2000.

The UAW has not released any of the vote tallies from Sunday's voting. The Ottumwa, Iowa plant's "no" vote of 66 percent was made public when an official posted the figure on the Local 74 website. It was promptly removed, but not before a worker took a screenshot and sent it to the *World Socialist Web Site*.

In addition, the *Waterloo Courier* reported yesterday, "Local 838 members rejected the tentative agreement by a vote of 1,816 no to 859 yes, multiple union sources said Monday—about 67 percent against."

The fact that workers at two major plants—with more than 4,500 workers or well over one third of eligible voters—defeated the contract by a two-to-one margin is an indication that opposition to the contract may have been far more widespread than the UAW admits.

The UAW announced the ratification on its website in a cursory statement, without any figures, shortly after workers across Iowa, Illinois and Kansas completed voting. In the aftermath of the resounding defeat inflicted on the UAW by Fiat Chrysler workers, the UAW was determined not to have a repeat performance. Aware of growing opposition to decades of concession contracts, the UAW made a decision to carry out this vote under the most anti-democratic, dictatorial conditions.

Workers were kept in the dark until the very last minute and told to vote at Sunday's meetings right after being handed the UAW's "highlight" brochure,

which painted the deal in the brightest colors.

In the aftermath of the UAW's announcement, many workers are demanding the vote tallies be made public. One worker told the WSWS that "a lot of us are calling this BS," while another demanded, "I think the locals should post their numbers. Absolutely."

"A bunch of us would like [a recount], especially because the autoworkers had problems with their ballots," said a third worker, referring to the widespread suspicion of fraud by the UAW at the Fiat Chrysler Warren Truck plant in suburban Detroit.

Another worker wrote to the WSWS, "Your reporting on the UAW Deere contract was pretty much accurate from what I saw at the Sunday ratification vote. I'm madder than I can express right now. No one knows when we will actually see the contract but the worst may still be coming."

Widespread opposition was expressed on Facebook as well.

"I still can't figure out how it passed," one worker said. "Everyone I know voted no...every voting location was openly pissed with this contract...yet Deere and company knew by 5 pm that the contract was ratified. I wonder if they even bothered to open the ballot boxes...I've got some questions for sure. I'm wondering what the line at the union office is going to be like in the morning."

Another worker added, "Isn't it funny how no one voted yes, again. Same happened in 97, 03, 09, and here we are again...can't see a reason to continue to pay dues, if they can't protect me."

Pointing to the anti-democratic maneuvers of the UAW, a Deere worker from Ottumwa told the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter*, "I think there were votes thrown out due to the fact people were emphatically voting no (like 'hell no') on the ballots. So in essence

an emphatic ‘no’ did not get counted.”

An assembly worker from Waterloo, Iowa said, “Some people wrote on the ballot and some are saying those didn’t count! But no one told us not to. We marked ‘no’ and some of us left nasty remarks. Some locals said they were told not to write anything on the ballot. But Local 838 didn’t say anything about it.”

Moreover, some of the ballots used by the UAW at certain locations are simply pieces of paper with a “no” and “yes” box, making duplication easy.

Many Deere workers find it hard to believe that a majority would support the sellout contract, with opposition so widespread in the plants.

“This contract is better than being on strike? Horse manure!” said one worker. “If they step down and accept this they will get screwed more and more in the future! Years of record profits, and that is how Deere thanks its workers! You would think for all the money the workers invest in the union for representation, that they could negotiate for something a lot better!”

Another worker posted on the UAW page, “Wish u didn’t roll over and show the company your bellies. Weak joke of a contract. I believe you knew this when you presented us with this garbage.”

Workers are justified to ask many questions about the irregularities: if the election was carried out without fraud, why won’t the UAW and the company publish results? Why weren’t workers allowed to monitor the vote count? Why did Local 74 remove its “no” vote tally?

Even if the vote was narrowly ratified, with six years of their lives on the line, workers have every right to demand a recount of the ballots. If the UAW has nothing to hide, it should have no reason to oppose such a basic demand.

Regardless of whether there was fraud—the fact that the UAW provided workers with no information on the details of the six-year contract until workers arrived to vote is proof that the UAW is engaged in a conspiracy with the company.

Workers need their own organizations to oppose the UAW-John Deere conspiracy. Farm equipment workers can join forces with their brothers and sisters in the auto industry by building rank-and-file committees, democratically controlled by workers, to wage a real fight against the companies.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact