

UAW schedules ratification vote on Deere contract without announcing any deal

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To get in touch with the World Socialist Web Site to discuss forming a rank-and-file committee, John Deere workers can email deerewrjc@gmail.com or text ? (484) 514-9797. ?

Four weeks into contract talks between the United Auto Workers (UAW) and farm and construction equipment giant Deere & Company, workers have yet to hear or read a single word on contract negotiations from the union. This has not stopped the union from scheduling a contract vote on October 10.

Talks between Deere and the UAW began on August 20. The current six-year contract expires on October 1, with 10,100 workers from Iowa, Illinois and Kansas to be covered under the new contract.

The UAW-Deere talks are being led by UAW Vice President Terry Dittes, who oversaw the betrayal of the 40-day General Motors workers strike in 2019. The deal, approved with his signature, allowed GM to significantly increase its low-paid temporary workforce and close three factories, including the Lordstown, Ohio assembly plant.

On its website and Facebook page, the UAW has said nothing about the Deere negotiations, sharing zero information on contract talks, let alone even acknowledging that they are ongoing. The union wants to keep the workers in the dark and prevent them from mobilizing a fight against another sellout contract.

The workers have instead relied on one another and the *World Socialist Web Site* to get and share information and prepare a serious struggle. More and more Deere workers have told the WSWs they are going to fight against attempts by the union and the company to pass another sellout contract. One worker told the WSWs, “I don’t care what’s in the first contract, I know it’s going to be a sellout. I’m voting no, no matter what.”

Whatever “talks” the UAW is engaged in has nothing to do with improving workers’ wages and working conditions. The fact that it has already announced a contract ratification date shows that an agreement has already been reached, and the only thing the UAW is talking to Deere executives about is how to beat back the resistance of workers to another pro-company contract.

The union pushed through the last agreement in 2015 without workers laying their eyes on the actual contract. Instead, it released a 17-page “highlights” document distributed the day workers were to vote, with only two hours to read it. The UAW claimed the agreement passed by a margin of only 180 votes, amid accusations of vote fraud and workers’ demands for a recount.

The UAW says it will reveal the company’s initial offer on September 12 and hold a strike authorization vote on the same day. Union officials say these meetings will get “feedback” from workers on the first offer. Whatever responses workers give, however, will be ignored. As for a strike, the company is already facing a parts and labor shortage, and the UAW has no intention of doing anything to undermine the company’s profits or its share price.

Union officials are posturing as being more “democratic” this time because the UAW, from local representatives all the way up to Solidarity House, is aware of the mass anger among Deere workers. The cynicism of this stunt is belied by the fact that workers will have to vote on a tentative agreement on October 10 no matter what. Workers will be forced to continue working in order to stockpile products and undermine any potential strike they would conduct.

Last month, Deere announced surging profits of over \$1.6 billion for the third quarter of the year, which

comes out to roughly \$160,000 for every one of the 10,100 workers under contract. The profit report destroys any arguments by the company or union that there is not enough money to meet the demands of workers.

Deere workers must take their lead from the ongoing fight of Dana, Inc. workers across the Midwest and South. The auto parts workers just voted down a contract backed by the UAW and the United Steelworkers (USW), which continued mandatory overtime, including 12-hour days, 7-day-a-week schedules, and unsafe conditions and wages that do not keep up with inflation. In defiance, the “no” vote in many plants was well above 95 percent, with workers in Toledo, Ohio, voting 435-0 against the union-backed contract.

To stop another sellout and prepare a real fight to win back the necessary improvements in pay, benefits and working conditions, Deere workers must take control of the struggle. This means following the lead of the Volvo Trucks workers in Virginia and Pennsylvania, and Dana workers establishing their own rank-and-file committees. Such committees are controlled democratically by workers themselves and fight for what workers need, not concessions or wage cuts demanded by the company and the UAW. A Deere Workers Rank-and-File Committee will lay the groundwork for a genuine fight back against the company and the union.

The formation of this rank-and-file committee will add to the growing network of rank-and-file committees nationally and internationally and establish lines of communication and coordinated action. A Deere committee will unite with workers at Volvo, Dana, the Big Three automakers, Caterpillar, Case IH and workers throughout the US and internationally, including Deere workers in other countries, to prepare a fightback to overturn decades of attacks on living standards and working conditions.



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