

John Deere workers demand: “Show us the full contract! Workers have the right to know what is in the tentative agreement!”

John Deere Workers Rank-and-File Committee
5 October 2021

John Deere workers have established a rank-and-file committee to oppose the conspiracy of the United Auto Workers (UAW) and Deere to try to force through another six-year concessions contract. The UAW and Deere are working behind the scenes to force through new attacks on pay, benefits and working conditions. The UAW announced that a tentative agreement was reached last Friday, but will only provide self-serving contract “highlights” the Friday and Saturday before the vote.

To learn more about joining the John Deere Workers Rank-and-File Committee, email deerewrfc@gmail.com or text (484) 514-9797?. ?

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To our Deere brothers and sisters:

The United Auto Workers and John Deere are conspiring against us to try to force through another pro-company contract, in a repeat of 2015 and earlier sellouts. This cannot be allowed to happen again.

Since announcing last Friday that it had reached a tentative agreement for a new six-year contract with Deere, the UAW has stated it will be releasing “highlights” of the contract only the Friday and Saturday before the vote on Sunday, October 10.

The union knows workers are angry. The UAW announced an extension of the contract shortly after midnight on October 1, refusing to call a walkout despite our overwhelming strike authorization vote. The extension provoked an outcry and numerous calls for strike action.

A tentative agreement was then announced less than 13 hours later. Since then, UAW officials have refused to answer why the full contract cannot be released and have browbeaten workers in the plants who raise critical questions. Suspiciously, Local 838 in Waterloo has been disabling comments on all its recent Facebook posts.

We’ve been here before. In 2015, the UAW shared its “highlights” with us just before we voted on it. They had a reason to spring their summary on us at the last moment: the

contract kept the tier system, gave Deere the blessing to lay off thousands, substantially raised co-pays and out-of-pocket health care costs, had raises below inflation, and kept in place the grueling CIPP productivity “incentive” system.

Even with the UAW’s sleight-of-hand, there was widespread opposition to the contract, and many suspected there was manipulation of the vote. After the UAW claimed ratification by a margin of just a couple hundred ballots, it refused demands for a recount.

We refuse to be steamrolled again! We urge our brothers and sisters to join us in demanding the following:

- The immediate release of the full contract, with all associated “memoranda of understanding” or side letters.
- At least a week to study and discuss the contract before any ratification vote.
- Oversight by the rank and file of the voting process to prevent any fraud.

If the UAW refuses to provide us with the information, resources and time to make an informed decision, if it refuses to conduct a transparent vote count, workers should reject this contract on principle.

There is already ample evidence that the UAW is withholding details of agreement because it is another sellout. At strike authorization votes in September, the UAW released just a few details of the company’s supposedly initial “offer,” including the ending of a plant closure moratorium, an increase in workers’ share of health care premiums from zero to 20 percent, and ending overtime pay for working over eight hours.

But now the UAW claims in its press releases that the TA contains “significant economic gains.” It is simply not plausible that the company completely reversed itself without a strike and only because of the supposed “efforts of the UAW negotiators,” who, frankly, are responsible for the miserable conditions we currently work under.

As many know, the UAW corruption scandal has revealed its top executives stole workers’ dues money and accepted

bribes in exchange for pushing through pro-company contracts. To date, 11 UAW officials, including two of the last four union presidents, have been indicted or convicted for various charges stemming from the investigation, including former UAW Vice President Norwood Jewell, who led the 2015 Deere contract negotiations, as well as Nancy Johnson, Jewell's assistant who was also on the 2015 UAW bargaining team.

Regardless of the removal of some of the worst offenders, the pro-corporate character of the UAW has not changed. At Volvo Trucks this year, workers voted down three UAW-endorsed concessions contracts, only to be forced by the union to re-vote on the third agreement, with the UAW then suspiciously claiming ratification by just 17 votes.

At auto parts maker Dana this summer and fall, the UAW, along with the United Steel Workers union (USW), has been seeking to push through a contract which would allow the company to continue mandating 12-hour, seven-day-a-week overtime schedules, while raising health care costs and keeping raises below inflation. Our fellow workers there recently voted down this agreement by 90 percent, and the UAW and USW have responded by extending the old contract for weeks, enabling the company to stockpile parts, while the unions maintain a total information blackout on their talks with the company.

Despite the efforts of the UAW to make us feel powerless, we Deere workers are in fact in a powerful position. First, Deere is flush with billions of dollars in profits in the past year alone and has plenty of money to meet workers' needs and more. This year, Deere broke its previous annual profit record, taking in \$4.3 billion in net income for the first nine months of the year.

Second, this is a critical time for Deere, and a strike could quickly cripple the company. Harvests are near, ag equipment prices are jumping and Deere is struggling to hire or keep workers from quitting. Speaking to local news station WQAD8, Financial Advisor Mark Grywachski said, "I think faced with the prospect of having 10,000 plus employees go on strike for an unknown amount of time would add a further toll on production schedules and outputs. So, I think having this resolved in a timely manner prevents it from becoming yet another challenge that John Deere would have to face."

Third, we are an international force. Deere workers have thousands of brothers and sisters that work in the United States, but tens of thousands across the globe. Deere has plants in 70 countries, including India and Brazil. Our power lies not only in our ability to stop production in the United States, but also internationally.

We are powerful, many and we've had enough. Therefore, we, the recently formed John Deere Workers Rank-and-File

Committee, put forth the following minimum demands for a contract:

- An immediate end to the two-tier system, with all workers brought up to top pay and benefits
- A 30 percent across-the-board pay increase to make up for the years of wage freezes and stagnation
- An annual cost-of-living escalator clause to keep up with spiking inflation
- Fully paid health care benefits for active workers and retirees, with no co-pays or premiums
- The abolition of the CIPP regime, with no loss of pay
 - Overtime pay for work over eight hours and on weekends
 - Workers' oversight of safety protocols and social distancing to stop the spread of COVID-19. The right to halt production and close the plant for full cleaning, with guaranteed compensation to workers for all missed time, if there are COVID outbreaks.

Our struggle is part of many currently unfolding in the United States and internationally. Kellogg food workers began a strike just Tuesday morning. Thousands of carpenters in Seattle and coal miners are currently on strike. Some 60,000 production workers in the movie and television industry have voted to authorize a strike, and 24,000 Kaiser Permanente nurses are voting on strike action. On Friday, parents in the United Kingdom and elsewhere held a school strike against the ruling class's policy of reopening schools while the pandemic rages and kills thousands every day.

To all John Deere workers, we say: join our committee! This committee will be the means to link up and communicate across Deere plants in Iowa, Illinois and Kansas, facilities in Georgia and Colorado, and non-UAW plants in other states, as well as with workers at Caterpillar, Volvo, Mack Trucks, Amazon, the auto plants and elsewhere. These committees will provide workers with information the UAW refuses to and develop a strategy to stop and reverse decades of corporate attacks.

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