

Deere workers issue statement: “Vote NO to the UAW-Deere garbage contract! Rank-and-file workers must have oversight over balloting!”

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

On October 1, the United Auto Workers union and agricultural equipment giant Deere and Company announced a tentative agreement for a new six-year contract. The UAW began distributing details of the deal on Friday, just two days before the vote on the agreement. Workers have reacted angrily to the contract’s terms, which keeps raises below inflation and creates a new tier between workers’ retirement benefits.

The recently formed John Deere Workers Rank-and-File Committee issued the following statement on Friday calling on workers to oppose the UAW’s efforts to push through another pro-company agreement. To learn more about joining the committee, workers can email deerewrfc@gmail.com or text (484) 514-9797.

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**Vote NO to the UAW-Deere garbage contract!
Rank-and-file workers must have oversight over balloting!**

Brothers and sisters:

The UAW is trying to ram through a new six-year contract which fails to meet the needs of workers and gives the company what it wants.

UAW President Ray Curry and Vice President Chuck Browning have said their agreement with Deere contains “substantial gains” for workers. They must think we’re fools.

First, the contract contains wage increases well below the current 5 percent rate of inflation, amounting to a cut in real wages and undermining our buying power. There would be just three general wage increases over six years, as well as a signing bonus and three lump

sum payments which don’t increase base pay and which are heavily taxed. After multiple contracts where our wages have been kept down, while Deere makes record profits, this is nothing but a slap in the face.

Second, the contract would eliminate any pension for newly hired workers, creating yet another tier and further undermining the principle of “equal pay for equal work.”

Third, the contract would keep the co-pays for doctors and emergency room visits and prescription costs implemented in the last contract.

Where exactly are the “substantial gains” in our pay, healthcare, retirement plans and working hours? Where are the gains for newly hired workers, kept for months on probation? Or for retirees and their spouses?

In years past, you could be proud to say you worked for Deere, and we set a high bar for ag workers. Now other workers can’t believe how bad it’s gotten here. If we can’t win real gains **now**, when Deere is making billions and unable to hire quickly enough to keep up with orders, when can we? We must win a better future for ourselves, our families, and the next generation.

The Deere Workers Rank-and-File Committee calls on all workers to turn out Sunday to reject this garbage contract and put it in the dumpster where it belongs!

Absolutely zero trust should be placed in the UAW to carry out an honest vote count. Many workers already suspect that the fix is in and that the contract will somehow “miraculously” pass by a slim margin, as the UAW claimed in 2015. But among workers it’s apparent that we are overwhelmingly opposed to this agreement.

To prevent any possibility of ballot stuffing or vote rigging by the UAW officials, who have made clear they want this contract to pass, there must be rank-and-file oversight over the vote. Workers should organize delegations from every plant and facility to monitor the ballot count.

It's clear that the UAW has not been "negotiating" anything with Deere this year. This is why they have been maintaining an information blackout on the talks. Their strategy now is to try to convince us that nothing can be done, to lie and claim this is "the best Deere could do," while at the same time censoring our comments on Facebook and saying they don't want to hear any criticism. In doing so, they're working as Deere's representatives, not ours.

Deere and its millionaire executives, and their "partners" in the UAW, will never admit the company can afford to give us what we need unless we stand up and fight for it. The Deere Workers Rank-and-File Committee puts forth the following minimum demands for what workers and retirees need to live dignified lives:

- An immediate end to the tier system by restoring fully paid for healthcare and pensions for all workers
- 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 inflation
- Fully paid health care benefits for retirees and their widows, with no co-pays or premiums
 - The abolition of the CIPP productivity improvement regime, with no loss of pay
 - No mandated overtime, so that we have time to spend with our families, and time-and-a-half pay for voluntary overtime over eight hours and on weekends
- Workers' oversight of safety protocols 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.

These demands are both realistic and achievable, but to win them, we must recognize that we are facing a struggle against both Deere and the UAW. We appeal for workers to join our committee and to set up local rank-and-file committees at every Deere plant in order to share information, coordinate our efforts and begin preparations for strike action.

At Volvo Trucks in Virginia earlier this year, a rank-and-file committee provided workers with crucial information and advice throughout a weeks-long strike, helping break through the UAW's information blackout. Their committee played the leading role in organizing three overwhelming rejections of the UAW's pro-company contract, and won major support from workers in other countries, including in Belgium, where Volvo workers carried out a wildcat strike after learning about the struggle of their brothers and sisters in the US.

With a powerful multinational company like Deere, we too must work to mobilize the widest support possible among workers in the US and in other countries, who are also seeking to put an end to low wages and long hours. This includes workers at auto parts maker Dana, Inc., which supplies Deere, where workers are currently being forced to work under a day-to-day contract extension by the UAW and United Steelworkers. It also includes the tens of thousands of Deere workers in Mexico, India, Brazil, Germany and elsewhere.

Brothers and sisters, this struggle can and must be won, but it depends on rank-and-file workers taking the initiative and developing the organizations which will fight to secure the needs of all workers!



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