

Deere workers issue statement opposing latest tentative agreement: “Reject UAW-Deere blackmail!”

Deere Workers Rank-and-File Committee
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On Sunday, the UAW released the “highlights” of its latest tentative agreement with agricultural equipment maker Deere and Company, which it is seeking to push through in a vote on Tuesday, giving workers effectively no time to study the contract. Over 10,000 workers in Iowa, Illinois and other states have been striking against the company for nearly three weeks, after voting down an earlier UAW-backed contract by 90 percent.

The WSWs published an analysis of the UAW’s selective “highlights” of the tentative agreement on Sunday, explaining that the contract once again fails to meet workers’ demands for substantial increases to wages and improvements to benefits, particularly health care for retirees and full pensions.

The John Deere Workers Rank-and-File Committee, formed by workers this month to oppose the UAW’s efforts to push through a pro-company deal, has issued the following statement in response to the latest agreement, denouncing the attempt by the union to ram another sellout through and calling for an expansion of the strike to win workers’ demands.

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

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Reject UAW-Deere blackmail!

Expand the strike to win substantial gains in wages and retirement benefits and take back our family lives!

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

After more than two weeks on strike, the United Auto Workers is trying to rush through another pro-company deal, which ignores our demands for raises big enough to make up for 25 years of eroding wages, time off with our families, and fully paid retiree health benefits and

pensions for all workers.

To add insult to injury, the UAW is trying to pull another fast one like it did in 2015 by making us vote before we have time to sufficiently study and discuss the deal. They are telling us to vote Tuesday without access to the full contract and letters of agreement that will dictate our lives for the next six years.

We are workers, not industrial slaves! The Deere Workers Rank-and-File Committee calls on workers to demand the release of the full contract and all side letters now and insist on a full week to study the contract before any vote. If the UAW goes ahead and holds the vote, Deere workers should reject the deal on principle and toss it in the garbage where it belongs.

Rank-and-file workers must also demand the right to oversee the voting process, so the UAW doesn’t repeat what it did in 2015, when it claimed the hated contract miraculously passed by 180 votes. No one should doubt that the UAW won’t try to make the vote come out the “right” way if they think they’re able to get away with it.

The self-serving “highlights” no doubt conceal numerous other concessions that we would only find out later. What we do know, however, is enough to reject this deal like we did the first one.

- The UAW frontloaded a 10 percent wage increase at the beginning of the contract. Over six years, however, annual raises will only average 3.3 percent, well below the current rate of inflation of 5.4 percent annually. Even with COLA added back in, this would be wage stagnation at best, and we would still be behind what our brothers and sisters were making 25 years ago.

- After trying to starve us out with their measly \$275-a-week strike benefits, the UAW is dangling an \$8,500

“signing bonus” to get us to buy this deal. But we won’t sell out our birthright for a mess of pottage. By now, every worker knows: the bigger the signing bonus, the bigger the sellout.

Once taxes and union dues are deducted, the bonus would hardly cover for the wages we lost during the strike. Furthermore, it is not even clear whether new hires and other categories of workers will qualify for the full bonus. After the six-week GM strike in 2019, the UAW pulled the same dirty trick, paying \$11,000 to full-time and \$4,500 to part-time temporary workers, before taxes and dues. The contract allowed GM to close plants and vastly increase the number of low-paid second tier and temp workers.

- The UAW also wants us to turn our back on future generations. Workers hired after 1997 will still not have post-retirement health care benefits, guaranteeing that many will be dead or in poverty just a few years after producing a lifetime of profits for the company. New hires will be given a “choice” between pensions and 401(k) plans, paving the way for the elimination of company-paid pensions entirely. We went on strike to abolish the rotten tier system, not create even more tiers!

- Under the agreement, Deere will continue to have a free hand to schedule grueling amounts of mandatory overtime, robbing us of our health, our rest and time with our families.

- Finally, the CIPP speedup scheme has been left largely in place.

We did not strike and have a brother sacrifice his life in order to accept this insulting deal.

The UAW told us the first proposal contained “significant gains” and now they are telling us this is Deere’s “last and final offer.” If we reject their sellout deal, UAW officials say, we will be in for a long strike and economic ruin. This only shows that Curry, Browning and the rest of the UAW executives—who sit on a \$790 million strike fund and have never sacrificed a dime in their lives—are nothing but stooges for the Deere bosses.

The company expects to rake in nearly \$6 billion in profits this year and is handing millions in salaries and bonuses to its top executives and over a billion a year in

dividends to its wealthy shareholders. It has more than enough to pay us what we and our families need.

There is a growing strike wave in the US and around the world. After we have risked our lives in COVID-infected factories to make the billionaires even richer during the pandemic, workers are saying enough is enough. We need substantial raises, we need security in retirement, we want our family lives back, we want say-so over health and safety and conditions in the factories and other workplaces.

Commenting on our strike, one Wall Street analyst warned, “The blue-collar workers around the United States have the capacity to demand higher wages, a fact which will likely cause sharp margin reversals for many firms.” This, he said, could reverse the “environment” that has existed for decades, that “caused revenues to flow away from workers toward capital (i.e., investors).”

The UAW bureaucrats are not worried that we could lose the strike if we continue, but that we would win it. This would prove to other workers that they could defy the lies and intimidation of the gangsters in the UAW and open the floodgates to overturn all the union-backed sweetheart deals at GM, Ford, Stellantis, Volvo, Caterpillar, Dana and countless other locations.

The Deere Workers Rank-and-File Committee (DWRFC) was formed to unite all workers and lead the fight against the sabotage of the UAW. The committee has established lines of communications throughout the Deere empire, including with workers in Germany, and with auto and auto parts workers in the Midwest.

We are in a powerful position to win this struggle, with Deere feeling the pressure of the lack of replacement parts in the harvest season and their earnings report due soon. We cannot allow the UAW to snatch this victory from us. We urge all workers to reject this sellout deal and to join and expand the DWRFC to unite with other workers to win our social rights!



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[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)