

UAW conspiring with Deere management to ram through contract that workers voted to reject

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Deere management has declared that the contract that workers rejected Tuesday was their “best and final offer” and that they would not be returning to the bargaining table, Bloomberg News has reported.

“The agreement that we provided is frankly our best and final offer,” Marc Howze, chief administrative officer for Deere, told the business news outlet. “In order for us to be competitive we have gone as far as we’re gonna go.” In a separate news release, the company also declared that it would “execute the next phase of our Customer Service Continuation Plan,” i.e., its strikebreaking operation.

The statements from Deere amount to giving the United Auto Workers its marching orders to shut down the strike and enforce the contract which workers just rejected. No doubt, the UAW will attempt to ride roughshod over the democratic will of the workers and move rapidly to send the strikers back to work. Even if the union is unable to accomplish this, however, it will seek to isolate and starve out the Deere workers on the picket line with a woefully inadequate \$275 weekly strike pay.

This was the clear meaning of the UAW's own statement in the aftermath of the vote, which said: “The strike against John Deere and Company will continue as we discuss next steps with the company.”

Shelby Kluver, a reporter for WQAD in the Quad Cities, tweeted Wednesday afternoon that a company representative had told her, “Deere is still at the negotiating table and actively seeking to get the second tentative contract ratified. There [are] no moves being made for a new, third contract that goes beyond the scope of the second offer.”

That the discussion taking place centers around how to force through a contract which workers rejected stretches the meaning of the word “negotiating table” past its limit. It would be more accurate to say that Deere and UAW are

meeting at the “conspiring table” to discuss how to break the opposition of Deere workers.

Howze told the *San Francisco Gate*, in a statement that was equally condescending and threatening, “We want to make sure they understand the value of the agreement, to make sure they understand that there is nothing to be gained by continuing to hold out. To some degree, because we were able to come to a resolution as quickly as we were, I think there’s some folks who believe there must be some more available.”

For Deere to claim there is not “more available” is simply not tenable. The company is set to make close to \$6 billion in profit for its previous fiscal year, far exceeding its previous record. Demand and prices for its agricultural equipment have been on a sharp upward trajectory.

Deere is following the playbook of the Volvo Trucks strike to the letter. A month into that strike, Volvo Trucks workers delivered a stunning rejection of the third consecutive tentative agreement brought by the UAW. Volvo Trucks Vice President and General Manager Frankie Marchand also responded by declaring that the contract was their “last, best and final offer” and that it would unilaterally impose it.

Even as Volvo management was openly calling on workers to cross the picket line, the UAW served as its battering ram, forcing workers to re-vote on the contract that they had just rejected, while making it clear that regardless of the outcome the union was intent upon ending the strike. The contract “passed” under the re-vote under dubious circumstances by a mere 17 votes.

Volvo seized upon the narrower margin of defeat of the third tentative agreement by attempting to split the workforce between those who had voted “no” and “yes,” encouraging the latter to cross the picket line to work

under the terms of the rejected contract. Similar tactics will likely be attempted at Deere.

In particular, the UAW may attempt to split the Waterloo and Dubuque locals, the centers of opposition to the deal, from the locals that voted “yes” or rejected it by a narrow margin, sending the latter back to work while forcing Waterloo and Dubuque workers to fend for themselves. An article in the *Wall Street Journal* that noted that Howze and Deere executives “were encouraged by the level of support for the second offer after 90% of the voters reportedly turned down the first deal” is a clear indication that they are considering how to enforce such a split.

The turn now must be to the broadest possible mobilization of the working class in defense of the Deere strike, against both management and the UAW. Deere workers are in a powerful position and can defeat both the ruthlessness of the company and the treachery of the union, but they cannot fight them alone.

There is enormous support among workers for the Deere struggle. “As a former farm implement worker and vet of the great 1979-80 International Harvester Strike,” said one retiree, “I, like I am sure thousands of others, am proud of you and your efforts to begin reversing 40 years of union-enforced company concessions. Seems it is not an exaggeration to say the world is watching you.”

“UAW leadership is being exposed AGAIN!” a worker at Stellantis’s Sterling Heights Assembly Plant north of Detroit said. “We need to hold the union responsible for their actions, they are not upholding what’s due to the membership. We must stick together, majority rules!”

Another Detroit autoworker said, “You are the front-line for ALL workers, union or not. Don’t let the corrupt UAW do to you what they did to workers at FCA/Stellantis. You are powerful and in a position to make A REAL DIFFERENCE.”

Earlier on Wednesday, the Deere Workers Rank-and-File Committee issued a statement, “What’s next in our strike,” calling on their coworkers to stand strong against the union’s and company’s dirty tricks. “We won an important battle yesterday. But to win the war, we must press our offensive. We can’t allow Deere and the UAW any time to regroup and attempt to force through the same deal, or something largely similar with one or two cosmetic ‘sweeteners’ thrown in.”

Rank-and-file committees at other auto plants, formed to develop workers’ independent initiative and organization against the treachery of the UAW, declared in their own statements yesterday that they stand ready to

assist Deere workers. “John Deere workers, the rank-and-file committee at Faurecia stands with you,” an auto parts worker and member of that committee said. “We have to stand together and show the capitalists that we will not accept these sellout contracts anymore. The gravy train is over.

“Deere workers are doing a good job of building a rank-and-file committee. The IWA-RFC [International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees] is getting stronger by the minute. We all need to stand together. John Deere is a global corporation. We need to get word to our co-workers in other countries and keep each other informed about what’s going on.”

The Dana Workers Rank-and-File Committee, in its own statement, declared: “Now is the time for Dana workers to join Deere workers and all auto workers to overturn the fraudulent contracts signed by the UAW in recent months and years.”

All workers, taking up the principle that “an injury to one is an injury to all,” must mobilize in defense of the strike and against the UAW’s attempts to sabotage and isolate it. Deere workers should appeal to workers and plants which voted for the contract not to allow the company and the union to disrupt their solidarity.

Workers across the country must develop independent rank-and-file support committees to prepare for joint, nationwide action in defense of the strike.

Take the next step by contacting the Deere Rank-and-File Committee by emailing deerewrfc@gmail.com or texting (484) 514-9797. Alternatively, you can fill out the form below.



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