

Deere strike winning support among autoworkers

Marcus Day
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Support is building among autoworkers across the US for the defiant stand taken by striking Deere workers, who rejected a second United Auto Workers-backed contract on Tuesday. The 10,000 strikers are in the fourth week of their walkout and are pursuing major wage increases and benefit improvements.

The United Auto Workers union, meanwhile, continued its information blackout on its talks with Deere Friday. The union has remained silent while Deere has gone on a PR offensive, seeking to paint workers as greedy and unrealistic, while threatening to ramp up its strikebreaking efforts.

Marc Howze, Deere's chief administrative officer (with an estimated net worth over \$20 million), has been the main face of the campaign, telling media outlets the agreement was the company's "best and final offer" and that there is "just no more to give." Deere has stated it will not negotiate a third offer, is seeking to secure ratification of its second deal, and is in ongoing meetings with the UAW to discuss "next steps."

On Friday afternoon, Deere sent out a mass text attempting again to sell the already rejected deal to workers, claiming, "The second tentative agreement reached between John Deere and the UAW is more than simply the best in our industries – it's groundbreaking."

Workers immediately derided the company's latest clumsy propaganda efforts in comments on social media, asking pointedly how a contract which still falls short of the wages and benefits of a quarter century ago can be considered "groundbreaking."

Meanwhile, a Bloomberg News report expressed the growing concerns within the corporate and financial establishment over the impact of the strike. Bloomberg reported that agricultural equipment customers are beginning to face weeks-long delays for parts. "I would call it a double whammy, because we already had a supply-chain shortage and now we have a strike," Jon

Fisher, a tractor buyer-seller in South Carolina, told the publication. "They couldn't even fulfill the orders because of the supply-chain issues."

Now, he said, "What used to be there in two to three days is three weeks."

Bloomberg also reported that US harvests have begun to fall behind, noting corn is only 74 percent harvested, compared to 81 percent at this time last year, and soybeans are only 79 percent completed, compared to 86 percent last year.

"We face the same conditions in the Detroit plants, and we should fight together"

Despite Deere's efforts to use its media leverage to disparage the strikers—as well as the UAW's attempts to convince workers that they are isolated and losing community support—autoworkers are increasingly voicing their solidarity and calling for a joint struggle.

Travis, a worker at Volvo Truck's New River Valley Plant in Virginia, recorded a video urging Deere workers to press ahead in their fight.

"I just want to encourage you guys to keep going," Travis said. "That signing bonus is nothing. They are scattering grain and hoping the chickens will peck at it. You are better than that, I believe in you."

The UAW has been following the same playbook at Deere which it utilized to betray a strike by nearly 3,000 Volvo Trucks workers at the New River Valley plant earlier this year. After workers rejected three UAW-backed concessions contracts, the company declared the third deal its "last and final offer." The UAW facilitated Volvo's efforts to break the strike, forcing a re-vote on the rejected third deal, which it claimed passed by just 17

ballots.

A worker at **Mack Trucks**, which is owned by Volvo, told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*, “I fully support the John Deere workers who are on strike. We at Mack were on strike just two years ago, and I wish our brothers and sisters could have stuck it out like you guys!

“I just hope that you can stand strong for both new hires, old timers and retirees alike! Everyone deserves the recognition from management!”

Other workers issued warnings to the Deere strikers about the UAW’s treachery. A former **auto parts worker at Dana Incorporated in Paris, Tennessee**, stated, “If I could give the Deere workers a warning, I would say: I know the uncertainty is difficult, I know it’s hard not knowing. However, you can’t let the company and the union win. The workers determine everything as long as they’re willing to fight for it.” The UAW and United Steelworkers union are fresh off forcing through a sellout contract at Dana last month which maintains low wages and brutal levels of mandatory overtime.

“We have to keep fighting the fight,” the worker continued. “It will be a long and uncomfortable fight, full of scary and uncertain circumstances, but the ones doing us wrong (the companies AND unions) aren’t going to wake up one day and decide to change things.

“It is up to us to fix what is broken, even if that means completely breaking down the system, halting the entire industry, and rebuilding it around the values and basic rights that every human being deserves.”

A **Ford worker at the Chicago Assembly Plant** told the *WSWS*: “I was just reading on Google about how the UAW and Deere are playing games now on the words of the contract, ‘last, final and best.’ I want them to fight Deere, for themselves and everyone. I wish them all the luck, and I do support them, the workers, on every level and everything they are asking for.”

“I am really impressed by what the workers at Deere are doing,” a **Stellantis (formerly Fiat Chrysler) worker at Jefferson North Assembly Plant in Detroit** said. “It is setting a precedent for a lot of other plants. It is showing that if you stand up for what you believe, you can get results.

“They did the right thing by rejecting the signing bonus. They love dangling that bonus in front of workers who are not used to that much money, but money is not everything.

“I would tell the Deere workers ‘don’t give up, continue the fight,’” the worker continued. “The UAW is fearful because other workers are seeing this and gaining

hope, because they are seeing how strong our voices really are. Remember, the UAW’s objective is to help the company. They are now having fits, because this is not what they expected.”

Ron, a young worker at the **Stellantis Warren Truck** plant in suburban Detroit, said, “The Deere workers should keep on fighting. I support their fight to get the best deal they can. We face the same conditions in the Detroit plants, and we should fight together to overthrow all these bad agreements. We only get the ‘highlights’ from the UAW when they want us to vote on a deal, just like the Deere workers. They don’t want us to see what they really agreed to.

“We all have risked our lives working in the pandemic and making the companies’ profits. But we’re not getting our just due for taking these risks. At least 12 workers died from COVID in my plant, and no one should have lost their lives. The UAW is just an extension of management.”

Ron urged support for the Deere Workers Rank-and-File Committee, which has called for an expansion of the strike and solidarity actions by autoworkers. “The rank-and-file committees at Deere, Volvo, Dana, Faurecia and in the auto plants should all be talking to each other and organizing together. The corporations and political parties are organized against us, and now it’s time to organize against them. I never thought that we could communicate with workers in other countries, but now we’re doing it. No matter if we have different languages and customs, we’re all in the same fight.”

Deere workers, take the next step by joining the John 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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