

Defend Deere workers against company-UAW strikebreaking! Join the Deere Strike Rank-and-File Solidarity Committee!

Deere Strike Rank-and-File Solidarity Committee
10 November 2021

On November 6, workers who have been involved at strikes and struggles at Deere, Volvo and Mack Trucks, Dana, the Detroit automakers, nurses and educators voted to establish the Deere Strike Rank-and-File Solidarity Committee in order to mobilize the working class in the US and across the world to support the strike at John Deere.

The strike by over 10,000 workers at the agricultural and construction equipment giant is set to enter its second month on Thursday. On November 2, the workers defied a second attempt by the United Auto Workers union (UAW) to ram through a contract that failed to meet their demands for major improvements to wages, benefits and working conditions.

Since the rejection of the second deal, the company has taken a hard line, declaring the rejected contract was its “last and final” offer and that it is moving to the next phase of its strikebreaking plan, including ramping up production at its overseas plants. The UAW, for its part, said it is meeting with Deere to “discuss next steps” while keeping workers completely in the dark on the content of its discussions with the company.

Workers who participated in the rank-and-file solidarity meeting denounced the pro-corporate policies of the UAW and other unions, and declared their support for a combined struggle by workers across the world.

A Deere worker at the meeting said, “We’re not stupid, but we’re being treated like preschool kids who don’t know any better. Voting this last contract down, even if not by a huge margin, it’s progress. I couldn’t be more proud of us for holding the line to this point.”

“We as workers have to raise our fight to the next level,” a worker at Mack Trucks said. “It’s not a matter of waiting on the UAW, because they’re not going to do that.”

“They think they can isolate us, make us feel like we don’t have strength or power, but we do,” a teacher at the meeting added. “They think they can reallocate work globally, but we have our global network, too.”

Following the meeting, the Deere Strike Rank-and-File Solidarity Committee adopted the statement below calling for workers to come to the defense of the strike.

For information on how to join the rank-and-file solidarity committee and how to organize a solidarity committee at your own workplace, e-mail deerewrfc@gmail.com or text (484) 514-9797.

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Defend Deere workers against company-UAW strikebreaking!

The Deere Strike Rank-and-File Solidarity Committee declares its commitment to do everything possible to mobilize workers in the US and internationally to support the more than 10,000 workers on strike against the agriculture and construction equipment maker John Deere since October 14.

After striking workers courageously rejected a second pro-company contract pushed by the United Auto Workers last week, Deere announced that this had been their “last, best and final” offer and that it was executing the next phase of its strikebreaking operations. Asked if this included hiring strikebreakers to replace current workers, the company’s chief administrative officer said “all options are on the table.”

Far from opposing this corporate ultimatum, the UAW immediately announced it was resuming meetings with the Deere bosses to “discuss next steps.” There have been no such meetings with Deere workers. On the contrary, the UAW has provided no information to workers about these closed-door meetings. That is because the corrupt officials in the UAW are not negotiating to win a better contract but are plotting with corporate executives to force workers to accept

another sellout deal.

Like so many other companies, Deere has seen its profits rise sharply during the pandemic and is showering its top executives and wealthy shareholders with huge rewards. But for their workers who risked their lives producing these profits, Deere claims “there is nothing left on the table.”

Deere workers, however, have said enough is enough. They are determined to win substantial raises to protect their families against surging inflation, health care benefits in retirement so they are not impoverished after decades of work, and the return of decades of givebacks the UAW and other unions agreed to.

Over the last year, tens of thousands of workers have gone on strike, from manufacturing workers, coal miners and Kellogg’s cereal workers to nurses, educators and graduate students, and many more. This is part of a global strike wave, including public sector workers in Canada, health care workers and teachers in Sri Lanka, German hospital and airport workers, and others. In every case, workers are rebelling against “unions” that function as nothing more than tools of corporate management and big business parties.

The Deere workers are fighting a battle for the entire working class. Workers at the Big Three auto companies, at Volvo, Mack Trucks, Caterpillar, the auto parts companies, and elsewhere have all suffered from the betrayals of the UAW over many years. We are all fighting to put an end to the wage and benefit tier system, endless mandatory overtime, loss of pensions, rising health care costs, unsafe workplaces, and other concessions.

What can be won will only be determined in struggle. A major victory by the strikers at Deere would enormously strengthen workers everywhere, encouraging them to raise their heads and go on the offensive for what they deserve.

Therefore, the Deere Strike Rank-and-File Solidarity Committee resolves that the Deere workers will not fight this battle alone. We will do everything to mobilize the broadest sections of the working class to help the Deere workers win their demands for substantial wage increases, fully paid pensions and retiree health care benefits and the overturning of other UAW-backed concessions.

Deere has announced plans to expand international production to undermine the impact of the strike. If the corporations use their global networks, workers must too. Deere workers in Mannheim, Germany, have already repeatedly voiced their support for the struggle by their brothers and sisters in the US.

Our committee will do everything to work with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) to inform Deere workers around the world and fight for international solidarity action to defend the strike.

The Deere Strike Rank-and-File Solidarity Committee asks all those who want to see this struggle succeed to do the following:

- Distribute this statement, and other material on the strike, as widely as possible among your co-workers, family and friends, to help break through the UAW’s information blackout.

- Submit a statement of support to the Deere Workers Rank-and-File Committee at deerewrfc@gmail.com or by text at (484) 514-9797.

- Get the word out on social media: Record a video or post a statement explaining why you support the strike, and use the hashtag #DeereRankAndFileSolidarity

- Raise the demand: Deere workers should be paid full income while on strike, not the \$275 a week the UAW is starving them on! The union bureaucracy controls nearly \$800 million in the strike fund, built up with workers’ dues. This money must be used to strengthen the strike, not fund the bloated incomes and perks of UAW executives, who are currently receiving their full salaries.

- Get involved with our committee and begin the process of forming a rank-and-file solidarity committee in support of the Deere strike at your plant.

For more information on getting involved in the Deere Strike Rank-and-File Solidarity Committee, e-mail deerewrfc@gmail.com or text (484) 514-9797.



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