

UAW announces re-vote on “last, best and final” offer which Deere workers already rejected

Marcus Day
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The WSWS urges Deere workers to get involved with the John Deere Workers Rank-and-File Committee to fight back against the latest sellout deal. Find out more by emailing deerewrfc@gmail.com or texting (484) 514-9797.

The United Auto Workers announced Friday night that it is scheduling a re-vote on the “last, best and final” offer from Deere and Company, which 10,000 striking workers had already voted to reject.

“John Deere and Company has made a last, best and final offer to the UAW negotiating team that includes modest modifications to the last tentative agreement presented for ratification on November 2nd,” the UAW wrote in its statement.

It continued, “As a result, the UAW will present the Company’s offer for ratification and, as has been the case throughout the bargaining process, will support the outcome as determined by our members.” This is an absurd lie. If it were true that the UAW respected the “outcome as determined by our members,” it would not be forcing them to vote on essentially the same deal which they voted to reject by 55 to 45 percent.

The announcement of the contract offer and the vote next week is the first statement by the UAW since workers rejected its second deal with the company a week and a half ago. The union has maintained a total information blackout on its talks with the company since then.

The statement gave no indication of when workers would be informed of what the supposedly “modest modifications” have been made to the contract. Indeed, workers have still not seen the full contract which they rejected on November 2, having only been given five pages of “highlights” by the union two days

beforehand. It concluded, “The strike continues and voting information will be provided by the Local Union.”

Deere, meanwhile, responded to the rejection by going on a media offensive, claiming there was no more money available. The company has sought to intimidate and divide workers with threats of hiring permanent replacements, on the one hand, and propaganda “explaining the value” of the defeated contract, on the other.

Deere workers Friday night voiced their indignation at the announcement. “A lot of people are saying it’s not any better,” a worker at the parts distribution center in Milan, Illinois, said. “I knew it was coming,” said a worker at Harvester Works in East Moline.

One worker in Des Moines, Iowa, said, “It was to be expected. The UAW didn’t issue any statement after the second tentative agreement and let the company do the dirty work by lying to the media and threatening workers.

“If a \$1 raise was a ‘significant economic gain,’ I am afraid to think what is a ‘modest modification.’ They’ve changed something just so it is not the same TA, hoping that their scare tactics will coerce people into voting yes.”

The shabby maneuver by the UAW, which is attempting to not only ram through a sellout but shift responsibility from themselves onto workers through a sham “democratic process,” confirms the warnings made by the *World Socialist Web Site* that the UAW would respond to a rejection by redoubling their efforts to betray the strike.

In particular, the WSWS warned that UAW and Deere are following the playbook used to shut down

and betray the strike by nearly 3,000 Volvo Trucks workers in Virginia earlier this summer.

After workers had voted down three UAW-backed concessions contracts, twice by 90 percent or more, Volvo announced that it had presented its “last, best and final offer” and would unilaterally impose it. The UAW went along with this naked strikebreaking, forcing workers to re-vote on the third contract they had just rejected, telling them it would go into effect regardless of how they voted.

Despite all the threats by Volvo and the union, there remained widespread opposition to the contract. The UAW claimed ratification by a margin of just 17 votes and ignored all demands for a recount.

Workers must mobilize for the broadest possible rejection of the contract. They must also be on guard against any attempts at vote rigging or other “irregularities” by the union officials, who have already made clear they want what Deere wants. Workers should organize rank-and-file delegations to observe the ballot counting and ensure the integrity of the vote.

It is no accident that Deere and the UAW are again attempting to force through a deal just at the point when the strike is winning growing support among autoworkers in the US and Deere workers internationally. Moreover, they are attempting to shut down the strike the same week that nearly 100,000 health care workers on the west coast are poised to take strike action. The announcement came as 60,000 film production workers are voting on a similar sellout this weekend, which may well be defeated.

The UAW is not only acting on behalf of the company, but the entire capitalist ruling class. They are terrified that if the strike continues much longer, it could coalesce into a far broader social movement by the working class against decades of wage stagnation.

The UAW announcement is a backhanded acknowledgment that the position of the Deere strike has never been stronger. Workers can fight and win a victory which meets the needs of all of the Deere workforce and sets a precedent for workers to follow everywhere.

The activity of the Deere Workers Rank-and-File Committee, the organizing center of opposition to the UAW’s betrayals, must now be greatly expanded. Local rank-and-file strike committees must be set up at every plant and warehouse, so that workers can take

control out of the hands of the corrupt gangsters at Solidarity House and appeal for support from workers across the world. The working class must likewise come to the defense of the Deere strike by joining the Deere Strike Solidarity Rank-and-File Committee to organize support, up to and including job actions.

“Support for striking John Deere workers in the USA that came from John Deere workers in France is significant for all John Deere workers worldwide,” the worker in Des Moines said. “For those here who are currently holding the line, this support gives us the strength to persevere and accomplish our goals. In addition, it provides us morale to fight the uphill battle we face against the company and corrupt UAW officials.

“This support gives us a feeling of not being alone in this struggle that is not just ours. Working men and women worldwide are going through the same struggles, and the only way to win is to stand together strong and united by sharing relevant information and experiences. We are all in this together.”



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