

CNH workers need full strike pay and a new strategy to win this struggle!

CNH Workers Rank-and-File Committee
7 June 2022

The following statement was issued by the CNH Workers Rank-and-File Committee on June 7. To find out more about getting involved with the committee, email cnhrfc@gmail.com, or text (262) 676-2381. Download a printable version of the statement [here](#).

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is more than one month since we launched the first strike against CNH since 2004. We entered into this struggle knowing it would be a fight, but did so because we could no longer tolerate low wages, rising health costs, 55-hour-plus workweeks and the destruction of a secure retirement. For decades we have gone backwards, but the Deere strike showed us it's our time to win back what we've lost, and more.

One month into the strike, it's time to carefully take stock of where we are and reevaluate our strategy.

First, what's the situation?

The company has dug in its heels. According to UAW reps, management is refusing to budge on its demands for below-inflation raises, no COLA, higher health insurance payments, no restoration of pensions or health benefits for retirees, and no relief on overtime. They're bringing in scabs and paying them far more than they're willing to give us, and they've cut off our health benefits.

In other words, CNH, despite record profits, is out for blood and wants to impose concessions all down the line.

Vice President Chuck Browning and the other UAW big-wigs didn't dare bring CNH's slap-in-the-face "final" proposal to a vote. They know well enough that we would have massively rejected any such contract, just as our brothers and sisters did last year where workers at Deere and at Volvo Trucks voted down UAW TAs by 90 percent margins.

While the company is playing hardball, however, the UAW is carrying out a strategy which is sabotaging our strike.

To date, we have been starved on just \$275 a week in strike pay. On Tuesday, the UAW International announced it would be raising strike pay to \$400 a week. UAW President Ray Curry said in the patronizing statement, "Our striking members and their families deserve our solidarity, and this increased benefit will help them hold the line."

Who does Curry think he's kidding?

First, \$400 remains totally inadequate to meet our needs. It comes out to roughly a \$10 hourly wage, half or less what many CNH workers normally make.

Second, the strike fund is not a "benefit" to be granted or taken away from on high. *We workers built up that fund with our dues, and it rightfully belongs to us.* As a brother put it replying to Curry's announcement on Facebook (one of hundreds of angry comments): "Lord knows they have enough to give everyone on strike \$1,000 per week."

The UAW executives are desperate to save face. They know how discredited they are in workers' eyes. Curry & Co. are constantly afraid workers will take matters into their own hands, and launch a strike wave outside their control.

What does the "solidarity" of Ray Curry and the UAW bureaucracy actually look like?

Workers at the vast majority of UAW-"represented" plants don't even know we're striking, because the union has kept them in the dark. Even though there are nearly 400,000 UAW members, the union has forced us to fight this multinational corporation on our own.

Meanwhile, we've only been fed a trickle of information, which contradicts itself from one day to the next. Local 807 President Nick Guernsey said last month that talks were "going in a positive direction." A few days later, he said talks had stopped and hadn't been "gaining any traction." Shortly after that, the UAW headquarters put out a blustering statement, as if they had suddenly discovered the company was taking a hard line against us.

Browning and the other head UAW "negotiators" can pretend all they want, but we know they're just as corrupt and in the pocket of management as the union officials who are behind bars. Browning himself was the top aide to former UAW President Dennis Williams (who is now serving a two-year prison sentence) while Williams was embezzling our dues right and left.

The CNH Workers Rank-and-File Committee was initiated by workers last month in order to lay out concrete demands based on what workers need to improve our living standards, and to overcome the UAW-company information blackout.

Our committee believes that a new strategy is necessary to win this strike and make sure that the needs of all workers are met. This starts with the following:

1. Raise strike pay to our full income:

\$400 a week is not enough. It does not cover most people's housing, let alone skyrocketing food, gas, water and electric bills, child care, car payments, car insurance, internet, phone bills, groceries, etc.

The UAW is sitting on an \$800 million strike fund, which belongs to the workers. Furthermore, why are UAW execs like President Ray Curry and Vice President Chuck Browning still receiving their full incomes—grossing over *\$4,000 a week*, based on their reported salaries—while we're being starved on the picket lines?

For Browning to talk about the *company* starving us out, and say

that the UAW is “conducting gate collections across the country” supposedly for our struggle, is nothing short of obscene, given the gigantic strike fund and assets of the UAW.

We need our full income. It would strengthen the strike, and vastly reduce the economic pressures which are forcing workers to quit or cross the picket lines. And it would be widely supported by workers at other UAW-represented plants, including Caterpillar and the Big Three automakers, where contracts expire next year.

2. Workers’ oversight over contract talks:

The UAW claims it’s “shooting for the moon” in contract talks, and demanding COLA and higher wages. How do we know what’s really being discussed, when the discussions are taking place entirely behind our backs and out of sight? Why should we believe what UAW officials are saying now, when they’ve repeatedly lied to us before?

There is no legitimate reason why contract talks cannot be livestreamed for all workers to observe and participate in. Workers should elect actual representatives from the shop floor to oversee the contract talks, including the most militant, trusted workers, not loyal UAW hand-raisers.

3. Mobilize workers at all CNH facilities, and beyond:

While our strike is no doubt having an impact on CNH’s output, it is increasingly clear we cannot succeed while our fight is isolated and confined to just two plants in the US.

Workers at non-UAW CNH facilities are up against the same management and are exploited to enrich the same corporate shareholders. They are facing the same inflation, the same erosion of their living standards, and are also looking for a way to improve conditions for themselves and their families. We must find ways to reach and appeal to these workers to support and join our strike.

Beyond CNH, workers at Caterpillar and the Big Three automakers face major contract battles next year, and are also looking to break out of the low-wage regimes forced on them in earlier contracts by the UAW. The UAW is keeping them in the dark about our strike because they know workers everywhere are itching for a collective fight. It is critical that we connect with our brothers and sisters at Stellantis, Ford, GM, CAT and Deere and urge them to take action in concert with us.

For a \$10 raise, COLA and no tiers!

UAW reps have stated their “demands” amount to a total of \$450 million over the life of a six-year contract. This amounts to just a tiny fraction of CNH’s profits in a single year. Who decided on this completely arbitrary figure? Certainly not us workers.

The CNH Workers Rank-and-File Committee again insists that the following demands are the minimum required for workers to ratify a

contract.

- A \$10-an-hour base wage increase for all workers, to make up for years of stagnating wages, in addition to all lower-tier workers being immediately brought up to top pay
 - The restoration of COLA to protect against out-of-control inflation
 - A substantial reduction to workers’ share of health care costs
 - The return to an eight-hour day, with overtime paid after eight hours and on weekends
 - Health care coverage for retirees and their families
- CNH will claim these demands are unaffordable. This is a lie.

First of all, CNH is coming off record profits, it cannot even keep up with orders, and management is projecting that revenue and earnings will continue to increase as farm commodity prices surge.

Second, nothing—pensions, the eight-hour day, COLA, health benefits—was ever won by workers without a struggle. The corporate owners will always cry poor in an attempt to keep workers down.

It is vitally important we win this strike. We are not just fighting for ourselves. A movement in the working class is growing, and workers all across America and the globe are fighting back against low wages, inflation, and unbearable working conditions. The contract for 12,500 nurses in the Twin Cities in Minnesota expired last week; 25,000 dockworkers on the West Coast have their contracts expire on July 1; and anger is building up among BNSF rail workers over a nightmarish attendance policy and an anti-strike court injunction. After being suppressed for so long by the pro-company unions, the class struggle is returning with a vengeance.

But time is pressing. Every week we wait a poor UAW contract looms closer to the surface. We have to organize ourselves, demand the resources to sustain our strike, break it out of its isolation and make sure we have the support we need to go on a real offensive.

We urge all our brothers and sisters at CNH who agree with these points to join our committee, and for workers at other companies to contact us to discuss how we can coordinate our struggles together. Contact us at cnhrfc@gmail.com, or text (262) 676-2381.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact