

John Deere to lay off a further 345 workers, adding to its bloodletting of over 1,500 jobs

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Take up the fight against layoffs! Fill out the form below to begin building a rank-and-file committee at your workplace.

Last Thursday, agriculture machinery maker Deere & Company announced 345 job cuts from its Waterloo Operations in Iowa, which employs some 5,000 workers. The layoffs will take place on September 20. It will also lay off seven workers from its Coffeyville, Kansas, plant on August 9.

According to Iowa's Workforce Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) site, Deere has announced 1,429 job cuts since the beginning of 2024. The consequences of these layoffs will ripple across workers' families and communities, multiplying their disastrous effects on thousands of people.

The layoffs can and must be stopped through the independent intervention of Deere workers by forming rank-and-file committees across state lines and internationally to unite workers against the cuts.

Mobilizing in opposition to both management and the sellout bureaucrats in the United Auto Workers, Deere workers should coordinate with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) to fight back and demand that all job cuts be rescinded and all laid-off workers be rehired.

Just two weeks ago, Deere announced indefinite layoffs of 800 workers in Iowa and Illinois in the coming months. In Illinois, 503 workers at its Harvester Works factory in East Moline, Illinois, will be laid off starting September 20. In Iowa, across the Mississippi River, 211 workers at the Davenport Works and another 99 at the Dubuque Works plant will be laid off, both starting on August 30.

Including the layoffs announced last week, the total number of job cuts at Waterloo alone is 894.

Deere's executives are shifting the cost of declining

sales onto the backs of workers. In a statement to the *Des Moines Register*, the company said, "As the largest global manufacturer of agricultural equipment, John Deere, like many others in the industry, faces significant economic challenges, including rising global operational and manufacturing costs, and reduced customer demand. These changes are being made due to reduced demand for the products produced at these facilities. As stated in our second quarter earnings call, industry sales are expected to decline 20 percent from 2023 to 2024."

Deere's attempts to justify its destruction of thousands of livelihoods are belied by the fact that it remains highly profitable. It reported \$2.37 billion in earnings in the previous quarter and over \$10 billion last fiscal year.

The "changes" Deere has imposed on its workforce will not extend to its executives. CEO John May earned \$26 million last year, while Deere paid out \$7.2 billion in stock buybacks and \$1.4 billion in dividends in 2023.

Meanwhile, the corporate media and union officials are attempting to place the blame for the layoffs on foreign workers, especially those in Mexico. These racist and xenophobic lies are desperate attempts to hide the real cause of the layoffs: the company and its accomplice, the United Auto Workers (UAW).

The layoffs at Deere come amidst a jobs bloodbath in the manufacturing and auto sectors. The UAW has done nothing to prevent some 21,000 auto job cuts that occurred between January and May, a staggering 18 percent increase compared to the same period last year, according to a report by job placement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas.

With Deere's workers facing their own jobs bloodbath, the UAW, of which some 10,000 Deere workers are members, has stood idly by, allowing

Deere to run rampant with its cuts in the name of profit.

The need for rank-and-file committees and the demand for a new UAW election

The layoffs come on the heels of a growing scandal in the union and a major court ruling on the UAW 2022 International Officers election. On June 25, a federal judge in Michigan ruled that the refusal by the Biden administration's Department of Labor to act on complaints by rank-and-file autoworker Will Lehman of voter suppression and other violations during the first-ever membership vote for top UAW officers in 2022 was completely illegitimate.

The suppression of votes meant that of the 1.1 million active and retired members who were eligible to vote, only 9 percent did, the lowest percentage of any national union election in US history.

The judge's ruling affirms that Lehman and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) were entirely correct. They exposed the union's corruption, and that UAW workers were victims of fraud, approved and signed off by the Biden administration, who were eagerly—and desperately—determined to have Shawn Fain become the new UAW president, completely sidelining the democratic rights of UAW members.

The endless claims and speeches by Fain and the Unite All Workers for Democracy slate that corruption within the UAW—of which a dozen UAW officers have gone to jail, including two previous presidents—is over are exposed as a heaping pile of lies. On June 9, the court-appointed UAW monitor announced he was investigating ongoing corruption in the union's executive leadership, including allegations of personal misconduct by Fain and embezzlement by an unnamed regional director.

The monitor said union leaders—including Fain—were interfering with and blocking the investigation by refusing to release tens of thousands of requested documents. If this persisted, the Detroit Free Press said, “it's not beyond the realm of possibility that the monitor could demand Fain's removal.”

The main legacy of Fain's administration is its

support for mass layoffs, not only at Deere but among US automakers. Thousands have lost their jobs since the union rammed through a sellout contract last fall, following a limited “standup strike” which did nothing to shut down production.

Under Fain, the UAW bureaucracy has also become a top ally of the Biden administration. Fain himself rubs elbows with billionaires and warmongers at visits for foreign dignitaries and on the Export Council. During an event last week at the AFL-CIO headquarters, Biden called the union bureaucracy his “domestic NATO,” underscoring how the government sees them as key allies in preparing the home front for war.

The ongoing betrayal of UAW members, combined with revelations surrounding the 2022 UAW officers election, is more than enough evidence that a new election must be held. John Deere workers should take up this demand and begin building a network of committees with Deere workers at every factory and workplace, expanding outwards to all UAW workplaces to fight for a new election and defend against job cuts.

In the statement, Demand a new UAW election! All power to the rank and file!, the IWA-RFC calls on workers:

...in every factory and workplace to build rank-and-file election committees to raise the demand for a new election and put the structures in place to guarantee its legitimacy. This means holding mass meetings to nominate the most trusted and militant workers, the organization of election committees to ensure the dissemination of information and guarantee the right of every UAW member to vote, and the exercise of rank-and-file oversight of ballot counting.



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