

Workers have the right to know what's in the contract

Reject UAW effort to ram through sellout deal!

For a unified fight of Deere, Fiat Chrysler and all autoworkers!

3 October 2015

John Deere workers should reject with contempt the effort of the UAW to ram through a pro-company deal while giving workers no time to study the terms they are signing on to for the next six years.

Nobody would buy a house if they were given only a couple of hours to examine it, let alone only a brochure of “highlights” prepared by some real estate agent who stood to make a lot of money. It would be no less mad for workers to accept the word of Norwood Jewell and the rest of the UAW, who also have a business interest in swindling them into buying this deal.

When Jewell, Williams & Co. tried to ram through a sellout agreement at Fiat Chrysler, the workers revolted. Autoworkers forced the UAW to release the full contract, and then voted it down by a two-to-one margin. If the UAW were not trying to push another sellout on Deere workers why would it not give them time to study it?

Deere workers should reject this contract on principle. The full agreement with all of the memos of understanding and associated material must be disclosed. Workers must have at least two weeks to study it before any ratification vote.

If the UAW can blackmail 11,000 Deere workers into accepting this, the Solidarity House leadership thinks it will bolster its efforts to beat back the resistance of Fiat Chrysler, Ford and GM workers. The sole concern of the UAW is to prevent a common fight by Deere workers and autoworkers.

But that is precisely what is needed. Like the auto companies, Deere and the Wall Street investors behind it have made record profits from two-tier wage and benefits systems, a freeze in real wages and the

relentless attack on jobs and work conditions.

After paying CEO Samuel Allen and other top corporate executives tens of millions of dollars and paying their richest shareholders, the company, the world's largest seller of farm tractors and harvesting combines, now insists there is no money to improve workers' pay and benefits because of a slowdown in sales.

As far as Allen or Fiat Chrysler boss Sergio Marchionne are concerned, workers who produce the billions in profits have no right to good-paying jobs, employer-paid health care or pension benefits. Instead they want a low-wage, casual workforce—virtual industrial slaves with no rights, who can be hired and fired at will, and whose pay is determined by how much they can produce and the profits of the corporations.

But workers did not create the global capitalist crisis, and our jobs and livelihoods cannot be held hostage to the short-term and often criminal decisions of the corporate and financial elite to enrich themselves at the expense of the rest of society.

The 2009 contract signed by the UAW preserved the hated two-tier system, significantly increased health care costs and expanded the probation period for new hires. There is no doubt this contract contains even more pay and benefit givebacks. This will be used, like the two-tier system the UAW established at Deere in 1994, to set an even lower benchmark for all workers.

In its actions at Deere, the UAW is once again demonstrating that it is not a genuine workers organization. Instead it is a business that profits from joint labor-management schemes, its positions on

various corporate boards, its control of multi-billion-dollar health care funds and a substantial share of corporate stocks.

The WSWS Autoworker Newsletter calls on Deere workers to elect rank-and-file committees, independent from the UAW, to take the conduct of the struggle out of their hands. These committees should demand:

1. An immediate end to secret negotiations: Workers have the right to know what is taking place in the negotiations on a day-by-day and hour-by-hour basis. A public viewing area should be set up in the negotiation room, and all meetings between the UAW and Deere should be live-streamed on the Internet for all workers to see.

2. Monitoring all vote counting by the workers: After allegations of vote rigging in some auto plants, workers cannot trust the UAW to conduct a fair and impartial vote count. The only reason why the UAW would not allow workers to monitor the vote count is if they were preparing to cheat.

3. Workers' control over use of the strike fund: Since workers' dues money built the strike fund, workers have every right to decide how the funds are to be used.

4. A contract that includes:

- Immediate abolition of all wage and benefit tiers
 - An end to grueling work schedules and forced overtime
 - A 30 percent wage increase and restoration of COLA
 - Full employer-paid health care benefits and an end to co-pays and deductibles
 - Restoration of guaranteed employer-paid pensions

There is widespread anger among workers over the shotgun vote organized by the UAW. In the words of one Deere worker, "The corrupt UAW management are using the same dirty tactics against the Deere rank-and-file as they are against Chrysler's. Tell them to stuff it."

Workers are in struggle not just against Deere but the entire economic and political system, which enriches the few at the expense of the many. The allies of workers are not the big business politicians, like President Obama and the Democrats, who, just like the Republicans, want to turn the US into a cheap labor haven.

The allies of Deere workers are the autoworkers,

steelworkers, telecom workers, postal workers, teachers and other workers around the country who face the same struggle. Their allies are their class brothers and sisters in Mexico, Canada, Italy and around the world who are facing the same attacks by the global corporations and banks.

The task before autoworkers, John Deere workers and the rest of the working class is to unite and broaden the struggle for social equality. This cannot take place through the UAW. It requires the formation of independent rank-and-file factory committees composed of the workers themselves, to open lines of communication between John Deere workers and workers at the Big Three auto companies, and to expand the struggle to the broadest sections of the working class in the US and around the world.

We urge Deere workers to contact the WSWS Autoworker Newsletter to take up this fight.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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