

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

BRIAN D ROOFF
Claimant

DEERE & COMPANY
Employer

APPEAL 22A-UI-00432-JC-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**OC: 10/17/21
Claimant: Appellant (1)**

Iowa Code § 96.5(4) – Labor Disputes
Iowa Code § 96.4(3) – Able to and Available for Work
Iowa Code § 96.1A(37) – Total, Partial, Temporary Unemployment

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant/appellant, Brian D. Rooff, appealed the November 22, 2021 (Reference 01) initial decision which denied benefits, concluding claimant was ineligible for benefits between October 14, 2021 and November 20, 2021 due to a labor dispute. After proper notice, a telephone hearing was held on January 28, 2022. The claimant/appellant, Brian D. Rooff, participated personally. The employer/respondent, Deere & Company, participated through Janice Gordon, human resources representative. Official notice was taken of the administrative record. Based on the evidence, the arguments presented, and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law, and decision.

ISSUES:

Is the claimant disqualified from benefits due to a labor dispute?

Was the claimant able to and available for work effective October 17, 2021?

Was the claimant totally, partially, or temporarily unemployed effective October 17, 2021?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant established his claim for unemployment insurance benefits with an effective date of October 17, 2021. Claimant filed claims for unemployment insurance benefits for the period of October 17, 2021 and November 13, 2021.

Claimant began work for employer on January 6, 1997. Claimant works for employer full-time in machine maintenance. Claimant works in the Waterloo EngineWorks plant in Department 506. Claimant performed work in this position until October 13, 2021. At that time, A labor dispute was initiated by employees concerning the terms and conditions of their employment.

Claimant is not a union member. He was directed by his supervisor not to report to work during the labor dispute. He was able and available for work during the labor dispute. He was not directly participating in, financing, or interested in the labor dispute which caused the stoppage of work.

While the labor dispute occurred, claimant's position was temporarily filled by contract employees. Claimant returned to his position after the labor dispute ended.

However, claimant does belong to a class of workers which were employed at the premises where the stoppage occurred immediately before the commencement of the stoppage and who were participating in, financing, or directly interested in the dispute. Following the labor dispute, employees in claimant's position received favorable changes in the conditions of their employment, including an increase in pay, retirement benefits, and ratification bonus.

Claimant returned to work on November 18, 2021 after the labor dispute ended. He is still employed by employer.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons set forth below, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant is ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits for the period of October 17, 2021 through November 13, 2021 due to a labor dispute.

As a preliminary matter, the administrative law judge notes claimant argued in support of his eligibility for benefits that contract workers temporarily performed at least some of claimant's work during the period of the labor dispute. The Iowa Supreme Court has held that a stoppage of work occurs even if employer keeps operating by replacing employees of the striking department with employees of other departments. *Crescent Chevrolet v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 429 N.W.2d 148, 152 (Iowa 1988). It has further held that only where employees are **permanently** replaced and there is no longer work available to them does the labor dispute and the consequent work stoppage cease to be the cause of a claimant's unemployment. *Titan Tire Corp. v. Emp. Appeal Bd.*, 641 N.W.2d 752, 757 (Iowa 2002). In such a case the employer is considered to have separated claimant from employment.

The administrative law judge concludes that in the case at hand, there was a work stoppage in claimant's department despite claimant being temporarily replaced by employees of another department. The administrative law judge further finds claimant was not separated from employer but remained attached to it during the labor dispute, as he was not permanently replaced.

Iowa Code section 96.1A(37) provides:

"Total and partial unemployment".

a. An individual shall be deemed "*totally unemployed*" in any week with respect to which no wages are payable to the individual and during which the individual performs no services.

b. An individual shall be deemed partially unemployed in any week in which either of the following apply:

(1) While employed at the individual's then regular job, the individual works less than the regular full-time week and in which the individual earns less than the individual's weekly benefit amount plus fifteen dollars.

(2) The individual, having been separated from the individual's regular job, earns at odd jobs less than the individual's weekly benefit amount plus fifteen dollars.

c. An individual shall be deemed temporarily unemployed if for a period, verified by the department, not to exceed four consecutive weeks, the individual is unemployed due to a plant shutdown, vacation, inventory, lack of work or emergency from the individual's regular job or trade in which the individual worked full-time and will again work full-time, if the individual's employment, although temporarily suspended, has not been terminated.

Iowa Code section 96.4(3) provides:

An unemployed individual shall be eligible to receive benefits with respect to any week only if the department finds that:

3. The individual is able to work, is available for work, and is earnestly and actively seeking work. This subsection is waived if the individual is deemed partially unemployed, while employed at the individual's regular job, as defined in section 96.19, subsection 38, paragraph "b", unnumbered paragraph (1), or temporarily unemployed as defined in section 96.19, subsection 38, paragraph "c". The work search requirements of this subsection and the disqualification requirement for failure to apply for, or to accept suitable work of section 96.5, subsection 3 are waived if the individual is not disqualified for benefits under section 96.5, subsection 1, paragraph "h".

Iowa Code section 96.5(4) provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits, regardless of the source of the individual's wage credits:

4. Labor disputes.

a. For any week with respect to which the department finds that the individual's total or partial unemployment is due to a stoppage of work which exists because of a labor dispute at the factory, establishment, or other premises at which the individual is or was last employed, provided that this subsection shall not apply if it is shown to the satisfaction of the department that:

1. The individual is not participating in or financing or directly interested in the labor dispute which caused the stoppage of work; and

2. The individual does not belong to a grade or class of workers of which, immediately before the commencement of the stoppage, there were members employed at the premises at which the stoppage occurs, any of whom are participating in or financing or directly interested in the dispute.

b. Provided, that if in any case separate branches of work which are commonly conducted as separate businesses in separate premises are conducted in separate departments of the same premises, each such department shall, for the purposes of this subsection, be deemed to be a separate factory, establishment, or other premises.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.33(1) provides:

As used in sections 96.5(3)“b”(1) and 96.5(4), the term labor dispute shall mean any controversy concerning terms, tenure, or conditions of employment, or concerning the association or representation of persons in negotiating, fixing, maintaining, changing, or seeking to arrange terms or conditions of employment regardless of whether the disputants stand in the proximate relation of employer and employee. An individual shall be disqualified for benefits if unemployment is due to a labor dispute.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.34 provides in relevant part:

Labor dispute—policy.

(2) Union membership in and of itself is not the determinative factor in whether an individual is participating in, financing or directly interested in the labor dispute.

A claimant is disqualified from unemployment insurance benefits during a work stoppage caused by a labor dispute. A work stoppage due to a labor dispute must be the cause of unemployment to result in the striking worker's disqualification from receiving unemployment benefits. *Titan Tire Corp. v. Employment Appeal Bd.*, 641 N.W.2d 752 (Iowa 2002). A claimant is not disqualified from benefits during such a period if the claimant is not financing, participating in, or directly interested in the labor dispute personally **AND** does not belong to a class of workers who are financing, participating in, or directly interested in the labor dispute.

There is little guidance in Iowa statutes, administration regulations, and case law as to what constitutes “financing, participating in, or being interested in the labor dispute” within the meaning of the statute at issue. However, the plain meaning of “interest” supports a finding that at minimum others in claimant’s class of workers who were on strike were “interested in the labor dispute.” See INTEREST, Black’s Law Dictionary (11th ed. 2019) (defining interest as “the object of any human desire; esp., advantage or profit of a financial nature.”).

The labor dispute at issue here concerned the terms and conditions of the employment of the class of workers claimant belongs to. As noted above, following the labor dispute employees in claimant’s position - including claimant - received favorable changes in the conditions of their employment, including an increase in pay and benefits. Based on the evidence presented, the administrative law judge finds that being on strike in order to secure more favorable terms and conditions of employment constitutes “being interested in the labor dispute” within the meaning of the statute.

Case law from the Illinois Appellate Court, while not binding here, is persuasive. The Illinois corollary to the Iowa statute also provides that claimants are “ineligible for benefits for any week with respect to which it is found that his total or partial unemployment is due to a stoppage of work which exists because of a labor dispute...” It also provides an exception where:

(A) the individual is not participating in or financing or directly interested in the labor dispute which caused the stoppage of work and

(B) he does not belong to a grade or class of workers of which immediately before the commencement of the stoppage there were members employed at the premises at which the stoppage occurs, any of whom are participating in or financing or directly interested in the dispute

820 Ill. Comp. Stat. Ann. 405/604. The Appellate Court of Illinois has held that an employee who was not a union member was ineligible for unemployment benefits during the period that union members of his grade or class – who participated in and were directly interested in the labor dispute – were on strike. *Boone v. Dep't of Lab.*, 495 N.E.2d 66, 68 (1986). Because the court found claimant belonged to an interested grade or class of workers it, did not reach the issue of whether the claimant was himself directly interested in the labor dispute to his receiving an increase in wages and benefits as a result of the strike. *Id.* The facts in *Boone* mirror the case at hand.

Based on the evidence presented, the administrative law judge concludes the employer has met its burden of proving claimant's unemployment beginning the week of October 17, 2021 was due to a work stoppage caused by a labor dispute. The administrative law judge finds this result is required by law, even though claimant is not a union member; was directed by his supervisor not to report to work during the labor dispute; was able and available for work during the labor dispute; and was not directly participating in, financing, or interested in the labor dispute which caused the stoppage of work.

Because claimant belongs to a class of workers which were employed at the premises where the stoppage occurred immediately before the commencement of the stoppage and who were participating in, financing, or directly interested in the dispute, claimant is disqualified from benefits during the labor dispute. Claimant is therefore disqualified from benefits during the labor dispute and unemployment insurance benefits are denied.

DECISION:

The decision dated November 22, 2021 (reference 01) that denied unemployment insurance benefits is affirmed. Claimant is disqualified from unemployment insurance benefits from October 17, 2021 through November 13, 2021 due to a labor dispute.



Jennifer L. Beckman
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February 16, 2022

Decision Dated and Mailed

jlb/abd