

Volvo to lay off 500 workers at Virginia truck plant

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On Tuesday, Volvo Trucks announced its intention to lay off 500 workers, comprising the entire second shift, at its Dublin, Virginia plant. The layoffs will take place in early February. The announcement comes on top of 300 layoffs in September and another 500 in February.

Volvo cites decreased demand for its trucks as the reason for the latest round of layoffs at the plant, a claim that is belied by the fact that they are requiring the very workers they will terminate in February to come in to work overtime shifts this Saturday.

One Volvo worker, a member of United Autoworkers Union (UAW) Local 2069, told the *World Socialist Web Site* that workers might call in sick for the Saturday shift, a tactic called a “sick out.”

Asked what the UAW was doing to prevent the job losses, the worker became angry and said quickly, “It sets up perfectly for the union. They are holding their local elections in March, right after the layoffs take effect. If you are laid off the union doesn’t tell you when you can vote. So they exclude the workers who are most affected by their sellouts policies from being able to vote them out.”

The worker had been on the second shift at Volvo for several years, and had witnessed the results of previous UAW-brokered contracts. He added, “The union said the [March 2016] contract had 80 percent approval or something like that, but nobody voted for it. It was ratified in April 2016, but we didn’t even get the full contract in September, as people were being laid off.

“The union was so unserious about the contract that, back in March right before the old contract expired, they told me to watch the news to see if we would be on strike or not! I was at work the day it was set to expire and only heard a half hour beforehand that there was an agreement and we were to keep working when the shift ended.”

He added, “The UAW trailer sits on site, with 5-15 people sitting in there smoking cigarettes, doing nothing, but getting full pay. It is locked with a punch code. When I went in there to ask about a contract, they all jumped out of their seats and pulled out their printed contracts, pretending to do something.”

The worker described a recent exchange with a UAW shop steward about the pending layoffs:

“I asked him, ‘Can you name one person who got money from the union after the [September 2016] layoffs?’ He replied, ‘How would we do that? We give to organizations that do good things in the community.’

“I said, ‘Why not have a soup kitchen for laid off workers? Have you helped anyone? How much of my dues went to Hillary? None of my dues goes to my fellow workers who are laid off. Will any come to me?’”

At that point the shop steward walked away.

UAW Local 2069 has nothing on its Facebook page about either the upcoming layoffs or those in September. The most recent post promotes the thinly coded antidemocratic nostrum of “fake news” impacting the 2016 US presidential election.

Asked what exactly Local 2069 does, the worker replied, “They do something about veterans riding motorcycles to Washington and they have a fish fry at the Veterans Affairs hospital. They supported Clinton. The reps went to Florida after the [March 2016] contract was signed for a rally for Clinton.”

Finally, the worker described the pool of unemployed workers that Volvo maintains:

“All of the local ‘get a job’ programs are bogus. They don’t want you to get another job. They move paper around. In the New River Valley, it is hard to get another job because employers think you may be hired back at Volvo. You get put in a Volvo stack because

you are addicted to this place and you will go back. They know you don't want to lose your hire date and status. This place is a noose around everybody's neck to keep them in there building trucks."

Volvo workers should immediately take steps to defend their jobs by building rank-and-file factory committees tasked with unifying workers of all tiers within the plant against job cuts. Ties to auto and other workers across the continent and internationally must be built to coordinate action against giant transnational corporations like Volvo, Freightliner and their parent companies.

Most importantly, such a struggle to unite the working class must be set on socialist and internationalist foundations in opposition to the pro-corporate, nationalist orientation of the UAW.

The *World Socialist Web Site* encourages Volvo workers to write in to share experiences and strategies with other workers and sign up for the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter*.



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