

Reject UAW sellout at Volvo NRV! No contract, no work! Elect rank-and-file strike committee to expand strike and restore all UAW-backed concessions!

World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter
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After two weeks on strike, nearly 3,000 workers at Volvo's New River Valley heavy truck plant in Dublin, Virginia, abruptly received instructions from United Auto Workers Local 2069 leadership to quit their pickets at 6 a.m. this morning and prepare to work third shift on Sunday, May 2, claiming it has reached a tentative agreement with the company. This flagrantly anti-democratic shutdown of the strike is being pushed through, not only without a vote, but without the union releasing any details or even highlights. Workers will reportedly not be sent details on the agreement for another two weeks.

The *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* condemns this maneuver by the UAW and calls on Volvo workers to begin organizing now to defeat it.

An "agreement" enforced under such circumstances can only contain the latest installment of concessions contracts imposed on Volvo workers by their corrupt union for the last 13 years. Since the introduction of the multi-tier wage system in 2008 Volvo has achieved massive profits for its shareholders while UAW executives have completed their integration into senior company management.

Workers immediately took to social media to denounce this return-to-work drive. One comment on the UAW Local 2069 Facebook page expresses the general tenor well:

"You have almost 3000 members demanding answers. This is your job. This is what you are paid to do. We should not have to go to work on an agreement we do not agree on. We voted to strike for a reason. Not to make corporate and UAW jobs easy. We made

SACRIFICES. WE STOOD IN THE RAIN AND FREEZING TEMPS. WE THE MEMBERSHIP DESERVE IMMEDIATE COMMUNICATION."

This is only the latest confirmation that the UAW is not a "union" at all, but a well-financed arm of management, controlled by well-heeled bureaucrats like president Rory Gamble (2020 salary: \$244,772) and secretary treasurer Ray Curry (\$236,608), which controls over \$1.1 billion in assets whose financial interests are opposed to the workers they claim to represent. Curry's mentor Gary Casteel stabbed Freightliner workers in the back during a 2005 strike that opposed the same multi-tier wages and cutbacks that the UAW secretly agreed to in 2003 in exchange for easy union recognition from the company.

The UAW has sold out one struggle after another for decades. To take only the most recent examples, these include: the isolation and betrayal of the strike at Mack Truck, a Volvo subsidiary, in which the UAW left Volvo Truck workers on the job at NRV until it was forced to idle only due to shortages; the General Motors strike in 2019, where the union rammed through a contract that ratified plant closures and allowed for the expanded use of lower-paid temp workers; and its ongoing dirty tricks campaign to isolate and defeat strikes by graduate students at Columbia University and New York University.

Those people supposedly negotiating on behalf of Volvo workers are the same ones who kept workers on the job as COVID-19 spread and workers died. Over a year has passed since governments and business leaders allowed the pandemic to spread and kill millions of

people, while carrying out a massive transfer of wealth from the working class to a handful of billionaires.

Everything depends on the initiative of rank-and-file workers themselves. Volvo workers must reject this sabotage of their strike and uphold the principle—long ago abandoned by the UAW—of *no contract, no work*. Embracing this elementary principle of a labor struggle, workers must not return to the line until they have had at least a week to review the *complete* agreement and then vote on it.

Through its abject treachery the UAW has surrendered any authority to negotiate on behalf of Volvo workers.

It is time for Volvo workers to take matters into their own hands.

Immediately, workers must organize online and other meetings to elect new, rank-and-file strike and negotiating committees independent of the UAW bureaucracy. It must be made up of the most dedicated and militant workers who will expand the strike and fight to restore all concessions forced through since 2008 by corrupt UAW officials—officials who have in many cases been indicted or otherwise implicated in taking company bribes and embezzling union funds.

Mass picketing must not only continue, but fan out to workers at Mack Truck, Navistar, Peterbilt and other workplaces, where workers are already voicing support for Volvo strikers on social media. A national strike to reverse concessions in the entire industry, run by workers and not union bureaucrats, must be prepared.

While the UAW presents Volvo workers as isolated and weak, they in fact have powerful allies. Workers throughout the US and the world are engaged in significant struggles. This includes strikes by ATI steelworkers, Texas ExxonMobil refinery workers, nurses in Massachusetts, coal miners in Alabama and NYU and Columbia University graduate students.

All of them face the same isolation and betrayals by their own unions and are also looking for a way to fight back. The mineworkers and steelworkers overwhelmingly rejected sellout contracts proposed by their own unions, and the graduate students, who are also in the UAW, are opposed to the flagrantly anti-democratic sellout of their own struggle being engineered by the union.

A stand taken by Volvo workers, directly appealing to their brothers and sisters in other workplaces and

industries, would have a powerful catalytic impact. They are not powerless before the UAW bureaucracy. Last March, autoworkers in the Midwest organized wildcat strikes against a UAW-brokered deal to maintain production during the initial surge of the pandemic, and successfully forced a two-month shutdown of the auto industry. This shows that workers can successfully fight against union treachery, but only if they develop their own initiative independent and opposed to the union.

But to establish and maintain this initiative requires a new organizational form: the rank-and-file committee. Such committees have already been set up in auto plants, school districts and warehouses throughout the United States, where they are fighting against unsafe working conditions imposed jointly by management and the unions and are campaigning for a shutdown of nonessential industries to combat the pandemic. These committees stand ready to assist Volvo workers in every way possible in their fight against the UAW's betrayal.

Tomorrow, May 1, the International Committee of the Fourth International, which publishes the *World Socialist Web Site*, is commemorating May Day with an international meeting which will initiate a campaign for an International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) composed of representatives from committees established all over the world. The purpose of this new organization is to unite workers engaged in struggles all over the world in a common organization, to communicate and share information, to pierce the divisive nationalism promoted by the unions and to work out a common international strategy for action. We urge Volvo workers to attend.

The Autoworker Newsletter stands ready to assist Volvo workers. Contact us today at autoworkers@wsws.org.



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