

Stop the UAW sabotage of our strike! No contract, no work!

The Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee
1 May 2021

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. Friday morning and prepare to work third shift on Sunday, May 2, after the UAW claimed it had reached a tentative agreement with the company. UAW officials have refused to provide details of the deal to workers.

An "agreement" under such circumstances can only contain the latest installment of concessions engineered by the UAW in collusion with management.

To oppose the UAW's attempts to force through another sellout, workers have initiated the Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee and have issued the following statement:

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Dear Volvo Truck Brothers and Sisters,

We, the Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee (VWRFC), call on you to stand together and stop the sabotage of our strike by the United Auto Workers and the effort by International and local union officials to force us back to work without seeing, let alone voting on, their supposed deal with Volvo.

This contract will impact our lives and the lives of our families for the next five years. Therefore, we urge you to join us in insisting on the following:

- No return to work until we ratify a contract. No contract, no work!

- The immediate release of the full agreement and all the side letters and memoranda of understanding.

- At least one week to study and discuss the contract

before any ratification vote.

- Rank-and-file oversight of the voting process to prevent any fraud.

We have not stood on the picket lines in the rain and the cold for more than two weeks without a paycheck only to be sent back to work with nothing to show for it. The UAW International claims we made "significant gains," but it is keeping the details secret. When we ask UAW reps about the contract, they say they've been "advised" not to say anything. They sound like criminals taking the Fifth to prevent self-incrimination.

UAW Secretary Treasurer Ray Curry says they are keeping the details secret "out of respect for our members." It's an insult to our intelligence.

If there was anything good in this contract, the UAW would not be afraid to submit it to a vote before we return to work. But they know it is another sellout agreement and if we saw all the details, we would reject it so fast it would make their heads spin.

No one in their right mind would buy a used car sight-unseen. We are not going to buy this contract without knowing what's in it!

UAW reps have admitted that the strike is having a major impact and that Mack-Volvo will soon run out of trucks. So why end the strike when we are gaining the advantage? The only explanation is that the UAW is looking out for management's profits, not the welfare of its dues-paying members.

The UAW officials tell us they could bring us back out on strike if we vote down the deal in two weeks. By then, however, the company will have even more trucks stockpiled to weather a strike and resist our demands. Did we not already work under a 30-day contract extension immediately before our strike?

We have formed the Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee because the UAW has betrayed us contract after contract. While UAW officials like General Holiefield took millions in company bribes, the UAW accepted contracts that divided us with two and three tier wages and reduced starting pay to \$16.50, little more than the wage at Walmart, Chick-fil-A or Hobby Lobby. The UAW has thrown out our grievances over the theft of overtime pay. They have allowed the company to outsource our jobs and given management a free hand to force us to work overtime whenever they want. At the same time, the UAW has done nothing to seriously protect us and our families from the coronavirus or secure our income if we are sick or quarantined.

Now Curry & Co. are telling us: "Trust us and shut up and do what you are told. Be thankful you have a job." But we are not children at the mercy of the company and corrupt UAW officials. We are workers, and we demand our rights.

The UAW has given up any legitimate authority to negotiate this contract. Our committee has been set up so that rank-and-file workers can take the conduct of the negotiations and the strike into our own hands. We are fighting for what workers need, not what the company officials and their corrupt stooges in the UAW say is affordable.

The claim that there is no money for us to secure good living standards and working conditions is a lie. Volvo Group just announced first quarter profits of \$1 billion, almost double what it made during the same period last year. While squeezing us for more concessions, Volvo's board of directors is paying millions in dividends to their wealthy shareholders and \$5.2 million to CEO Martin Lundstedt.

Therefore, the Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee insists that workers should continue the strike until we win the following demands:

- A 25 percent across-the-board wage increase to restore the income lost over the last three UAW contracts.

- The abolition of the multi-tier wage system and the restoration of the principle of "Equal pay for equal work."

- Full overtime payments for work over eight hours a day and weekend work. No forced overtime! One full-day notice before any scheduling of overtime, with the right to refuse with no retaliation.

- An end to speedup and harassment by management. We are not inmates of a prison but self-respecting workers.

- Workers' oversight of safety protocols and social distancing to stop the spread of COVID-19. The right to halt production and close the plant for full cleaning, with guaranteed compensation to workers, if there are COVID outbreaks.

These demands are completely justified. Over the last 13 years we have taken pay and benefit cuts, produced record profits, seen our bodies and souls worn down, and risked our lives during the pandemic. Prices are going up and we need job and income security.

All across the country and the world, workers are fed up with endless sacrifices while all the money goes to Wall Street and corporate CEOs. We are not the only ones on strike. This growing list includes ExxonMobil oil workers in Texas, Alabama coal miners, ATI steelworkers in Pennsylvania and other states, Massachusetts nurses fighting for safe staffing levels, and New York City grad students who have just rejected a sellout contract pushed by the UAW. Mack-Volvo and other truck workers face the same fight. Autoworkers in Detroit, teachers and educators in many states, and Amazon workers and others are building rank-and-file committees just like our own, both here in the US and in other countries.

To unite with these workers in a common fight, we urge our brothers and sisters to join the Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee. For more information, contact us at volvowrfc@gmail.com.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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