

Opposition remains high among Volvo Truck workers to the latest UAW concessions deal

Our reporters
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With a little over a week remaining until voting begins on May 16 on the United Auto Workers's sellout agreement for workers at Volvo's New River Valley (NRV) manufacturing facility, opposition among workers remains high, with many indicating that they plan to vote "no" on the deal.

The tentative agreement was announced when the UAW abruptly called an end to the strike by the plant's 3,000 workers last weekend, at the demand of the union's treasurer and head of its heavy trucks division, Ray Curry. Workers were not allowed to see the deal or even a highlights sheet before returning to work, prompting a furious response from workers.

One worker who recently spoke with the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* said that the company has ramped up production in anticipation of another strike, now that the UAW has forced workers back into the plant, stating, "As of now we are running FULL STEAM, nine-hour days started Wednesday, and we are working Saturday also, eight hours."

What details of the contract that have been revealed has confirmed the warnings made by the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* that what is, in fact, taking place is yet another assault on workers' livelihoods.

As another worker stated, "So, we are only hearing rumors still about some of the details of this tentative agreement. One is that our health insurance will go from 90/10 to 85/15. I thought that was why we brought in the pharmacy and medical center, you know, the one the retirees aren't allowed to use?"

"We were told it was to keep health costs down, to include the health assessment bulls***. Now we are told that Core group [Volvo's term for legacy workers] will be paying for their insurance, which is fine if the coverage stays 90/10. Volvo don't get the damn cake and eat it too."

The proposed agreement also reportedly upholds the despised tier system, which pits lower paid entry-level workers against legacy high seniority workers. Rather than eliminate the tier system, the union simply renamed it in an apparent effort to dupe workers.

Explaining this, the worker said, "How about that tier system? Well, it's still here, just a different name—Progression! It's like calling dog crap 'soft-serve fertilizer.' The tier should never have been a thing. It should have been gone, PERIOD!"

On Facebook, many workers are disgusted with the UAW's betrayal of the strike and are calling for a "no" vote on the temporary agreement. Responding to a post on the local's Facebook page in which the union was trying to dismiss rumors surrounding voting on the agreement, a worker wrote:

"I will tell you what isn't a rumor. We went to bargain and right at midnight before our current contract expired, we gave Volvo a 30-day extension, at which time Volvo then ramped up on daylight and scheduled plenty of overtime.

"Then, toward the end of the extension, Volvo started having supply issues, and there were rumors of them needing two down weeks for the suppliers to catch up. Then, lo and behold, we get the strike announcement, but those working after midnight had to finish out their shift, couldn't leave [the facility].

"While out in the strike line, nobody in the leadership could tell anyone why we were striking, only that our local leadership and Ray Curry were negotiating with someone from Volvo that wasn't even authorized to sign a tentative agreement. Really? Then, like clockwork, the strike is called off after TWO weeks, and we are told that a tentative agreement had been reached, but we were going back under the old contract!"

“This is bulls***, and the local leadership should be ashamed. We filled out elections with a pencil, but the tentative agreement with ink pen. Good, because I will be taking a picture of my NO vote in black ink!”

Another worker said that the UAW International at the so-called Solidarity House in Detroit, in a maneuver which reflects the anti-democratic character of the union, would likely overrule a “no” vote by the Volvo Truck workers.

“Regardless of anyone’s political affiliation, this is just wrong! If this was as good as we’re led to believe, there’d be no mixed communications, and information would be easily accessible. The International wants to keep us just dumb enough to accept it but not smart enough to ask why. There is NOTHING stopping the International from forcing this contract on us, even if we vote NO.”

It is urgent that workers begin organizing opposition to the union’s efforts to impose yet another concessionary contract. We appeal to all workers at the NRV plant to join and help build the Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee, which is committed to organizing and carrying out a struggle independent of the union and the company, against the UAW sellout in defense of higher wages and benefits, and the elimination of the tier system. Workers at Volvo and Mack Trucks should contact us today on how to get involved by emailing us at autoworkers@wsws.org.



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