

An Open Letter to UAW International President Rory Gamble, UAW Secretary-Treasurer Ray Curry, and UAW Local 2069 President Matt Blondino

Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee

21 May 2021

The following is an open letter written by the Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee (VWRFC) at the New River Valley Plant in Dublin, Virginia to UAW International President Rory Gamble, UAW Secretary-Treasurer Ray Curry, and UAW Local 2069 President Matt Blondino. Volvo workers can contact the VWRFC at volvowrfc@gmail.com or text to (540) 307-0509?.

On Sunday May 16, we the workers at Volvo Truck in Dublin, Virginia voted down the tentative agreement you brought back and asked us to approve. The result was not even close. We packed the union hall to vote by 91 percent against the toilet paper you called a contract.

Despite your arrogant predictions that the contract would pass “by 60 percent,” the opinion of rank-and-file workers was loud and clear. All of us, core and non-core, skilled trades, assembly and salaried workers, said with a resounding voice: “No!”

Your TA came after a series of rotten maneuvers. Before you began your “negotiations” with the company, you carried out a survey supposedly to find out what workers wanted, which you simply ignored. Then you called us out on a strike without proposing any demands that we were fighting for.

On April 30, you abruptly declared that the strike was over and that a tentative agreement was reached. You sent us back to work after two weeks of sacrifice on the picket lines without having a chance to look at, let alone vote on, the agreement.

Then followed the lies and bullying: Rosy “highlights” that painted over a rotten sell-out combined with threats that this was the best we could

get. Only by demanding the contract details did we learn anything real about the agreement, and once we learned what you had really done, we swiftly and decisively rejected it.

Now you are carrying out a new “survey” of workers while we remain on the job stockpiling trucks for Volvo. No doubt you intend to send this survey to the same place you sent the last one—into the trash.

So that there be no mistake, we, the rank-and-file workers of Volvo, make the following declaration:

First, we will not accept any contract that is negotiated behind closed doors. All negotiations must be supervised by a representative of the rank-and-file workers. We will not accept *another* contract proposal cooked up behind our backs, for the simple reason that this would only produce *another sellout*.

Second, we outline here the minimal basis for an agreement that workers will accept:

- A 25 percent across-the-board wage increase to restore income lost over the last three contracts.
- Maintain current health insurance rates and coverage.
- Fully paid health care benefits for retirees, with no copays or premiums.
- End the multi-tier wage system and transfer all workers to top-tier pay and benefits.

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- Eliminate the Alternative Work Schedule and keep current overtime rules.

- Implement a COLA clause to meet the soaring prices of consumer goods.

- Five personal days for all workers, not just salary workers.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

- A \$3,500 contract ratification bonus.

We are not interested in hearing talk about how the company cannot “afford” these demands. Even in the midst of our strike, Volvo reported \$1 billion in profits in the first three months of 2021 alone. The stock price has doubled in the past 12 months. Martin Lundstedt, the CEO, makes \$51 million a year.

Third, any resumption of strike activity cannot be used to starve us into submission in order to get us to agree to the same deal we already defeated. Strikers must be provided with *full income* for the duration of, and from the beginning of, any strike, paid for from the \$700 million UAW strike fund that has been built up with *our dues money*.

Fourth, we will not accept another attempt to force a contract through with lies and threats. Any new agreement must be provided in full to all workers with two weeks for us to review and discuss before a vote.

The company is already saying that it is “confident” that “both sides” in this dispute can reach an agreement. But let us be clear: One of these sides is us, the rank-and-file workers of Volvo. It is our lives and livelihoods at stake. We have mouths to feed, bills to pay, and children to educate.

These are not requests but demands. And we are prepared to fight for them.

Sincerely,

The Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee

To all Volvo workers:

We cannot fight for our interests if we don't have our own organization that is accountable to us, not to the company or the UAW officials. The Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee is this organization!