

Volvo workers: Vote “no” to the “new” agreement!

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

The Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee at the New River Valley Plant in Dublin, Virginia has issued the following statement opposing the latest tentative agreement handed down by United Auto Workers (UAW). As the statement explains, there is no substantive difference between the current tentative agreement and the tentative agreement that workers resoundingly voted down on May 16.

We publish the entire statement below and encourage workers to share and discuss it widely. Volvo workers can contact the rank-and-file committee by email at volvowrfc@gmail.com or by text at (540) 307-0509.

The Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee calls on our brothers and sisters at the New River Valley plant to vote “no” on the latest tentative agreement between the UAW and Volvo Trucks.

The 32-page proposal repackages the same manure that we rejected by 91 percent. The nickel here and the dime there are aimed at covering over the fact that not only is the “new” TA not significantly better than the last, in some ways it is worse!

The contract maintains the hated 4x10 work schedule and gives management a free hand in virtually all scheduling decisions: “Management will make a good faith effort to maintain the schedule” (Article 31). Good faith, indeed. If the “faith” is as good in this as in everything else, it means that there will be no real schedule at all!

It maintains the multilayer system, with the pay of new hires rising to \$27.47 only after six years, which is still \$3 below what core workers are making. Pay increases now average around 2 percent a year, less than the 3 percent included in the first TA, due to the extension of the length of the contract. These meager raises will be eaten up by rising inflation plus the increases in health care expenses, at a time when Volvo’s orders and

profits are on the rise!

The UAW gives Volvo another “agreement to agree” when it comes to retirees, whose benefits will be scrutinized by a third-party vendor selected by Volvo. We oppose this divide-and-conquer tactic. All proposals regarding retiree benefits must be made public, not pawned off for further discussion whenever it suits Volvo. We demand that retirees have the right to see any deal affecting them in its entirety and that they have the right to vote on it.

The contract is full of language like that stating that the UAW and the company will “continue meeting to discuss potential prospective changes to the Volvo Plan as it applies to each group.” That is, nothing is guaranteed.

Most ominously, the agreement contains a new provision that can only be interpreted as an agreement between Volvo and the UAW to allow for the indefinite extension of the contract with no right to strike. It crosses out language that states that the union “shall be free to strike” after the duration of the contract.

Brothers and Sisters, this is not a labor agreement but a sales contract for six years of industrial slavery!

In its latest maneuver to bully the membership into approving another sellout contract, the UAW is threatening workers with the prospect of a long strike that could last three to five months if we don’t ratify the agreement. The warning is clear: Accept this sellout, or we will starve you into submission on the picket line.

In the past the *union* threatened *management* with strikes. Now they threaten the workers! We insist that it is Volvo’s management, and not the Volvo workers, who should fear a strike.

We remind our brothers and sisters that it was the UAW leadership who ordered us to abandon the picket

lines in April and return to work with the announcement of the first rotten tentative agreement. We, the workers, were already prepared to maintain the picket lines, but the union demanded a return to work without any contract details.

We are certainly prepared to return to the pickets. But we also make the following demands in preparation for a victorious strike, and a long one if need be:

Full strike pay! No one can survive on less than \$300 per week.

Charity and starvation alike are beneath the dignity of the working men and women who produce all of Volvo's profits and all of society's wealth. The UAW's massive strike fund totaling over \$600 million is *our money* and not some bureaucrat's Wall Street hedge fund. Workers must receive full income for the duration of any strike.

Full contract details! No contract, no work!

The UAW has still not released to workers the full details of the new TA. Changes from the previous version have been posted on other pages, and we are left to try to figure out exactly what we are signing on to. We reject the hide-and-seek game of "highlight" documents and "agreements to agree later" when memoranda and letters of understanding no doubt contain language harmful to workers.

No secret negotiations!

Secrecy—disguised as respect for the membership—is the refuge of traitors. So far, backroom wheeling and dealing has generated not one but two rotten tentative agreements. Nothing beneficial to workers can arise behind closed doors, where company executives and their UAW partners conspire against us. We demand complete transparency, with rank-and-file oversight over all contract negotiations!

To Rory Gamble, Ray Curry and Matt Blondino, we reiterate 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 multitier wage system and transfer all workers to top-tier pay and benefits
- 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 salaried workers, and no cuts to vacation days
- A \$4,000 contract ratification bonus

The Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee will not allow the UAW to squander our momentum following the defeat of the first tentative agreement. We are taking the offensive. Volvo workers who agree with this statement should join our struggle.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact