

“Hold strong and trust each other, and don’t let the UAW International dictate things”

Autoworkers, logistics workers, teachers voice support for striking Volvo workers

Our reporters
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Nearly 3,000 Volvo Trucks workers walked out on strike Monday at the New River Valley (NRV) plant in Dublin, Virginia. The workers struck the Swedish-based multinational giant after decisively rejecting a second attempt by the United Auto Workers union to ram through a pro-company contract.

The strike is the latest in a wave of industrial actions by workers in the US since the beginning of the year. It is part of a growing movement of the working class internationally against demands for greater austerity by corporations that are reaping growing profits.

Opposition at the truck manufacturing plant has been led by the Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee, which was formed in early May to oppose the conspiracy of the company and the UAW to further attack wages, health care and pension benefits and impose a new, 10-hour workday.

Responding to the walkout, NRV Vice President and General Manager Franky Marchand said, “It is difficult to understand this action,” adding that “the UAW International, Regional and Local leadership endorsed the tentative agreement, which provided significant economic improvements for all UAW-represented workers, and a package of benefits that is very competitive for our industry and region.” The company and the UAW, however, did not have the agreement of the workers, who had to found a new organization to voice their collective opposition.

The company has responded to the walkout by provocatively cutting off medical insurance for the striking workers and their families, as it announced that managers and nonunion workers were being ordered to report to work during the strike.

The courageous stand by the Volvo workers has inspired workers across the US and internationally. As part of the fight to broaden support for the strike and prevent the UAW from isolating the Volvo workers, reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* and the *Autoworker Newsletter* gathered statements of support from autoworkers, logistics workers, educators and other workers across the country.

A Ford worker at the Kansas City Assembly Plant said, “This

is very encouraging. The union is not backing the Volvo workers since they voted the contract down. That should be a wake-up call to other workers that the unions are not working for the working class, they’re working for the elites. They’re still taking people’s money and not representing them. The union officials make a lot of money, and they don’t represent the working class people. The working class people all over the country are in between a rock and a hard space. When you form the rank-and-file committee, you get the workers to represent themselves.

“This is happening worldwide, like the virus. Everything is opening up now, and the summer is coming, and this should be a wake-up call to the working class that the elites don’t care about our lives. All they care about is making their profits. In India also, the autoworkers [who organized wildcat actions at Hyundai, Ford and Renault Nissan] are not making any money anyway, and to see them make a stand was very encouraging.

“People have to come together, read the WSWs, and see that there is an answer, and it’s not through the unions and capitalism.”

A veteran worker at the Ford Chicago Assembly Plant said, “This is good that they voted it down. I’m wishing them all the best. They will need it. I hope it works out for them, and I thank them for standing tall. I would have done the same thing. I have voted ‘no’ on every contract in all my years at Ford.”

An Indiana Stellantis autoworker condemned the UAW, saying, “The fact that they were brought two horrible contracts to vote on sure sounds familiar, and the fact that the UAW wasn’t able to fix the results in Volvo’s favor gives us autoworkers hope.”

A Stellantis worker at the Warren Truck Assembly Plant in suburban Detroit said, “We plant workers have to stand up for our rights. What is happening at Volvo is a microcosm of what we all face. Workers are starting to flex our muscles and demanding that they stop taking advantage of us.

“The rank-and-file committee at Volvo made it possible for workers to stand up. This strike could spark a wave of strikes

across the country. All autoworkers should support the Volvo workers. We had our own wildcat strikes against the UAW last year, when they kept the plants open when the pandemic first hit. At least five workers died at our plant from COVID. The working class has to take matters into our own hands, organize and stand together.”

A worker from the John Deere Dubuque Works plant in Iowa said, “I wish I could be there with you on the picket line and support you. Hold strong and trust each other, and don’t let the UAW International dictate things. Fight strong. After seeing all these guys from the UAW in prison, keep your guard up.

“Why would the UAW push an agreement that was voted down by 90 percent of the rank and file? You didn’t let yourself get sold out. You fought back! The fight continues.

“Six years ago, the UAW pushed a sellout contract onto us. Many of us fought against it, but the agreement passed. Contract negotiations between Deere and UAW are starting again soon. We take inspiration from you and hope to be as vigilant and strong. Keep on fighting. Deere workers are standing with you.”

The rank-and-file committee is independent of the pro-corporate UAW, so that workers can organize their own struggle.

A UPS worker in Rockford, Illinois noted about the attacks on workers by the unions. “This is happening everywhere. Fiat Chrysler in Belvidere, now Stellantis is laying off everyone besides one shift, from my understanding. Also, all of our strike funds [Teamsters and UAW] seem to be set up to not be enough to survive to even strike. It doesn’t make sense to me unless it’s all set up in the company’s favor to begin with.”

To the Volvo workers he gave his support and said, “I’d say stand strong, and don’t let the company or union divide the majority’s determination to fight for better wages and conditions. Stay focused and keep fighting.” He also urged UPS workers to “stand in solidarity and spread awareness” about the Volvo workers strike.

“Fedex is similar,” a logistics worker said. “Big payouts to shareholders via dividends, but cuts to health care and retirement for hourly employees. We need to fight back against these corporations that abuse hourly employees.”

“Love that all the workers stuck together. Not only do we fight against the company low balling us, we also must fight against the UAW International because we all know they are getting paid off,” a Daimler Truck worker commented on Facebook after the reading an article on the vote from the WSWs. “Read the part where the company let the International in the plant to push the contract!”

Michael Hull, a victimized Texas educator and the founder of the Facebook group, Teachers Against Dying, said, “I am a teacher and a member of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Like the UAW, we are a subsidiary of that old serpent, the AFL-CIO. If there were ever a time in history when we needed our union to protect us, it was during this unprecedented

pandemic. Yet, teachers, students and staff were herded to their deaths for the preservation of the Dow Jones.

“I got an audience with Randi Weingarten, the president of AFT, on March 16, 2021, and voiced several safety concerns, including the deaths and disabilities of teachers under their homicidal ‘safe reopening’ campaign. She lied to me, a cancer survivor and caretaker, saying she would help with an accommodation, and dismissed the scientific evidence I presented her. These betrayals are typical of this so-called union, which in 2018-19, broke up teacher strikes in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Arizona and other states and brokered rotten deals.

“As workers, we need to consider what the original concept of a union was. It was the power of the labor in numbers leveraging against the management. How can these union officials, many of them wealthy enough to be members of the ruling class, with ties to politicians, really represent us in good faith? These are not the ones who stood down the Pinkertons and the National Guard to secure the modicum of rights the working class clings onto. These entities represent a controlled opposition, fully grafted into the same political establishment that oversaw the greatest transfer of wealth upward in human history. They are a disgrace to our proud history of labor struggles in the United States.

“Our labor is who we are. We are defined by the jobs we do, and we take great pride in them. Ask yourselves, what is the job of a union bureaucrat? Is it the same as yours? Do they make the same wages? Do they have the same interests? A short reflection on these simple questions should lead any honest worker to conclude that the working class must unite outside of these elitist structures! I extend my encouragement and solidarity to the Volvo workers. Stay strong!”



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