

Volvo Trucks workers in Virginia renew strike after defeating second UAW sellout deal

Ed Hightower
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Volvo workers can contact the Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee by email at volvowrfc@gmail.com or by text at (540) 307-0509.

Nearly 3,000 workers at Volvo Trucks New River Valley plant in Dublin, Virginia, walked out on strike at noon today after their vote Sunday overwhelmingly defeating the second pro-company contract proposal agreed to by the United Auto Workers union. Workers voted by 90 percent to reject the six-year deal, which would have continued the string of concession-laden contracts pushed by the UAW spanning decades.

The UAW shut down an earlier two-week strike on April 30 and then attempted unsuccessfully to ram through its first deal on May 16. It only called the walkout today due to the enormous pressure from rank-and-file workers, who are determined to overturn the multi-tier wage and benefit system and obtain substantial gains in pay, health care coverage and pensions from the highly profitable multi-national corporation.

While the UAW claimed it could not attain anything more in negotiations, Volvo Group's corporate board announced recently that it was proposing to hand out to its wealthy investors \$2.3 billion from the proceeds of the sale of a subsidiary, on top of the record \$3.68 billion in dividend payments earlier this year.

In opposition to the UAW-management collusion, workers at the plant have formed the Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee, which played a decisive role in the defeat of both sellout agreements. In the days leading up to the vote, committee members and other workers widely distributed a statement from the VWRFC calling for a rejection of the deal.

In a brief letter announcing the strike, UAW Secretary Treasurer Ray Curry acknowledged that workers had opposed virtually every aspect of the

tentative agreement he negotiated. "As you know, many topics remain at issue, including wage increases, job security, wage progression, skilled trades, shift premium, holiday schedules, work schedules, health and safety, seniority, pension, 401(k), healthcare and prescription drug coverage and more."

Indicating the UAW's unshaken willingness to meet Volvo's demand for cost savings, Curry wrote, "We are confident that further discussion of these and other issues will result in progress toward the goal of a contract that works for both the Company and its employees." The union, he said, would be available to reconvene negotiations on Wednesday.

In a sign of the extreme nervousness of the UAW over the rebellion and their isolation from workers, Local 2069 disabled comments on its Facebook posts announcing the contract rejection and the renewal of the strike.

Rank-and-file workers are determined to win this struggle and prevent the UAW and the AFL-CIO from isolating their walkout and starving workers into submission with poverty level strike benefits. One Volvo worker told the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter*, "We should reach out to the non-union workers at the Salem plant and to the Mack-Volvo workers in Allentown and Hagerstown. It would be a good thing to all join together because what happens at NRV will affect them too. The union screwed us when they stopped the strike and sent us back in the plant to build them another 2,000 trucks."

He continued, "The \$275 they want to pay us in strike benefits is less than a minimum wage and we're going to have taxes taken out of that too. In 2020, the UAW spent almost a half of million on buying new furniture for their offices. The strike fund belongs to us, and we have to have what we need for a strike."

The UAW has an estimated \$790 million in its strike fund and the AFL-CIO has even more assets.

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

From the beginning of the struggle, the UAW has done everything to undermine the efforts of workers to defend their living standards. With the previous contract set to expire in March, the UAW granted Volvo a 30-day extension that allowed the company to continue stockpiling trucks to offset the impact of a strike. Then, without any explanation or report on the status of negotiations, the UAW called NRV workers to the picket lines on April 17 and then sent them back to work on April 30, without giving workers access to the tentative agreement or having the right to vote on it.

But the campaign by the UAW to sell the contract, including sending national and regional representatives into the plant last week, backfired.

The Volvo workers who are manning the picket lines today are speaking not just for themselves, but for the entire working class. After more than a year in which workers have been forced to sacrifice their lives for corporate profit during the pandemic, they are saying enough is enough and rebelling against the demands for more givebacks from the giant corporations and their paid lackeys in the unions.

The Volvo strike is part of a growing wave of struggles, including Warrior Met coal miners in Alabama, ExxonMobil workers in Texas, ATI steelworkers in Pennsylvania and other states, and nurses in Worcester, Massachusetts. The growth of working-class militancy and resistance is an international phenomenon with strikes and struggles by Indian autoworkers, miners in Canada, Chile, Peru, Colombia and Mexico, and other struggles against austerity and social inequality.

Statements of support to the Volvo workers have already come from Mack-Volvo workers in Hagerstown, Maryland, and Allentown, Pennsylvania, and Amazon workers in Baltimore. It is critical to expand this support and begin an internationally coordinated counter-offensive by the working class. To meet this need, the International Committee of the Fourth International has initiated the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.



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