Statement of Volvo workers: What's next in our two-front war

Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee
8 June 2021

The following statement was written by the Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee (VWRFC) at the New River Valley Plant in Dublin, Virginia. Volvo workers can contact the VWRFC at volvowrfc@gmail.com or text to (540) 307-0509?.

Brothers and sisters,

Sunday's massive no vote was a powerful act of real, genuine solidarity, and it'll make itself felt far beyond our plant. After years and years of having one concession after the other shoved down our throats by both the company and the UAW, we're standing together to show that it ends HERE and NOW.

In rejecting the latest contract, we were fighting not just for ourselves, but for the retirees, for the next generation, for Mack workers, and for workers everywhere fed up with being told they have no choice but to accept less.

But as inspiring as yesterday's vote is, **there is no room for complacency or wishful thinking.** The rejection of the contract was one battle won in a running war on two fronts. The real struggle is just beginning.

We all know we're up against a cutthroat enemy in Volvo. They're terrified that if we get substantial gains, it's going to spark an uprising among workers all across their operations. And they've got the backing of other major corporations and the banks, who are all worried about a wave of strikes for higher wages, along with the big business parties, the courts, and the police.

Volvo is working with a strategy to win. The local has said Volvo will most likely cancel our health insurance today, the first day of the strike. We've also heard that the company is going to try to force workers outside the UAW to report to work and scab on us.

That's one front. But we're up against not only Volvo. The truth is that we're also fighting the UAW, which has made it abundantly clear whose side it's on.

We need our own strategy in order to win this war. And we can't ignore the fact that no matter how many times we vote no, the UAW is going to keep coming back with the company's marching orders, which means the tier system, attacks on pay and healthcare, and the assault on retirees. The leopard cannot change its spots.

We can be absolutely sure that even as we were celebrating last night, the UAW Executive Board at anti-Solidarity House were having an emergency meeting to figure out how they were going to throttle the opposition (in other words, us workers) and get a contract through. They decided they had to call a new strike.

To Curry, Gamble, and Blondino, we demand to know: what exactly is your plan? **As we have already made perfectly clear, we will not accept a strike in which you keep us isolated or starve us on below-minimum wage strike benefits. That's a strategy for defeat, not victory.**

What is necessary in order to really win this fight and get what we need?

First of all, **the cutoff of health insurance is absolutely unacceptable**. We have families to care for, and medical coverage is Volvo's responsibility. We say that there must be no more negotiations until our benefits are reinstated.

Second, the UAW "bargaining" committee—which to now has simply passed along the company's demands—must be withdrawn and any negotiations placed under the oversight of the rank-and-file.

Third, the Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee reiterates the following basis for a serious struggle against the company:

1. **Full income for striking workers.** We demand

© World Socialist Web Site

that Volvo workers have full income during the strike, paid for from the UAW's $790 million strike fund, built up with *our dues money*. These resources must be used to sustain our fight, not fund the golf trips and restaurant meals of the corrupt union executives. By providing all strikers with full income, not $275 a week, we will be sending a signal to the company that we are not going to back down.

2. **Mass picketing to prevent scab operations.** The great tradition of mass picketing must resume to block scab labor and shut down operations at NRV completely. Pickets should not be isolated with only a handful of workers. Moves by Volvo to keep production going with replacement workers must be met with the full mobilization of all Volvo workers in the US and worldwide.

3. **Unification with other Volvo workers.** The deliberate UAW strategy of separating us from other workers at Volvo, particularly Volvo-Mack, ends now. Workers want to unite. If the enemy wants to wage war on us, we must be prepared to open up new fronts in their rear, including at Volvo's operations in Hagerstown, Macungie, and Roanoke, as well as Sweden, France, Belgium, Russia, Brazil, India, and Thailand.

4. **Support and coordination with ongoing strikes.** Isolation guarantees defeat. We must send delegates to and coordinate with striking Warrior Met coal miners in Alabama, Vale Inco miners in Ontario, Canada, ATI steelworkers in Pennsylvania and other states, Massachusetts nurses and locked out ExxonMobil oil workers in Texas. Solidarity is not for us a mere slogan; it is the active, fighting unity of the working class.

5. **No return to work without *our* minimum demands.** We have nothing to discuss with Volvo or the UAW until we see a contract with 25 percent pay raises, an end to the tier system, no Alternative Work Schedule, five personal days for everyone, a $4,000 signing bonus, no increase in health care costs and full funding of retiree health care without premiums or co-pays. To the UAW, we say: Don't you even **think** of pulling the same fast one of shutting down the strike without us seeing the contract, having a week to study it, and voting on it. No contract, no work!

We are engaged in a complicated, difficult struggle on two fronts, against the company and the UAW. Victory requires that we understand what we're up against, work out our strategy to the very end, rally new forces and stay united.

Volvo workers can contact the VWRFC at volvowrfc@gmail.com or text to (540) 307-0509?.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site