

Pennsylvania educators support unified struggle with striking Volvo workers and Amazon workers!

**Pennsylvania Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee
15 June 2021**

The Pennsylvania Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee, with additional support from educators in Ohio and Maryland, offers our fullest solidarity with the striking Volvo workers at the New River Valley plant in Dublin, Virginia.

This powerful strike represents a turning point in the class struggle in the US and globally. The formation and growth of the Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee, which has played a major role in defeating the first two sellouts agreed upon by Volvo and the United Auto Workers (UAW), marks the beginning of a resurgence of a militant and class conscious labor movement. It is in this strike that millions of workers around the world may find inspiration and a program to fight for the interests of the working class.

We fully welcome and support the formation of the Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee and encourage all workers to support your strike. We especially encourage Volvo workers in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and Hagerstown, Maryland, to join this movement and attend the upcoming meetings of our rank-and-file committees.

The Volvo strikers are rebelling against a company that has raked in billions in profits while workers have risked their lives for meager pay during the COVID-19 pandemic. For years, Volvo has attempted to roll back health care benefits and wages and impose 10-hour workdays. Now workers are fighting back against these greedy capitalists, who have no concern for the safety or well-being of working people and whose only goal is to extract as much wealth from the working class as possible.

But workers are not just fighting against the bosses; they are fighting against the corrupt union bureaucracy

as well. The UAW, once one of the most militant unions in the United States, has converted itself into an appendage of management, agreeing to one concessionary contract after another.

It was the UAW that accepted the Obama-era restructuring of the auto industry, which undermined the eight-hour day and imposed the hated tier system. It was the UAW that took bribes from the companies and embezzled millions of dollars in union dues while members languished in poverty. And it is the UAW that is now attempting to isolate and starve out the Volvo strikers by giving them just \$275 a week in strike pay from their \$790 million strike fund, with these meager payments only starting after their second week on strike.

We as educators understand these union betrayals and assaults on working and living conditions. We have watched as the UAW has shut down graduate student strikes across the country, from New York to California; and we have watched as the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA) and all their state and local affiliates accepted the dictates of administrators and politicians, Republican and Democrat alike, determined to send teachers and students back into unsafe classrooms in order to fully reopen nonessential workplaces before the pandemic was contained.

The AFT Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT) conspired with Democratic Governor Tom Wolf to force teachers back into the classroom. Philadelphia educators put up a courageous fight, following the example of their fellow teachers in Chicago and refusing to send children and teachers back into unsafe classrooms at the height of

the pandemic. But just as in Chicago, the PFT sided with the state and the administrators and agreed to send educators back into old and decrepit buildings with poor ventilation on the false promise that it was safe and that ventilation systems would be improved.

For decades, teachers and students have suffered in decaying school buildings, exposed to lead and asbestos, as education budgets are continuously slashed and funneled away to pay administrators lavish salaries while politicians spout lies about their concern for students.

In opposition to the pro-capitalist politicians and union bureaucrats, educators and autoworkers across the US and globally are fighting to build rank-and-file committees that we control ourselves. These are new labor organizations that will lead the global counteroffensive of the working class against austerity and exploitation.

In Baltimore, Amazon workers have formed the Amazon BWI2 Rank-and-File Committee, which has worked to oppose the same unsafe conditions that educators and autoworkers face. Amazon workers throughout the world have been forced to work in warehouses where COVID-19 runs rampant, and the company is now moving to lift indoor masking requirements. Educators, Amazon workers and auto workers must join together across the region, and globally, to oppose the assault on the safety, health and lives of working people everywhere.

The working class has tremendous power and the potential to change the situation. Volvo Trucks is understocked and the company is desperate to keep production flowing, with one of its main clients, Amazon, pressuring Volvo to suppress the strike in Virginia as quickly as possible.

Unless support for the Volvo strike grows, it risks being isolated and defeated. We call upon all working people to support this strike and build the movement to found the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).

No more defeats and no more concessions! It's time for the working class to fight back worldwide!



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