

“Every manufacturing worker should be walking out at all the plants”

Workers call for joint action to fight Volvo Trucks strikebreaking and UAW surrender

Jerry White
12 July 2021

Sign up for breaking news updates from the WSWS by email or text at wsws.org/volvonews.

Striking workers at the Volvo Trucks New River Valley (NRV) plant in Dublin, Virginia are mobilizing against the company’s announcement that it will unilaterally impose a six-year labor agreement that workers just rejected by 60 percent on Friday.

In a statement released Sunday, the company said it had reached an “impasse” in negotiations and would impose its “last, best and final offer” on Monday and restart production with anyone who would cross the picket lines.

Far from challenging the company’s declaration of war on the Volvo workers, the United Auto Workers announced that it would hold a revote on the rejected contract on Wednesday, with UAW Local 2069 falsely claiming it is under some legal obligation to do so.

Another post from the local’s election committee chair made it clear that the UAW intends to shut down the strike regardless of the outcome of the vote and send workers back to work under the rejected contract. The UAW, she said, would file a toothless “unfair labor” charge with the National Labor Relations Board, which “could take months or years to resolve.”

Workers have voted down three UAW-backed contracts, which contained below-inflation-rate wage increases and cuts in healthcare coverage for current and retired workers. The agreement also includes a six-year “progression” for new hires to make top pay, which would translate into years more given the regularity of layoffs in the industry.

“The union is going along with this rubbish,” one

striking Volvo worker told the WSWS. “This is not democratic. They’re forcing us to take this like we’re a bunch of slaves. This is not going to go over.

“A lot of people are calling for the bargaining committee to step down. They’re selling us out. Volvo has made record profits and shoved it in our faces. Our strike has showed that this is a national and worldwide issue. We’ve gone this far, but we need support from Mack-Volvo and other workers. If there was a walkout before Wednesday’s vote, that would give us great strength to resist.”

“Workers are upset and rightfully so,” another striking worker said. “We’ve been blindsided by the company and the union. A committeeman asked what would happen if we voted ‘no’ [on Wednesday] and stayed on strike, would we get strike benefits from UAW? He was told the International was washing its hands of the strike and would not support us.

“The Mack workers can see what’s going on with us. It is a great time to get unified. If Volvo and the UAW can do this to us, then it’s going to happen to them next. Every manufacturing worker should be walking out at all the plants.”

Opposition at NRV is being led by the Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee, which is calling on workers to decisively reject the contract on Wednesday and fight for a broader struggle.

A Mack-Volvo worker from Macungie, Pennsylvania, where workers are being forced by the UAW to handle scab parts from NRV, said: “What workers are doing down in Virginia is the right thing to do, and there isn’t any reason that everyone in the UAW should not be

striking in solidarity with them. The UAW is abandoning them. If they weren't company-owned, the UAW would be screaming for other UAW plants to strike.

“What these corporations have to be shown is that the workers are the ones generating the wealth, not the corporations or the unions. It's off our backs that they make money, not the other way around. This country needs a general strike to show everyone that the working class are the ones keeping the country alive. We're fighting a multinational corporation, and we have to unite with Volvo workers in Belgium and around the world.”

An auto parts worker said: “Volvo workers need to stick to their guns. If Volvo gets away with this, it will set the trend for everyone else. We should all go out to show the UAW and companies. At the company I work for in Indianapolis, our executives are making \$16 million+ with bonuses for sitting at home while we go into the plants. The big wigs don't have mandatory overtime. For the past 30 years I've seen the union transform into our worst enemy.”

A temp worker at a General Motors plant in Flint, Michigan said: “I'm so proud of the Virginia workers, my fellow Union brothers and sisters, for having the nerve and the solidarity to vote down not one, not two, but now the third agreement. They know what they deserve and are fighting for it. I was raised to believe that the unions were fighting for their members, but that's not the case, so the members have to fight for themselves. Solidarity.”

Other sections of workers are also calling for support for the Volvo workers and the expansion of the national and international network of rank-and-file committees as the real voice and leadership of the growing struggle of workers.

A teacher and a member of the Tennessee Educators Rank-and-File Committee said: “Our committee is 100 percent behind the Volvo workers. We're facing a situation where the colleges are providing free teaching certificates in order to undermine the professional standards and the wages and benefits of experienced teachers. There is no response from the unions; they are just going along with this.

“It's not a matter of if the government and school districts will try to do to teachers what Volvo is doing to its workers, it's when will they do it. We as workers

have to come together to stop them.”

A member of the Baltimore Amazon BWI2 Rank-and-File Committee added, “We support the Volvo workers. Most of the capitalist powers that be know they are going to have to deal with a revolt by the working class. They try to keep workers divided by bringing in younger lower-paid workers to get rid of people who were here for years. They want to replenish their workforce with fresh workers who don't know what's going on so they can exploit them.

“They are not trying to make our lives easier but to make money. I urge the Volvo workers to stand tall. If we don't have a voice, we have nothing and the capitalists will continue to control our destiny. We all need to join forces to fight.”

The *World Socialist Web Site* calls on all Volvo workers, autoworkers and other sections of the working class, in the US and internationally, to organize rank-and-file committees to support the striking Volvo workers. Contact the WSWS for assistance in building a committee at your factory or workplace.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact