

Statement of Volvo workers: Vote NO to corporate threats on Wednesday!

Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee
12 July 2021

This statement was issued by the Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee after the United Auto Workers announced Sunday that Volvo was planning to unilaterally implement a contract at its New River Valley plant in Virginia which workers had voted down on Friday. The UAW, far from opposing this corporate strikebreaking, is facilitating it. The UAW is forcing workers to vote again this Wednesday on the contract they already rejected and has told workers the company will impose the agreement no matter which way they vote.

Volvo workers can contact the Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee at volvowrfc@gmail.com or by text to (540) 307-0509. Download a printable version of the statement [here](#).

**Vote NO to corporate threats on Wednesday!
Tell Volvo to take this contract and shove it!
July 11, 2021**

Today, Volvo and the UAW announced that the contract which we just voted down Friday night—the third deal between them we’ve rejected—would be unilaterally imposed by the company starting Monday. Their agreement would raise health care costs significantly, put a question mark over retiree health care, keep wages for top pay far below inflation, and string out new hires on a six-year wage “progression” system, among other concessions.

The UAW, which endorsed the last contract and the two we turned down before it, has called a vote on the very same deal for this Wednesday. They have stated that if it is voted down, there will be no signing bonus, but the contract will remain in effect anyway.

The company is declaring war on us. Instead of countering this naked corporate blackmail and strikebreaking, the UAW is colluding with it. The company and the UAW are using scare tactics, lies and misrepresentations in an attempt to frighten, confuse and divide us. These must be rejected.

First, the union is under no legal obligation whatsoever to call another vote on the same deal after the company said it was its “last, best and final offer” and declared an impasse. The UAW took this action deliberately and willingly, defying our previous vote, in an attempt to get the company’s demands through. In fact, there is no impasse at all between Volvo and the UAW, given that the UAW has endorsed each of the company’s concessionary contracts. The real impasse is between the company and union on one side and the workers at NRV on the other.

Second, Missy Edwards, the Election Committee Chair, has stated that if we vote down the contract again Wednesday, “We will still go back to work under TA3,” after which the union will file unfair labor charges, and “we will see what comes of that.” The UAW is attempting to make it appear as though it will be a legal requirement for us to end the strike and surrender even if we reject the contract, that heads they win, tails we lose. This is a complete and utter lie and an effort to cover up their desire and intention to wreck our strike.

Third, Volvo is taking this extreme action not out of a position of strength, but of weakness. NRV General Manager Franky Marchand stated that it was necessary to immediately end the strike because “the continued loss of production represents too much of a risk to the future of our business and our facility.” Our strike and repeated contract rejections have placed them in crisis, with their production threatened to such an extent that they are taking this desperate step. With Volvo’s back to the wall, now is not the time to back down.

Volvo would not be taking this step unless it was the contract they want. This is also why the UAW has refused to release the full contract terms to the entire membership and has refused to give us detailed information on what it has been “negotiating” with the company the entire time.

The UAW had no business or right to submit this

contract to a second vote, but now that it has, it is our duty to overwhelmingly reject it and send it down to a colossal defeat.

The company is saying our vote and the will of the majority don't matter. They seem to think we live in a fascist dictatorship and have no democratic rights, unless we vote the way they want us to.

If they are able to get away with doing this here in Virginia—if they're able to make an example out of us—then Volvo and the other companies will do it in Allentown, Hagerstown, Detroit, Ghent, or anywhere else. The corporate owners would take it as a sign that it's open season on the rights of the working class.

It is clear that the attempt to trample on our rights is already provoking outrage. To cite just a few of our brothers' and sisters' most popular comments on Local 2069's Facebook page: "Vote hell no this time! Don't be bribed into this BS contract we voted down."

"How do you re-vote on something you already voted on and rejected. This is a TOTAL SCAM!!"

"If you all cave in now it was all for nothing... Remember YOU ARE WHAT MAKES THEIR MONEY."

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

From the beginning, the UAW has done everything to isolate us, to keep our brothers and sisters at Mack, Volvo and elsewhere in the dark. But the information blackout is breaking down. Volvo and the UAW are well aware that the strike is now winning growing support from autoworkers throughout the US and internationally, including among the Volvo Cars workers in Ghent, Belgium, who carried out wildcat strike action last week against an attempt to lengthen their working hours, just a few days after they learned of our strike.

The union, working on behalf of the company, is trying to convince us that the only option is unconditional surrender. This is another lie. We are not scared by the company and union's threats and believe this strike can and must be won. But to do so, the following is needed:

1. The contract must be overwhelmingly defeated on Wednesday. We especially appeal to our brothers and sisters who voted "yes" on Friday to reject this attack on the rights of all Volvo workers. This strike has not been easy for anyone. But nothing worth fighting for is ever easy. The decisive rejection of this contract can clear the path to a victory that meets the needs of all workers at NRV.

2. Any attempt to reopen the New River Valley plant with scab labor must be met with the mobilization of workers at Mack and other Volvo plants—both in the US and in other countries—to immediately shut down the company's operations. We have to show the company we have this power and are willing to use it.

3. Preparations must be made for solidarity actions by autoworkers in Detroit and other cities, and broader sections of the working class, if the company proceeds with its threats to unilaterally enforce the contract and operate with scab labor. Not only our interests are at stake; the interests of Mack workers, autoworkers, and others are on the line.

4. The UAW must hold town hall meetings to give a comprehensive report on the history of its discussions with Volvo. At this meeting, nominations must be taken so that the bargaining committee is expanded to include all constituencies among the workforce at NRV: pre-2011 hires, 2011-2015 hires, newer hires, retirees, and salaried workers. Despite the company's ultimatum, the struggle over this contract is far from over.

If Volvo has billions for its shareholders, then they have the money to pay for all of our health care—active AND retired workers—bring everyone up to full pay immediately, end the tier wage and benefit system once and for all (NOT replace it with a six-year wage progression treadmill), significantly increase wages across the board, and reimplement the cost-of-living raises.

To accept this contract after we've already voted it down would be to accept corporate dictatorship. To reject it would send an unmistakable signal to Volvo that we are not afraid and are prepared to fight for our demands.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact