

Volvo Trucks workers denounce UAW officials, call for decisive rejection in contract revote

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Hundreds of angry Volvo Trucks workers flooded the United Auto Workers Local 2069 union hall in Dublin, Virginia early Monday morning to confront UAW officials who agreed to hold a revote on a tentative agreement that nearly two-thirds of the workforce rejected last Friday. Defying the will of the majority, the UAW will hold a ratification vote on the concessionary agreement this Wednesday.

On Sunday, Volvo declared that the tentative deal, the third UAW-backed agreement to be defeated by workers since May, was its “last, best and final” offer. Management said it would implement the agreement on Monday and urged striking workers to break ranks and cross the picket lines to resume work under the terms of the rejected contract.

According to striking workers, less than 30 employees out of more than 3,000 hourly and salaried employees reported to work, including supervisors, a handful of intimidated younger workers and an electrician. Strikers were contacted by several engineers at Volvo Trucks North America’s Greensboro, North Carolina headquarters who said management had asked them to volunteer to go to the New River Valley plant to replace striking workers and build trucks at a target rate of 10 trucks per day. Many refused and told strikers they supported their struggle and would honor their picket lines.

The UAW is doing Volvo’s dirty work and has made it clear that it will send workers back to work by July 19, regardless of the outcome of the vote. Ray Curry, the newly installed UAW president, who signed each of the sellout deals with Volvo, has remained totally silent on the company’s efforts to blackmail workers. That is because he and the rest of the UAW apparatus support

it.

A striking worker described the scene at the local union hall Monday morning. “We gave [Local union president Matt] Blondino hell for bringing this contract up for another vote. They could have shot it down, but they didn’t. He said that ‘only’ 60 percent of the members voted against it, and that was not enough to ask the UAW International to keep spending so much money on the strike.”

“We were outraged,” the worker said. “We told him and the rest of the bargaining committee to resign their positions. He complained that we voted down three tentative agreements, and we said that was because they were crap. The third TA has a little more in pay for production workers, but the Core Group and the rest of the plant is going to lose money because of what we are paying for our insurance.”

“He told us we had to vote ‘yes’ and that we couldn’t go back to work on July 19 with an ‘open contract,’ that had not been ratified. If we voted ‘no’ again, he said, it would be bad for the workers and the union, which would have to spend a lot of money to keep us on strike.”

This only exposes the hostility of the well-off business executives who run the UAW. Curry is continuing to collect his \$236,608 salary—or \$4,538 a week—while condemning striking Volvo workers to starvation-level strike benefits of \$275 a week during the now five-week strike. The UAW does not want to pay out anything more from its nearly \$800 million strike fund, which has long been a slush fund for the top union executives.

Blondino said the decision was being made over the local’s head and the UAW International had the “final

say,” the worker reported. “That’s probably true, but there are a lot of people from the local on the bargaining committee, and it was Blondino and [local bargaining chairman Greg] Shank who were the deciding vote to end the strike and send us back to work before voting on the first TA.”

“Blondino is looking to move up the ladder in the UAW if he hasn’t already,” the worker said. “Volvo is setting out to scare people into voting ‘yes’ and going back to work by threatening their jobs. The UAW is not denouncing Volvo for bullying the workers. They’re not saying they’ll protect workers from Volvo’s threats to their jobs. In fact, they’re not saying anything negative about Volvo at all.”

The worker added, “We’re trying to get workers to stay out if they vote ‘no.’”

The Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee (VWRFC), which has led the fight against both the company and the collusion of the UAW, issued a statement Monday calling on workers to decisively defeat the contract during the revote on Wednesday. It explained that the UAW is under no legal obligation to call another vote and has taken 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.”

The statement also called for 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 if the company attempted to reopen the NRV plant with strikebreakers. At the same time, it called on autoworkers in Detroit and other cities, along with broader sections of the working class, to make preparations for solidarity actions: “Not only our interests are at stake; the interests of Mack workers, autoworkers, and others are on the line.”

Rick, another striking worker and member of the Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee, told the WSWS: “The local union says it’s going to file an unfair labor charge. Let’s say in a year or two from now, the NLRB says it wasn’t an impasse, all they are going to do is say go back to the table. The UAW will pretend to go back and give the company anything they

want. Workers are so angry they want to chase these suckers out of state.

“I’m telling workers what is the point of a contract if the company can do anything they want whenever they want? Who’s to say if this contract is ratified that one year from now, if the economy tanks like it did in 2008, that the company won’t say your \$30 an hour pay is now \$20? What is the union going to do, just shrug its shoulders and say, ‘They can do that’?”

“If 3,000 of us vote this down and stay on strike, there’s nothing they could do about it. A lot of workers are just looking for leadership. There’s been a lot of posts on Facebook from workers who said they voted ‘yes’ on the last contract but are going to vote ‘no’ on Wednesday because they are so pissed over what went down. I hope that is a trend that will build.”

Another VWRFC member said, “We have to vote this down again. Volvo and the UAW are setting a bad precedent for workers everywhere. We have to get the Mack workers, the autoworkers in Detroit and Volvo workers all over the world to all stand up with us, otherwise they’re going to be next.”

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 VWRFC statement on the revote [here](#).



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