

Volvo Trucks workers revoting today on rejected contract as opposition mounts to UAW collusion with corporations

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Opposition among Volvo Trucks workers in Virginia continued to grow on the eve of the revote ordered by the United Auto Workers on a third tentative agreement, which nearly two-thirds of the workforce have already rejected. Voting is scheduled to begin today at 6:30 a.m. at the UAW Local 2069 union hall in Dublin, with results expected to be released shortly after the polls close at 5:30 p.m.

Last Sunday, two days after the workers rejected the agreement by 60-40 percent, Volvo declared it had reached an “impasse” and would impose the terms of its “last, best and final” offer on Monday and reopen the plant with strikebreakers. Far from opposing this provocation, the UAW immediately announced it would hold a revote and possibly file a toothless “unfair labor charge” against Volvo with the National Labor Relations Board.

A negligible number of workers have broken ranks and crossed the picket lines, with workers reporting seeing only a couple dozen, including management personnel, reporting for work. With its supply of trucks nearly exhausted due to the strike, the company is pressing white-collar workers, including engineers from its Greensboro, North Carolina headquarters, to resume the production of trucks at a rate of 10 a day.

“Volvo had a meeting with their white-collar workers to ask for volunteers to be bused down to New River Valley,” a worker told the WSWS. “They will pay for their meals and their hotel, and they actually rented out an entire hotel for four weeks. The white-collar workers would do production jobs for four weeks while the other people go out on strike, because that’s what they [Volvo management] are predicting.” The worker added, “This comes from a very reliable source, so if you could please get this out to the union members, I’d appreciate it.”

Rank-and-file workers are calling on their fellow workers, including those who voted “yes” last Friday, to decisively reject the contract at the revote today. “The mood here is angry,” one worker told the WSWS. “People are pissed at the company and the union. There are posts on the local’s Facebook page by workers who voted ‘yes,’ but are going to vote against it because of the way they ignored our vote and are trying to ram this down our throats. I am hoping that sentiment will grow, and we will shoot this contract down again.”

Local 2069 President Matt Blondino has told the workers to vote “yes” and to prepare to return to work between Thursday and next Monday, July 19. After the UAW sought to starve workers on the picket lines with \$275 a week in strike pay, Blondino is waving the \$2,000 signing bonus over workers’ heads, saying they will not get it if they reject the contract. He has also falsely suggested that the UAW is legally obligated to force workers to vote on the contract they decisively defeated and to return to work.

“The pissy ass signing bonus of \$2,000 is meaningless,” another striker told the WSWS. “After taxes, it’s more like \$1,200. Sacrificing my soul is more expensive than \$1,200,” he said. One post on the local’s Facebook page said, “We’ve come too far to sell out for \$1200 (after tax). Vote no!! ... At least our conscience will be clear that we didn’t sell out for a few dollars. Hold the line! We’ve got more to gain in the long run!”

Several striking workers called the National Labor Relations Board to ask how to charge the UAW with breaching its duty of fair representation. While on the phone, they asked NLRB representatives whether it was true, as the UAW suggested, that workers had to return to work even if they rejected the contract. “When they heard that it wasn’t true, they were furious,” another striker told

the WSWWS.

This is par for the course for the UAW, which has long used lies, threats and intimidation to push through pro-company contracts in the auto and truck manufacturing industries. With each of the three tentative agreements, UAW leaders, including now-UAW President Ray Curry, have claimed the deal was the best they could get. But workers are determined to overturn more than a decade of UAW givebacks and fight for substantial wage increases, a cost-of-living escalator to protect them against inflation—now 5.4 percent, the highest in 13 years—and no cuts to employer-paid medical coverage for current and retired workers. They are also determined to end the hated two-tier wage system, which condemns younger workers to substandard pay and benefits.

Unlike the strikes the UAW has betrayed at Caterpillar, American Axle, Lear, Nexteer, John Deere, Chrysler, General Motors and countless other locations since the 1980s, a new voice and leadership has emerged in the Virginia strike, the Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee. The VWRFC has led the fight against the consecutive sellout agreements and the UAW's sabotage of the strike. It is calling for a rejection of the contract in today's revote and an expansion of the strike to Mack Trucks and the Detroit automakers to answer Volvo's strikebreaking threats.

Fearing that a real victory by the Volvo workers would unleash a wave of struggles by autoworkers, the UAW has done everything to isolate the strike and prevent workers in Detroit and other industrial centers from learning about the Volvo workers' rebellion against the corporations and the UAW.

To break through this conspiracy of silence, the VWRFC, with the assistance of the WSWWS, has appealed to autoworkers in Detroit, Chicago and other cities to make preparations for solidarity actions in the event that the company goes through with its threat to restart operations with strikebreakers.

On Tuesday, supporters of the Socialist Equality Party held a rally at the Stellantis Warren Truck Assembly Plant in suburban Detroit and distributed hundreds of copies of the WSWWS *Autoworker Newsletter* informing workers of the efforts of Volvo and the UAW to blackmail the Volvo workers. During the rally, Stellantis workers stopped and spoke remotely to a striking Volvo worker and member of the VWRFC who was on Facetime from Virginia.

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

Workers responded with anger and disbelief when they learned that Volvo workers were being forced to vote again on a tentative agreement, which they had already voted down. "[The union] ought to be doing everything they can," Tony said. "Workers deserve a fair contract. We all pay dues and it's for these times that it matters."

Randall declared his support for Volvo workers. "We need more people out fighting for these workers! We got to have each other's backs."

"If I can be frank," Johnny, another worker, said, "the UAW is full of crap. They take our money every paycheck and where does it go? They should be doing everything to support these workers and they're not. No surprise."

A Warren Truck worker who has been following the Volvo strike through the WSWWS *Autoworker Newsletter* said, "I hope they get what they want, I really do. They have our support."

Another worker who read a previous copy of the newsletter stated, "I support them 100 percent." When asked whether Detroit autoworkers also want to fight for a 25 percent wage increase, she said, "Most definitely." Regarding the multi-tier wage system, she said, "Get rid of it."

Commenting on the many workers who stopped to speak to him and issue words of support and encouragement, the striking Volvo worker told the WSWWS, "Lot's of workers in Detroit had our backs. They expressed solidarity and gave us thumbs up. Almost every worker on the shift change took the newsletters about our strike. I told them to think about us and to keep speaking out.

"We need to team up with workers in Detroit, with Mack and Volvo workers around the world. We need one team, one fight."



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