

Pennsylvania Mack Trucks worker responds to President Joseph Biden's visit to truck plant

A Mack Trucks Worker in Macungie, Pennsylvania
9 August 2021

The World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter received a letter from a Mack Trucks worker in Macungie, Pennsylvania, which it is reprinting here in full. The WSWS strives to bring the voices of the working class to our world audience. If you have something you want heard, contact us today at autoworkers@wsws.org. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

The day after Biden's visit, workers at the Macungie Plant, inspired by the example set by Volvo Trucks workers during their five-week strike, announced the formation of a rank-and-file committee in opposition to the pro-corporate United Auto Workers. To contact the Macungie committee, send a text to (484) 466-8841. For assistance setting up a committee at your own workplace, contact the WSWS at autoworkers@wsws.org or by filling out the contact form here.

On July 28, President Joseph Biden came to our Mack Trucks facility in Macungie. This trip, which came less than two weeks after Volvo Trucks and the United Auto Workers union pushed through a rotten contract on our coworkers at the New River Valley plant in southern Virginia, was done for several reasons.

First, this was a show of force by the company, the United Auto Workers and the United States government in order to intimidate us at Mack Trucks. The company knows we are angry, having been forced to work during the strike and handle scab parts that kept coming in from NRV during the strike in June and July. This alliance was best seen in the image of Biden walking the factory floor with UAW Local 677 chairperson Kevin Fronheiser at his right hand, and

Mack Trucks president Martin Weissburg at his left.

Second, Biden's team knew that, except for a select few, we workers would not be there that day. He must know that, by-and-large, Mack Trucks workers do not like the president. But Mack Trucks is a symbol of American manufacturing and Biden wanted to promote economic nationalism, the same thing that Trump before him did. Speaking about China at his press conference, Biden declared "we're in a race with them" and that we should "grow more American-based companies" to compete.

American economic nationalism is fictional because, as everyone knows, Mack is owned by Volvo, a Swedish-based company and Volvo has its global investors. The tactic of distracting us by blaming a foreign country and its workers as economic rivals is a prized tool of management and the UAW. In fact, the rivalry is not with other countries' workers, but the ruling class here. This was clear when NRV was on strike last month. The workers in Virginia received both words and actions of support from working class people across the world. Most importantly, this was seen in Ghent, Belgium at a Volvo plant that went on strike two days after hearing about NRV's strike.

This shows us that working class people in other countries are not our competition, but our brothers and sisters across the globe. The UAW *used* to recognize that, with its logo of workers holding hands across the globe. But it has shown it has forgotten this even as the logo remains.

Biden's aim was to stir up this competition with Chinese workers as his infrastructure plan is to give money to companies to make electronic chipsets here. While being assembled in America, we all know Mack

trucks are made of global components. Whoever makes those components is a working class friend of ours and attacks on the working class should not be tolerated no matter what country they come from.

The government always has tax payer money for companies and banks, and it never seems to find its way back to the working core that paid it in. This was what happened to workers at General Motors during its bankruptcy in 2009. At last week's appearance, Biden, who was vice president in 2009, patted himself on the back at Macungie for his role in pushing the bankruptcy deal through. This deal included an agreement to cut the wages of all new hires in half, which led to the tier system across the industry and in our company.

In other words, this money ended up like trillions of other US tax dollars: given to companies who then turn around and demand concessions from us!

Instead of attacking workers in other countries, Biden could have hit at Volvo for shorting our coworkers in Virginia last month. But Biden never intended to stand in solidarity with any workers. The only thing Biden cares about is corporate profits and the corporate alliance of Mack/Volvo and the UAW brass.

We are not allied with the company. We are allied only to each other. The company is feasting while refusing to give us workers what we need. We keep finding out about new things that were taken from us in the contract that was foisted on us after our strike in 2019. At that time, the UAW told us the tier wage system in our plant was "not a part of our contract negotiations" so it could not be gotten rid of. How could our wages not be a part of our contract?

Mack-Volvo is not something we should be allied to. They only feast because it is off the gains we have given away to them for nothing in return.

Biden no doubt saw what happened in Virginia and yet made no mention of it. While Biden's labor relations board last week called for a new union vote at Amazon after it found discrepancies with the election last March, that doesn't mean that Biden supports workers. It means he supports a union at Amazon to keep workers there in line.

He does not want workers fighting tooth and nail for cost of living, but to slide into poverty instead. At his Macungie visit, he met only with a handpicked few, the majority of them being company-side. There was absolutely no mention of the working conditions being

made. The entire visit was just a photo opportunity with some company people from Mack and a UAW rep that is no different than the company. This was so blatant that I could see the CEO Weissburg giving Kevin a thumbs-up in the background after Biden's speech.



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