

Teamsters resort to lies and intimidation to push sellout deal at UPS

Hector Cordon
29 June 2018

After announcing that it had reached an “agreement in principle” with United Parcel Service (UPS) on June 21, the Teamsters union has launched a campaign to ram the sellout agreement past the opposition of rank-and-file workers. The current five-year agreement for 230,000 UPS workers expires on midnight, July 31.

Without releasing the details of the partial deal, union functionaries have touted it, echoing National Negotiating Committee (NNC) co-chair Denis Taylor's statement that “this agreement is among the very best ever negotiated for UPS members.” In New York City, NNC member Danny Montalvo told a shift of drivers, “There has been a lot of negatives about it by certain people. I don't know why.”

The union has declared there will be no strike when the current agreement expires and is urging workers to cast a ‘yes’ vote on an incomplete contract, which workers have not seen.

According to the Teamsters for a Democratic Union web site, union president James P. Hoffa Jr. has kept details of the contract secret from not only the rank and file but also from members of the National Negotiating Committee. This is obviously to prevent further leaks of embarrassing details that have bedeviled negotiations. In May, several NNC members were removed after they revealed that the union had proposed creating a “hybrid driver” position.

The new hybrid driver position would introduce for the first time a second tier of lower-paid drivers to work the weekends that would normally earn drivers considerable overtime pay. These new drivers will make substantially less than legacy drivers, starting at \$20.50 per hour and topping out at \$34.79 by 2022. A second tier of lower-paid workers will inevitably be used as a wedge by the company, with the collusion of the union, to attack the pay and benefits of legacy

drivers.

As early as the mid-1970s, UPS blazed the trail for corporate America through the introduction of part-time and second-tier workers. After a bitter strike in 1976 was betrayed by the Teamsters, the company brought in part-time workers as sorters, loaders and other inside workers at its warehouses and hubs. Today part-timers, with starting wages of as little as \$10.00 per hour, comprise 70 percent of UPS's US workforce.

The proposed contract will continue that low rate, calling for a new starting pay of \$13.00 an hour rising to \$15.50 by 2022. In contrast, part-time loaders in 1978 were making \$7.50 an hour at a time when the minimum wage was \$2.83. In current dollars this would be over \$30.00 an hour.

In one incident, caught by a worker on video, Montalvo tries to sell the contract to a group of suspicious drivers outside a New York City hub and complains about workers carrying signs that say, “No tier two.” He says, “We’ve had tier-two jobs since the inception of part-time jobs, because that is a part-time job at a different rate.” After the 1997 strike, Montalvo continued, there were 10,000 part-timers flipped over to full-time but afterwards new, third-tier “helpers” and other low-paid positions had been established. Montalvo then said, “Would you rather have no part-timers having those jobs and no contributions to your pensions?” As for ‘hybrid drivers,’ Montalvo says, “I don’t agree with it but that was what was handed down to us, and we’re going to take it and we’re going to run with it.”

In a comment on the TDU page, a long time UPS employee and shop steward says, “The tidbit that has been released is a joke! ...Using “hybrid drivers” will cost them \$160 a day compared to \$560 using senior drivers...The \$4.15 raise over 5 yrs? hmmm UPS record

profits yet lowest raises in over 25 yrs? ...You knew when they announced it was closed door negotiations that we were sold out again!!!! These negotiations were done before they ever walked into the room. It's all been a dog and pony show to try and appease the membership. Does anyone actually think Jimmy Jr. will call for a strike? Hell, the hybrid driver was his proposal. When the vote returns a no they will agree on an extension then our fearless leaders will accept a BS agreement without sending it to the rank and file to vote on!"

In reaction to anger and widespread opposition to the agreement, two union officials, members of the NNC in Southern California, issued statements warning against "outside anti-union groups recommending a no vote on the UPS contract without seeing the terms of the final contract."

The Teamsters have long been notorious for using physical intimidation against its critics. While it has denounced the TDU as an "anti-union group" in the past, the union apparatus has little to fear from the TDU, which has long functioned as a loyal opposition inside the union and a faction of the union bureaucracy itself.

Far from leading a struggle to break the grip of the Teamsters over rank-and-file workers, the TDU has long sought to contain opposition within the union by peddling the lie that the Teamsters could be reformed by the election of TDU officials. The bankruptcy of this perspective was revealed by the election of TDU-backed candidate Ron Carey in 1991. Carey, the former president of local 804 in New York, betrayed the two-week strike in 1997, which maintained the hated two-tier part-time system. Shortly after, Carey was forced out of office after the exposure of an illegal scheme to fund his 1996 reelection campaign against Hoffa through kickbacks involving the AFL-CIO and Democratic National Committee.

Watch David North's remarks commemorating 25 years of the *World Socialist Web Site* and donate today.

The Teamsters apparatus, above all, fears that the movement by rank-and-file workers, part-time and full-time alike, will find conscious organization and political direction through the *World Socialist Web Site* and Socialist Equality Party. During the 2015 autoworkers' rebellion and the more recent teacher strikes, the WSWS became the center of opposition,

prompting the union bureaucracy and its apologists to denounce the WSWS and its worker newsletters as "outside anti-union groups."

We urge UPS workers to contact the *World Socialist Web Site* and use our site to organize rank-and-file committees to take the conduct of this struggle out of the hands of all factions of the Teamsters bureaucracy.

The WSWS and SEP urge UPS workers to establish rank-and-file workplace committees to demand the release of the full contract and sufficient time to study and discuss it before any ratification vote. UPS workers should begin to organize now to reject the sellout, oppose any contract extension and prepare an all-out strike.

Rank-and-file committees should fan out to mobilize the broadest support in the working class, including appealing to Amazon and FedEx workers and the 200,000 US Postal Service workers who are facing privatization threats and contract expiration on September 20.

Such an industrial counteroffensive by the working class must be combined with the development of a powerful political movement against both big-business parties and for a socialist alternative to the capitalist system. This would include the transformation of the giant corporations such as UPS and Amazon into public enterprises, collectively owned and democratically run by the working class itself.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact