

“Now we’re all slaves, no matter what color you are”

UPS workers oppose sellout contract, warn of union fraud to pass agreement

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Opposition is growing among the more than 230,000 United Parcel Service (UPS) workers to the sellout contract agreement released by the Teamsters union on Tuesday. The proposed deal would create a new second-tier driver position that will be used to destroy well-paid full-time jobs, maintain the company’s ability to force employees to work over 70 hours a week, and do nothing to address poverty-level wages for part-time workers who make up 70 percent of the workforce.

On Tuesday, the union announced that it was indefinitely extending the deadline for negotiations until after the July 31 expiration of the current agreement, to give the union more time to wear down opposition.

World Socialist Web Site reporters spoke with drivers and part-time workers at a UPS depot in Madison Heights near Detroit, Michigan. Most workers had not even been informed that the union had extended the contract deadline. Many said the union was seeking to find a way to push through the sellout agreement, and that it would resort to ballot stuffing to secure a “yes” vote.

“It’s the same as the last contract in 2013,” said a worker with 10 years, five of them as a driver and five in the warehouse. “It got shoved down our throats even though we voted ‘no.’ Not one person I spoke to voted ‘yes’ on that deal, and they put it through.”

The worker said he had “read the whole damn contract, and it is BS. If you want to create a new driver job, you need to pay them like drivers,” he said. “Don’t pay them BS to do our job. It’s aimed at taking away overtime pay. The real aim is to abuse the new workers.”

While the worker is a full-time driver, he said he was

opposed to the treatment of young part-time workers, who make as little as \$10 per hour. “You can go to McDonalds and make \$13 per hour. Why would you work here for the same money in a hot warehouse without AC?”

Another driver said: “I have been here for 29 years, and I have never seen a full, final contract in front of my face. In 2013, we voted against the contract, yet they [the Teamsters] still drove it through. I believe that’ll happen this time if we vote ‘no.’”

The worker, who wished to remain anonymous to avoid punishment from the company and union, added, “We are in a powerful position right now. The workers could strangle UPS. But I don’t think the union would. The union won’t get paid by the company if we’re not working. That’s my opinion.”

Pete, a driver for 24 years, said the contract provided nothing for drivers. “They [the union] have been making concessions for years. It feels like they’re in the pockets of the company.”

A driver with over 20 years at the Madison Heights hub said he would vote ‘no’ on the contract because of the second-tier driver position and the attacks on part-timers. The contract will see part-time workers’ maximum wage rise to \$15.50 by 2022, maintaining poverty-level wages permanently.

“We bust our butts, the part-timers bust their butts. They should be making more than \$15 an hour.” He said that for many young people, this was better than working a food or retail job, but not by much. “I believe in fighting for the new generation to have good jobs. I believe not just in fighting for higher wages, but for sharing the profits. They have millions of dollars.”

“The corporations have been here since about the

beginning of this country. They had free slavery first for 200 years, and now we're all slaves no matter what color you are."

In 2017, UPS recorded \$7.5 billion in profits off the backs of its workers, who are subject to high-speed physical labor, unsafe conditions, digital tracking and harassment from management. This amount would be enough to provide an immediate \$32,600 raise to every one of UPS's employees.

Anthony is a part-time warehouse worker whose conditions are representative of those of hundreds of thousands of others. He works 20 hours a week at UPS for \$12 an hour, on top of a full-time job fixing printers. "I'm trying to pay some bills," he said. While the union was boasting about a wage of \$15.50 within five years, Anthony responded: "It's not something to be really happy about. It's just like working at McDonalds and Wendy's. It sucks."

Many workers have taken to social media and the Internet to denounce the union for yet another sellout deal. The union has deleted hundreds of comments from the UPS Rising Facebook page.

One member of the forum Brown Cafe, which is used by UPS employees, started a new thread with the introduction: "The agreement put before us is a joke. If they do not have something we can work with by August 1st we should strike. No extensions. If we let them pay other drivers less for the same job then we have lost everything we have fought for in years past."

"We should never allow the company to pay them less than us," added another worker. "If anything, and especially on Sunday, they should be paid an extra premium." Expressing the sentiments of solidarity among legacy drivers and younger workers, he continued, "To me, it's not just about me. It's about what's fair and right for now as well as the workers moving forward when I won't be around."

Chad has worked at UPS for 22 years in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, under the "22.3" full-time non-driver position. This category was introduced in 1997, allowing the company to hire warehouse workers for full-time positions on lower wages. He told the WSWS: "I know if this contract gets pushed through a lot of the members will quit paying union dues, especially in all the right-to-work states. People aren't going to pay their salaries anymore by collecting our dues and selling us out!"

Chad said there was immense support for a strike among the workers. "We are ready to walk, no doubt! I hope to hell we vote this agreement down, and it should be unanimously voted 'no,' but everyone feels the voting process is rigged. The 2013 Master Agreement was rigged. Everyone knows it. It always seems to just magically pass by a few percentage points.

"If 93 percent voted for a strike, I can guarantee you this Master Agreement should be voted 'no' also," he added. "Not a single proposal we gave the union was agreed upon with the company, yet they still had this backdoor handshake agreement."



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