

“Profit over people? The people make those profits possible”

UPS workers respond to surge in company stock following Teamsters’ sellout contract

Kayla Costa
18 July 2018

Wall Street has responded to the Teamsters union announcement of a sellout agreement with United Parcel Service and the extension of the strike deadline well beyond July 31 by driving up UPS stock nearly 3.5 percent over the past five days.

The stock surge, however, has only intensified anger among the firm’s approximately 250,000 US workers over the union betrayal and heightened their determination to oppose the deal.

A driver with 12 years at UPS told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “The union is just trying to sell this new contract because they want to get more union members and collect more union dues. They are making deals with the company to suit them, not the members. For the union and the company, it’s all about the numbers. For us, it’s daily harassment and working long hours. We are working very hard so they can share all the profits.”

The driver said that while he pays more than \$90 each month in union dues, he doesn’t receive help from the union. “They should be getting members together and helping us fight for a better contract,” he said. “I don’t see them doing anything.”

The company has increased workloads and stepped up tracking and harassment to boost its profits. “They want more and more from us daily just to satisfy the numbers. We are being pushed to the limit. We are not machines, we are just humans.”

The driver called the Socialist Equality Party’s proposal for UPS workers to form rank-and-file committees independent of the union “a great idea.” He said, “Somebody has to control the company and the union at the same time, so we workers are not exploited. The people on top are making millions and

we are working very hard, and they don’t want to share the wealth.”

Raul, a worker in Southern California with 28 years in the warehouse feeder division, told the WSWS: “Of course Wall Street is happy with the headlines that an agreement has been reached in principle. But that is not the sentiment among the rank-and-file across the country. It will get a ‘no’ vote.”

He continued, “UPS is making a pretty penny, and they have been for years.” He pointed out that in 2017 the CEO received a 20 percent raise, taking in \$13.7 million. “We will all tell you he did not earn that raise. He didn’t lift a finger or deliver a package. That’s the problem with the business culture here in the US. Profit over people? The people make those profits possible.”

The Teamsters have agreed to a new contract that will slash labor costs by introducing a second tier of drivers, with far lower pay and more onerous working conditions. Part-time workers, the bulk of the workforce, will receive a token wage increase that leaves them with a maximum of \$15.50 an hour at the end of the five-year contract.

Raul continued: “With the initial information we have received on the Internet, Denis Taylor, our lead negotiator, has failed us. There is no need for a new 22.4 [hybrid driver] job classification. It will only allow the company to manipulate the numbers and its workforce more than it already does, and at a bargain price. Why would we vote to have someone do the same job as a full-time driver for less money per hour? It is a concession that cannot be allowed to happen.

“As for the 48 union officials who make more than 200k per year, they all depend on our union dues. Their job security depends on the dues we currently pay. If

they don't meet our demands, that could change as well. They just need to be reminded who pays them.

"It's not that the International Brotherhood of Teamsters can't protect our benefits, but rather they are choosing not to. The rank and file are seeing them as weak and afraid or receiving compensation from the company under the table to push this through."

Chad, who started at UPS after graduating from high school shortly before the 1997 strike, works at a hub in Orlando, Florida running the belt system. He told reporters that everyone at his hub says they are voting "no" on the contract.

He said: "I feel the contract does not help any of the drivers who are out there all day and night, who never get to see their families. When I started, all drivers were in by 6 pm each night, or maybe 7. You only saw them out later during the Christmas season, and that might be 9 pm. Today's drivers are out until past 10. Last Christmas, drivers were coming in at midnight! Fourteen hours a day is too much to ask from anyone, especially those with a family.

"When it comes to the part-timers, the pay is so low that no one wants to work here more than a few days. Jobs like Disney, Universal and many other companies pay far more than UPS. It took me around eight years to make \$15 an hour... This petty \$5.50 raise [over the course of the contract] for part-timers is pathetic when you consider UPS is making record profits."

Jeff, a driver of 20 years, said, "That's one greedy company. It's bad that a union the size of the Teamsters sold us out."

He said his biggest issues with the proposed contract include the increase in work time limits from 60 to 70 hours per week, stricter rules for work limit grievances, and harassment by management. "It's getting worse and worse every year," he said. "In a five-day period, they work us 11 to 12 hours for two out of five days."

A warehouse worker in Baltimore told the WSWS, "UPS has record profits as they chew up and spit out part-timers like they're chew toys.

"We get worked to death or until we're injured. And then when we do get injured, not if, but when, we're accused of lying about it or milking it and we're ostracized. They have a plan to keep injuries low because otherwise the insurance bill will go up, so they do everything they can to persuade you from seeking medical aid and fight you tooth and nail over things

when they know for a fact it's their fault."

In his experience, most of the full-time, high-seniority workers "believe we have a weak, pathetic union that doesn't care for the workers or getting them more benefits or a humane work environment. I wouldn't doubt the union heads selling out. Everyone is ready for a strike. Maybe then some of this crap they keep pulling would change."

When a WSWS reporter explained that rank-and-file committees would organize workers independently of the union and unite workers at UPS, Amazon and the postal service in a militant struggle, the worker said, "Where do I sign up?"



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact