

Teamsters union blames opposition to sellout contract on “internet trolls”

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Facing mounting anger from UPS workers to its sellout contract proposal released on July 10, the Teamsters union is seeking to slander workers’ opposition as the work of “Internet trolls.”

Last Thursday, Teamsters Local 174 in Washington State published a three-minute video, complete with Beethoven background music and all the technological sophistication of a high-school animation project, warning workers not to listen to statements by “trolls” criticizing the UPS agreement on social media.

The union’s agreement includes the creation of a new, second tier of warehouse-driver “hybrid” workers, who will be paid less than current drivers. It allows for the continued exploitation of workers for more than 70 hours a week during peak season, and it maintains poverty-level wages for part-time workers who make up more than 70 percent of the workforce.

The Teamsters’ attack on “Internet trolls” recalls the propaganda campaign waged by the United Auto Workers (UAW) union during the 2015 contract negotiations with the Big Three automakers.

After Fiat Chrysler workers rejected the UAW sellout contract by a 2-to-1 margin, the union executives spent almost half a million dollars to hire BerlinRosen, a Democratic Party-aligned New York City public relations firm, to push through the sellout. Its campaign included claims that information spread by workers online, including from the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter*, was “fake news.” The union was widely denounced by workers for stuffing the ballots to eventually push through the deal.

It has since been revealed that high-level UAW officials were accepting millions of dollars in payoffs from the automakers throughout the contract negotiations between 2009 and 2015, during which time the union introduced a new second-tier position

for new-hires with poverty-level wages, and an alternative work schedule with 10-hour shifts. Last week, it was reported that Dennis Williams, the recently-retired UAW president, personally signed off on such corrupt payoffs.

The UAW’s attacks on the *World Socialist Web Site* anticipated the ongoing “fake news” campaign by the Democratic Party and the intelligence agencies aimed at justifying the censorship of left-wing and alternative news sites. This campaign has been intensified in the wake of strikes by teachers in West Virginia, Oklahoma and Arizona this year, during which teachers used social media to organize independently of the unions.

If anything, the Teamsters’ attack on “Internet trolls” is even less sophisticated than the UAW campaign over “fake news.” Its video actually underscores the naked character of the sellout, because it is unable to answer any of the attacks on the agreement that it itself cites.

The video includes a series of animated speech bubbles with quotes ostensibly made by “trolls,” but which are actually attacks on the agreement widely made by workers on social media, including on the “Vote No on UPS Contract” Facebook page, which has over 20,000 members.

These include: “I heard you guys sold us out on the 70-hour week;” “I heard the new [tier] are going to take all our work and do it for less money;” “I heard the [new tier] are going to be completely abused by the company;” and “I heard we could have gotten a way better deal if you guys weren’t afraid to strike!” These accusations are not answered with arguments; they are crossed out with red lines and a giant “NO,” followed by a plea for workers not to trust “Internet trolls” but only their “trusted local union leadership.”

The business executives who run the corporate-labor syndicate named the Teamsters Union obviously think

workers were born yesterday.

Among the statements by workers on Facebook in response to the video, Mark, a UPS driver, commented: “I only have one thing to say. Where is the power of my union dues that the so-called great union takes each and every month? Why the hell would anyone let UPS put this out for a vote? No one is even mentioning the \$1 billion that UPS received this year from president Trump’s tax cut, which we as employees [have] seen nothing of... [A]s I see it the UNION really screwed us over, 31 years at UPS and I have never once seen a contract go out for a vote and go back as [a] no.”

There is no way for UPS workers to defend their interests through the Teamsters union. The union does not represent the workers; it is a labor-management syndicate whose role is to provide the company with a low-wage workforce and suppress opposition to wage cuts, speedup and the destruction of workers’ rights.

Workers need new organizations to conduct a fight. Rank-and-file committees should be elected by workers in every depot and warehouse to lead a struggle for a rejection of the contract, to make preparations for a national strike, and to turn out and make contact with other distribution workers in the United States and internationally for a common struggle. We urge all UPS workers to contact us today to discuss this perspective.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact