

Teamsters union keeps 240,000 UPS workers on the job as contract expires

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The contract covering one quarter of a million UPS workers expired on Tuesday, July 31. The Teamsters union is forcing workers to continue on the job without a new contract, in open defiance of a vote by more than 93 percent of the workforce at the beginning of June authorizing a nationwide strike beginning midnight, August 1.

On July 10, the union announced that it was indefinitely extending the current contract by at least 60 days. The announcement came as the union released its proposed contract for 2018-2023, which is a provocation against the workforce. The union is aware that there is widespread opposition to the deal and is seeking to delay to wear down the workers.

The proposed agreement includes:

- * The creation of a new “hybrid” class of “22.4” driver/warehouse workers, who will be paid far less than current drivers and are not guaranteed full-time hours. The new position, which the Teamsters union boasted arose from its own proposal, is designed to destroy the last remaining decent-paying full-time jobs at the company and extend part-time “flexibility” from the warehouses to the delivery drivers.

- * Maintaining permanently low wages for part-time workers who make up more than two-thirds of the UPS workforce. The union boasts that part-time workers’ wages will reach \$15.50—itsself a poverty-level wage—by 2023.

- * No limits on forcing drivers to work overtime for up to 70 hours per week during peak season.

- * No change to the dangerous working conditions caused by endless corporate speed-up demands.

Chris, a UPS driver, told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “The company and union both feel like this new proposal will be rejected by the membership. The union has been in stall mode and hasn’t even thought about

sending out ballots for a vote. Ninety-three percent voted to walk. That’s a big number for the company and IBT [International Brotherhood of Teamsters] to overcome.”

The growing anger among workers was expressed in a video statement, posted on YouTube by a UPS driver named Tyler Binder on July 27, which has been viewed more than 15,000 times. The worker denounced the union for working to “formulate opinions on this contract and shove it down your throat. They’re not the ones who are going to have to live with this contract every single day.”

Binder noted that the union will “go ahead and authorize a strike vote and then two or three weeks later, take an indefinite extension on the contract.”

Thomas, a part-time warehouse worker of 10 years, told the WSWWS that workers in the warehouse were “shaking their heads about it, saying sarcastically there was an ‘extension.’ Everyone thinks this is a tactic to wear us down so we will accept the contract as it is. The union sent out something saying, ‘Don’t listen to the internet trolls.’”

This is a reference to a video released by a Teamsters local slandering all opposition to the contract as the work of internet “trolls,” in language reminiscent of the United Auto Workers’s denunciations of exposures of its 2015 sellout contract—since revealed to have been obtained under conditions of bribes and kickbacks to UAW officials by the auto giants—as “fake news.”

There are nearly 300 comments on the video, most from UPS workers opposing the contract and denouncing the Teamsters.

There are widespread suspicions among workers that, like the UAW in 2015, the Teamsters will push through the contract using ballot fraud. These fears have been compounded by the fact that the union has announced it

will be utilizing an electronic balloting system in this year's national contract for the first time. Thomas added, "I feel uncomfortable, because I think that no matter how many people vote 'no,' they are going to try to pass it."

UPS workers must not allow the Teamsters to carry out their conspiracy with the company. To fight against the sellout contract, workers should form their own organizations, rank-and-file warehouse and depot committees, to take the struggle into their own hands.

Such committees must immediately raise the demand for workers' oversight over the counting and verification of ballots in the contract vote. There must be no backroom negotiations and deals between the company and the union; all contract negotiations must be live-streamed for workers to view, and all additional deals and memoranda must be published before any vote.

A rejection of the contract should be the starting point for a nationwide strike and a turn out to other sections of workers, including those at the United States Postal Service, Amazon, FedEx, and other workers in the United States and internationally.

UPS workers face more than just the greed of one company and the complicity of the Teamsters. Every struggle by workers to defend their conditions is a political struggle, directed against the interests of the corporate and financial elite, the entire capitalist system, and both big business parties that defend it.

The union, the capitalist parties and the media declare there is no money to provide everyone with well-paying jobs, health care, and decent working conditions. This is because they defend the subordination of every aspect of life to the profit interests of a tiny corporate oligarchy.

The more than \$7 billion in pre-tax profits reported by UPS last financial year would be enough to provide an immediate \$32,000 raise to the quarter-million UPS employees. The corporate and financial elite has amassed vast sums on the backs of the exploitation of the working class, under both the Democratic administration of Barack Obama and now the Republican administration of Donald Trump.

The critical task is to build of a political movement of the working class that will expropriate the fortunes of the oligarchy, transform the giant corporations and banks into publicly-controlled utilities, and reorganize

economy on the basis of genuine social equality, rather than private profit.



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