

“We need joint strike action, nationwide!”

Autoworkers call for united struggle with UPS workers against low-pay and part-time jobs

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The widespread opposition among UPS workers to the sellout contracts agreed to last Thursday by a national meeting of Teamsters officials has widespread support among autoworkers, with many calling for joint nationwide strike action.

The *WSWS Autoworkers Newsletter* spoke to workers in Michigan, Ohio and Illinois about the efforts of the Teamsters at UPS to ram through the contracts. They include the creation of a second tier of lower-paid “hybrid” delivery drivers and the maintenance of poverty-level pay for part-time workers.

Speaking about the spread of low-paid, part-time jobs at UPS, a worker at the Ford Rouge plant in Dearborn, Michigan said, “It’s terrible. It has to stop... Hell yes, we need joint strike action... nationwide!”

Currently 70 percent of the 240,000 employees of the shipping giant are part-time, performing everything from loading trucks in warehouses to delivering packages during peak periods. Top pay for a part-timer will reach only \$15.50 per hour at the end of the proposed agreement.

The aim of the joint conspiracy of the Teamsters and corporate management in introducing a second tier of delivery drivers is to force out older workers and reduce the entire workforce to poverty conditions and casual employment.

Among autoworkers, there is growing anger over the proliferation of tiers and highly exploited temporary part-time (TPT) workers, and widespread support for a united struggle. As with UPS workers, autoworkers face a joint offensive of corporate management and the United Auto Workers in enforcing concessions.

“I think they should vote ‘no’ on the sellout,” said a worker at Jeep in Toledo, Ohio. Addressing himself to the workers at UPS, he added, “Don’t let [Teamsters

President] Hoffa trick you. You should have just one wage, the top wage, no tiers. To have people doing the same job and being paid differently is unconscionable.

“We are no longer able to afford the cars we build. It says something about how far things have gone today.”

At Ford’s Chicago Assembly Plant, a worker with six years there said that she supported the UPS workers’ struggle. Her best friend works part-time at UPS, and the situation is the same at Ford. “There’s not that big of a difference between us, Amazon and UPS,” she said. “We’re all in the same boat.

“There’s enough money for everyone to be paid well,” she continued, but the corporations “are hiding it and spending it on themselves, making us fight for it.”

Another high-seniority worker at Rouge reporting for the night shift commented, “I am what they call a ‘legacy’ worker [that is, a senior worker with higher pay and benefits]. But I have two sons who are TPTs [Temporary Part-Time workers], one at Flat Rock and one at the stamping plant here at Rouge.

“My daughter-in-law was a TPT for two years. She had to quit because she couldn’t get hired in full time.”

The worker recalled that when he was hired, it only took 90 days to get full pay and benefits. “This is horrible,” he concluded. “Their [TPT] pay is lousy. They get no benefits. They have no rights on the shop floor. We have to do something to stop it.”

A TPT worker at Rouge took the newsletter, saying, “I’m in an impossible situation. When I hired in, the union told us we would be full time after 90 days. That was a lie. I have been here two years, and I’m still not hired in.”

“It’s horrible,” added another TPT. “They are doing it everywhere. There should be a nationwide strike against it.”

A legacy worker agreed. “That’s what’s coming is a nationwide strike,” he said. “I really believe that.”

Another worker agreed but was more reflective. “A nationwide strike... I hope so,” he said. “This has gone on too long.”

He continued by recalling the 100-year anniversary of the Russian Revolution. “I am Russian,” he said. “I believe the world would be different if Lenin had lived longer.” Following a discussion of the fight by the Trotskyist movement against the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Union, he concluded, “Yes, Trotsky was right. Socialism has to be international.”

In addition to second-tier and TPT workers, the UAW has accepted a third category of low-paid, disenfranchised employees called “Short-Term Supplementals,” or STSs, under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoA) with the company. MoAs are secret deals, signed behind the backs of the rank-and-file, but that are included in the stack of agreements between the UAW and the company that are used to legally straitjacket workers.

“All STS and TPT workers,” said one worker, “think that unions are structured like the military where you work up the ladder.” But it doesn’t work that way, he concluded. “You don’t improve your situation.”

“I was a TPT last year,” another agreed. “Now I’m an STS, but it’s still the same. As a TPT you have no representation. They make you think that after one year your situation will change for the better. But then you find out you have no guarantees, and they cut your hours.”

“I have worked here for years,” added another STS employee. “I don’t trust politicians or unions. But, you can only squeeze a cactus so much until there’s no water left,” he concluded. “Eventually the tables will turn.”

The WSWS urges UPS and autoworkers to build their own organizations of struggle, rank-and-file committees in every factory, hub and warehouse, to unite their struggles and prepare for a coordinated offensive against the corporations.

For more information, sign up for the UPS Workers Newsletter and the Autoworker Newsletter .



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