

Break the UPS-Teamsters conspiracy!

Mobilize opposition to the sellout contract!

The WSWS UPS Workers Newsletter
14 August 2018

It is five days since a national conference of Teamsters executives voted to endorse the sellout contract that includes major cost-cutting concessions to UPS and maintains poverty-level wages for hundreds of thousands of workers.

The Teamsters union is continuing to keep workers in the dark. There is still no date set for a vote on the contract, and the union has said nothing since its announcement last Friday that workers will receive ballots in “early September”—nearly two months after the expiry of the last contract. The union’s silence is part of a deliberate strategy worked out with UPS management to buy time and wear down opposition among rank-and-file workers.

UPS management made clear the real significance of the contract last Thursday, when it released a gloating statement on the Teamsters vote declaring that their contract will “give UPS greater flexibility,” including for “expanded weekend residential services, as well as to address challenges from competitors.”

Counting on the ability of the Teamsters to push through the deal, UPS felt itself at liberty to announce on the very same day its quarterly dividend of more than \$700 million to shareholders. This money will go directly to the corporate and financial elite, including UPS’ CEO David Abney and other executives, as well as giant hedge funds, such as Vanguard Group (which receives \$46 million), Blackrock (\$36 million) and State Street corporation (\$24 million).

The Teamsters declares that there is no money to provide a livelihood for part-time warehouse workers who make up 70 percent of the company’s workforce and perform backbreaking labor for \$10–12 per hour. It declares that a \$15.50 maximum wage for a warehouse worker would constitute a great “victory.”

What lies! There is more than enough money for large wage rises, fully-paid health care and retirement benefits,

and making all part-time workers full-time. The problem is not a lack of wealth, but that the money produced by the workers is expropriated by the corporations and handed to the rich. The \$2.8 billion that UPS will give in dividend payments to Wall Street this year could provide an immediate \$11,000 raise to every UPS worker.

There is enormous opposition among workers to the union’s conspiracy. But it is necessary that this be consciously organized and mobilized.

Form rank-and-file committees to organize a fight!

The WSWS UPS Workers Newsletter urges workers to form rank-and-file committees to take the struggle into their own hands. These committees should draw up demands as the basis for a nationwide strike. These should include:

- Immediate transformation of all part-timers to full-timers, with a corresponding increase in pay and full benefits.
- Abolition of all tiers.
- An across-the-board pay increase of 30 percent and restoration of cost-of-living adjustments.
- Billions of dollars to fully fund the pension and health care funds for all workers.
- Workers’ control over production, including the setting of safe line speeds and warehouse conditions.

Many workers have raised justified concerns that the Teamsters will seek to push through the contract vote by ballot stuffing. The campaign for a “no” vote must therefore raise the demand for workers’ oversight over the balloting process and verification of its integrity. Control of the \$160 million Teamsters strike fund, financed by workers’ dues, must be under workers’ control to ensure adequate pay during a strike.

UPS workers must reach out to other sections of the working class!

The UPS workers, numbering more than a quarter million, possess immense social power. They transport

over one third of all package deliveries in the United States, much of which is critical to the functioning of large portions of industry and the economy. They have powerful allies among the 200,000 United States Postal Service (USPS) employees and the half-million Amazon workers internationally, who form part of the same global supply chain and confront similar conditions of exploitation and corporate abuse.

Workers know that a strike at UPS would be met with ferocious opposition by the ruling class and its state, from court injunctions and police repression to attacks by the Trump administration and the Democratic Party, denunciations from the corporate-controlled media, and efforts by the Teamsters to isolate and betray the struggle.

The logic of the UPS workers' fight therefore poses the need for workers to expand their struggle. Rank-and-file committees of UPS workers would turn out to unite and establish communication with distribution workers at Amazon, USPS, FedEx and other sections of the working class in the US and internationally.

A strike at UPS would win the support of millions of workers who have suffered three decades of attacks on their jobs, wages and social rights. Around the world, there is a growing determination of the working class to fight. In the past fortnight, Ryanair workers in Europe have voted overwhelmingly for strike action and engaged in a one-day strike. Teachers in the US are returning to work with none of the issues resolved from the wildcat strikes that were shut down and betrayed by the unions earlier this year.

There is immense support for the UPS workers, expressed in the statements given to the WSWS by Detroit autoworkers who called for a nationwide strike of workers.

This is precisely what the ruling class fears. Under both the Obama and Trump administrations, it has pursued the single-minded transfer of wealth from the working class to the corporate elite through a policy of ultra-low interest rates, corporate tax cuts, the slashing of wages and the looting of social programs.

The logic of the class struggle

The entire capitalist market today depends upon the endless rise of share prices through the lowering of workers' wages to satisfy the demands of finance capital for ever greater profits.

This transfer of wealth has been made possible due to the role of the trade unions, which function as agents of corporate management, not workers' organizations, and have sold out and betrayed every struggle by workers over

the past three decades.

The most dangerous illusion would be to believe that the Teamsters union can be forced to adopt a militant policy and defend the workers' conditions. This is the lie promoted by the Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), which represents a faction of the union apparatus.

The TDU calls for a "no," but it offers no perspective upon which workers can fight. It calls on workers to place their faith in the union to return to the negotiating table and reach a better deal, and it has explicitly stated that it is not calling for strike action. This is because it wants to contain opposition and prevent it from developing into a real struggle against the company and the capitalist ruling elite.

The working class has a long experience with dissident factions operating within the unions, whose oppositional rhetoric is so much hot air. The TDU itself controlled the Teamsters union under Ron Carey from 1991 to 1997, overseeing a series of concessionary contracts. It accepts the nationalist and pro-capitalist framework of the union. Its chief concern is to be brought into the union leadership and to secure a greater share of its highly paid positions.

The class struggle is a war. The trade unions, the corporation and the government are working out their strategy against the workers. The workers must therefore base themselves on their own strategy and their own independent organizations.

The struggle by UPS workers poses directly the question of which class holds power and decides how society's resources are allocated: the working class, which produces all the wealth in society through its labor, or the corporate and financial oligarchy.

The Socialist Equality Party fights for a socialist movement of the working class to expropriate the gigantic corporations such as UPS and Amazon. The wealth of the oligarchy must be expropriated and used to meet social needs of the working class. These corporations must be put to use for society as a whole through their transformation into public utilities under the democratic control of the working class.



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