

Opposition mounts to UPS-Teamsters conspiracy as union announces contract for airline mechanics

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There is growing anger among UPS workers at the Teamsters union's sellout contract and its conspiracy with the company to push through the agreement over widespread opposition.

On Tuesday, the Teamsters announced a new separate contract covering 1,300 UPS aircraft machinists and related employees. The union is deliberately isolating these workers from more than a quarter million drivers and warehouse workers, and another 13,000 UPS Freight long-haul drivers.

While the UPS mechanics agreement has not been released, there is no doubt that it is a sellout like the two covering other UPS workers. The company released a statement hailing the deal for "providing enhanced flexibility, positioning UPS to meet customer needs, while also addressing competitor challenges." It includes annual wage raises of three percent, barely outpacing inflation. The aircraft mechanics have been working without a contract for five years, after their last agreement expired in 2013.

The Teamsters national conference voted last Thursday to endorse the UPS contract that would enforce poverty-level wages for part-time warehouse workers and create a new tier of lower-paid "hybrid" workers, who are paid \$6 per hour less than drivers and can perform the functions of both warehouse workers and delivery drivers. Since then, the union has maintained a virtual silence, providing no date for a contract vote, as part of a deliberate strategy to keep workers in the dark and wear down opposition.

There is growing support for the WSWs *UPS Workers Newsletter's* call for the election of rank-and-file committees in every warehouse and hub to coordinate opposition to this conspiracy and prepare for

a nationwide strike.

Daniel, a driver of over 20 years in Los Angeles, contacted the WSWs *UPS Workers Newsletter* yesterday for information on establishing a rank-and-file committee. He told us it was "ridiculous the profits the company is getting, and the union is trying to push this contract down our throat. I'm tired of it."

UPS' profits of more than \$7 billion last year would be enough to provide the global UPS workforce of over 400,000 people with a \$16,000 raise. Workers have reacted with outrage at the fact, exposed by the WSWs, that UPS paid out \$700 million in dividends to its shareholders the same day that the Teamsters formally supported the contracts.

"There's a long list of angry people," Daniel said. "They're going to use these new 'hybrid' workers for cheap labor." While Daniel is full-time, he denounced the conditions for part-time warehouse workers at UPS. "The young workers live with mum and dad and don't get a decent wage. It's like we're going backwards instead of forwards. My wife and I are both working, but it's so expensive to live in California. We have three kids."

Daniel said he believed rank-and-file committees should be established in the warehouses to express the will of workers in opposition to the union and management. "We should have the power to dictate our working conditions," he said. "We're working 12-hour days now. It used to be nine, maximum. We had a life outside of work."

"UPS minimizes the number of drivers because they don't want to pay more medical benefits, so they have us out there for 12 hours. Your body ends up giving out. UPS sets the pace, and the union says nothing

about it—doesn't argue that they can't work us like this. They just sit back and let the workers develop knee issues and have their body start breaking down."

"The Teamsters is like a business," he noted. "They're running it to profit off our backs, not to help us with our backs. I'm sick of it. I know the local officials are getting over \$100,000. They have three different positions and get three different checks. I pay \$90 a month in dues—imagine with all the other workers how much they are getting. They're not in the warehouses. They're sitting in their big houses. They don't know what we're going through."

Campaign teams for the WSWS UPS Workers Newsletter have spoken with hundreds of workers across the US. In Richmond, northern California, reporters spoke to Jamar, a 38-year-old warehouse worker who has been at UPS since 2003. He travels 90 minutes each way by public transport to his job, where he works for 30 hours a week to support his girlfriend and his 11-year-old daughter.

"There's nothing really in the contract that makes us feel like we're winning," he said. "They're just whipping dead horses. Everybody is saying, 'Vote no.'... The union knows we're not making that much money, but they want us to drive to Martinez [a 45-minute drive by car] to 'speak our mind,' and no one has time to drive that far."

Damien, a part-time warehouse worker with one year's experience earning \$13.60 per hour, said, "it seems like with every contract, they're doing something to attack benefits, especially with part-timers."

Yesterday, Teamsters officials of Local 89 in Louisville, Kentucky, which contains a large airhub facility employing over 9,000 workers, called for a rejection of the contract. The local's president is Fred Zuckerman, who is backed by the Teamsters for a Democratic Union, a dissident faction of the Teamsters that is calling for a "no" vote.

The TDU's call for a rejection of the contract is aimed at containing the growing anger among workers to the deal and preventing it from developing into opposition to the union, which functions as a cheap labor contractor. The TDU's statements call for workers to reject the contract to "send negotiators back" for a "better deal."

In other words, workers must continue to place their

faith in the very organization that has overseen the systematic slashing of their conditions for more than three decades. The TDU states explicitly that it is not calling for a strike. Its aim is to secure the highly-paid leadership positions of the union for themselves.

Among workers, there is widespread support for a nationwide strike and fight to unify their struggle with Amazon, USPS and other logistics workers.

Daniel, the driver in Los Angeles, said, "We should strike. We should all unite. We could shut down the whole country. We could stop the world. Those rich guys up there making the money would feel it. We put money in their pockets. We have the power, but we just have to get united and I guess get educated."

Daniel said that when he delivered in the downtown Los Angeles areas he sees "kids driving around in their vans and delivering Amazon boxes, making peanuts. They have no health care, nothing at all. It's sick. I'm so fed up and tired of it. And Jeff Bezos has billions of dollars. FedEx workers should get in a strike as well. They're even worse off than us. They don't even get the same benefits. That company is making money hand over fist because they give nothing to their employees."

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.



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