

“The union rammed all these things down our throats”

UPS prepares to impose contract after Teamsters defy workers ‘no’ vote

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It is now two weeks since the Teamsters defied the “no” vote by thousands of United Parcel Service workers who rejected the sellout contract backed by the union and management on October 5. The deal covers nearly 250,000 UPS drivers and warehouse workers across the US.

The Teamsters declared the contract ratified even though 54.7 percent of the workers rejected it. The union cited a never-before-used constitutional loophole, which requires a two-thirds vote to defeat a deal if less than half the workforce participated in the vote. The widely-recognized fact remains that the union is defying the stated will of the workers.

The Teamsters is attempting to suppress and diffuse opposition by keeping workers completely in the dark about what is taking place and lying about what the union is doing. In the warehouses, workers report that management is now already implementing terms of the illegitimate contract, which includes the creation of new “hybrid” driver/warehouse workers who are paid up to \$6 per hour less than current full-time drivers.

“We have a total lack of information,” Tim, a driver in Florida with 33 years, told us. “Somebody says the union signed the agreement, and other people say they didn’t. Our union reps came on Thursday to the hub. They don’t even talk to us because they know what they’d get. They went up to a few young part-time kids to try to get them to join the union. When we tell them we’re not happy, they offer us golfing tickets to shut us up.”

UPS released a statement reporting that it will meet with the Teamsters today, where it will discuss the contract for 12,000 UPS Freight workers. That contract was also rejected—by 62 percent—but the union was

unable to use the same rationale to ram it through because the turnout was more than 50 percent. The Teamsters has defied the overwhelming strike authorization by UPS Freight workers and says it is returning to the table to continue negotiations.

Leading Teamsters officials, including President Jimmy Hoffa (salary almost \$400,000), have celebrated the imposition of the contract with a trip to Singapore.

Tim noted that while “it has only been two weeks since the vote, the changes are starting already. I’ve been here three decades at this building, and in the last two weeks it feels like a different company.” Emboldened by the naked gangsterism of the union, the company “do what they feel like and think they’re in control of everything.”

While workers previously could pick up extra overtime, Tim said that “they won’t give me a minute of overtime now.” He said management has already begun training new drivers for the new “hybrid” positions at a nearby training school.

Workers in every hub are declaring they are canceling their dues payments to the Teamsters and will no longer pay for the privilege of being lied to, threatened and having their will openly overridden. In Tim’s hub, five workers withdrew from the union in the last week alone. “The members are pissed off,” he said. “If we lose \$20,000 a year, the union is going to be done. A lot of people are going to withdraw when they start losing that. They’ll save the \$75 a month we pay the union for gas money.”

Tim said he had been “a union guy for 30 years. But I didn’t buy into everything always. They told us this was the best contract ever, and it’s the worst. They rammed all these things down our throats.”

“Me and a group of other guys are pulling up information to discuss it,” he explained. “We’re not being represented by the union, but what’s next? We don’t really have the answer and that’s why I’ve been searching all over the internet.”

In order to contain mounting anger, the Teamsters is relying on its loyal opposition, Teamsters United (TU) and Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), to confine workers’ opposition to harmless appeals to Hoffa and signing petitions demanding that he “return to the table” to negotiate. In a meeting organized by *Labor Notes* on Tuesday, the TDU instructed workers that they cannot strike or carry out any other forms of industrial action, because it would not have the backing of the International—which is openly working with management to impose its sellout.

TU released a statement last week calling on the Teamsters to “return to the negotiating table,” and declaring that “UPSers are reasonable and know that negotiations won’t start over from scratch.” Warning that the union is confronting the possibility of a rebellion that could get out of its control, the statement appeals for the union to make cosmetic changes to “priority issues that caused the contract to be rejected.”

Among workers, however, there is widespread support for a struggle. Tim said that in the past 10 years, “I saw when Obama was president, the only people who got the breaks were the billionaires. Now Trump has come in and he gave the billionaires even more money. The middle class is disappearing, and we see these [Amazon CEO Jeff] Bezos guys getting astronomical amounts of money, but the workers are getting further and further in the hole. It’s time we fight back.”

Steve, a driver of more than 30 years in Nebraska, told us that the Teamsters “is a bunch of crooks. I was pissed like everyone else. The constitution rules that state that you need a two-thirds vote or 50 percent turnout is bologna. If we elected a president that way, whoever was the president would never lose.”

“Corporate America today has gotten so big and they buy the politicians,” he said. “They get everything they want. And we’re getting pushed down more and more.”

The *WSWS UPS Workers Newsletter* urges workers to establish their own rank-and-file workplace committees, independent of the Teamsters union, to

organize opposition to the illegitimate sellout contract and launch a struggle. We urge UPS workers who want to establish rank and file committees to contact us today.



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