

Teamsters forces UPS Freight workers to vote again on rejected sellout contract

Will Morrow
30 October 2018

The Teamsters sent a notice to almost 12,000 United Parcel Service (UPS) Freight division workers on October 25 announcing that it will force them to vote again on virtually the same sellout contract they rejected by more than 60 percent on October 5.

The announcement follows the union's defiance of the 54 percent "no" vote by UPS package warehouse and delivery workers, who rejected the union-backed national master contract covering over a quarter million employees. In that case, the union utilized a constitutional loophole, permitting it to impose any contract if less than half the workforce participates in the vote, unless a two-thirds majority votes it down. While the union claims that only 44 percent of UPS workers voted, many workers have reported having never receiving their electronic voting card.

Because the official turnout by workers in the UPS Freight division was 66 percent, the Teamsters has been unable to use this nakedly anti-democratic clause. It is instead seeking to force UPS Freight workers to vote again until they get it "right," threatening that the union will isolate them and not conduct any struggle for a better contract if they reject the deal another time. UPS Freight and UPS workers voted by 91 and 93 percent respectively to authorize a strike at the beginning of July.

The statement released by Teamsters National UPS Freight Negotiating Committee Co-Chairman Kris Taylor consists of a series of lies and threats against workers. It claims that Teamsters officials sought to address workers' principal concerns in negotiations with the company on October 22.

These include the company's widespread use of subcontractors, who are less costly for the company because most are forced to pay their own maintenance, medical insurance, gas and medical bills. The

agreement increases drivers' wages by 1.7 percent per year, less than the rate of inflation, meaning it is an effective wage cut.

The contract also surreptitiously creates a second-tier of lower-paid workers by creating a new top pay scale for "in-progression" workers, that is, those who have not yet reached the top pay scale. They will top out at the current rate, which will not increase over the life of the contract, which means they will be paid \$2.20 per hour less than current top-pay employees.

These attacks remain in the current contract. The union has withdrawn other attacks on workers that it had itself introduced into the tentative agreement, including an increase from 1,500 to 1,800 hours required before workers qualify for full-funded pensions.

Speaking on behalf of the company, Teamster official Taylor declared that UPS would not accept any fundamental changes to the agreement because there is "no more money to be had."

This incredible statement came just one day after UPS released its profit figures for the third quarter of 2018, showing a 20 percent year-on-year profit increase to \$1.5 billion. The company is on track for \$7 billion in profits this year. Revenue from the UPS Freight division has increased by more than 11 percent.

The statement by Taylor warns that this agreement is the "last, best and final offer," and claims if workers vote "no" there "will be a strike at a time and location(s) determined by the negotiating committee."

This is a threat against workers rather than a call to action. Any action overseen by the Teamsters executives would be aimed at isolating workers at individual facilities and starving them into submission with poverty level strike pay. Taylor made it clear the union would not call out warehouse and package

delivery workers. “It is important to note that any strike against UPS Freight is directed only at UPS Freight and not against UPS Parcel or any other UPS entity.”

Many workers have also suggested that the timing of the vote, occurring over Friday, Saturday and Sunday, November 9–11, with workers forced to vote in person at local union halls, rather than online or by mail-in ballot, is aimed at reducing the voter turnout. This would allow the union to utilize the same two-thirds clause to impose the agreement by fiat.

One UPS worker, Ivan, commented on Facebook, “Why can’t we vote online?” Another worker, Joe, replied: “The Teamsters are in bed with management. They think this will cause lower turnout.”

Randy, a driver of 20 years from Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “The Teamsters is profiting off this. That’s my opinion. I think they’re getting kickbacks. I don’t like it. It’s all about making the company profits. Nothing benefits the employee. It benefits the company. Every part of the contract is for them. That’s who the union works for.”

Randy began driving in 1998 for Overnight Transportation, which was purchased by UPS in 2006. He started driving in 1998 making \$13.25 an hour. “Now, there are part-time warehouse workers who make even less than that today,” he said. He also began getting vacation benefits after 90 days, whereas “now it is half a year.”

“My biggest issue is the outside contractors that the company brings in,” he said. “If they want to hire new drivers, they should hire them through UPS, and lower the four-year pay-scale progression down so they reach maximum pay quickly. I’m concerned about the new workers who will be starting out.” Randy previously was able to drive 6,000 miles a week, but his hours have been systematically cut down to around 4,800 miles.

Randy said that management has already begun threatening workers that unless they vote “yes,” the company could lock them out. This is in line with reports by UPS small-package workers, who reported managers demanding to know if they had voted on the contract, and openly calling for a “yes” vote.

The union’s open alignment with UPS management has emboldened supervisors and managers to step up their harassment of workers. On Tuesday, last week, these conditions had their tragic outcome, with the

death of a 43-year-old maintenance worker, Andy Schanding, who was killed while performing maintenance on a conveyor in Lexington, Kentucky.

The Teamsters’ actions make clear that it functions not to defend or protect the conditions of workers, but rather to isolate workers and suppress their demands and to boost profits for the corporations. Workers need new organizations, directly controlled by workers themselves, to organize a struggle.

The *WSWS UPS Workers Newsletter* urges UPS Freight workers to establish their own rank-and-file workplace committees, which would seek to overcome the isolation and sabotage of the Teamsters union by reaching out to UPS workers and UPS aircraft mechanics to prepare a national strike. This should be combined with a call for united action with Amazon, FedEx and all logistics workers.

We encourage workers who want to take forward such a fight to contact us today for more information.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact