

“The Teamsters union is with the company”

UPS workers oppose Teamsters isolation of freight division, call for united struggle

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The WSWS UPS Workers Newsletter is holding an online call-in meeting for UPS Freight and Parcel workers on Sunday, November 11, at 4pm Eastern (1pm Pacific). To register, click [here](#). To dial in by phone, call +1 (872) 240-3311, and enter access code: 723-872-717.

Workers at the United Parcel Service (UPS) Freight services division are continuing to denounce the despotic actions of the Teamsters union, which is seeking to impose the concessions contract that workers voted to reject a month ago.

More than 11,000 workers are being forced to vote this week on a virtually unchanged agreement, which would maintain widespread subcontracting, create a new tier of lower-paid drivers, and maintain poverty wages for warehouse dockworkers.

Workers say that the union is seeking to reduce the voter turnout to below 50 percent, which would allow it to use the same constitutional loophole that it used against a quarter of a million UPS small-package workers on October 5, defying their 54 percent “no” vote and ratifying the contract over mass opposition. A clause in the constitution states that if fewer than half the workers vote, a two-thirds majority is required to reject the contract.

In Chicago, Roger, a dockworker with nine months, told the *WSWS UPS Workers Newsletter* that only on one of the four scheduled days of voting will workers be allowed to cast ballots at the terminal. Otherwise, they will have to travel an hour away to the local union hall to vote. In Florida, Mark, a driver of 15 years, said that workers had received a letter from the Teamsters Local advising they can only vote on Sunday morning, November 11, at 10 a.m.

In Georgia, Jane, a driver of 20 years, reported that the

voting window will be 30 minutes each day, meaning many drivers will be unable to vote.

At the same time, the Teamsters union is blackmailing workers to vote “yes” by threatening that a “no” vote will result in a company lockout, that workers will lose their health care, and that the union will hang workers out to dry by refusing to mobilize any struggle against the company.

After the Teamsters announced on October 26 that it would force workers to vote a second time, it allowed more than two weeks for the company to remove all the freight from its system. “We could have voted last weekend,” Dan, a driver of 14 years in Florida, told the WSWS. “What the union did was allow UPS to clear the freight off the docks, so there wouldn’t be bad publicity about people’s freight being tied down by a strike, and so they would have more leverage to threaten us during the vote. If there was freight in the system, we would have the leverage. It’s all a game, and the Teamsters union is against us.”

The union is isolating the UPS Freight workers from their counterparts in the small package division, which employs approximately 20 times as many workers. In the event of a strike or a lockout by the company, the Teamsters union has made clear that it will force small package division workers to continue working and refuse to mobilize workers to broaden the struggle against the company. It is functioning as a professional scab organization whose role is to sabotage a struggle and attack workers’ conditions.

The Teamsters justifies the separation of UPS Freight from the small-package division with the absurd claim that they are “different companies.” In reality, every UPS financial report simply includes the profits of the Freight division as a sub-total in its accounting figures. UPS

acquired its Freight division, which covers larger-sized items, when it purchased Overnite Transportation in 2005.

“The Teamsters promised us at the beginning that the reason they negotiate our contracts at the same time as small-package was so that we would have more power,” Dan commented. “Now you see how package voted down by 54 percent and they stuck it to them and said: ‘You’re taking it.’ The workers there were unaware of that loophole. Who knew that if you don’t vote it counts as yes?”

“It could be 100 percent ‘no’ across the country for Freight, and the union is going to say it’s ‘yes,’ ” he added. “You think if the union sold out 250,000 employees that they wouldn’t with 11,000? The union has done nothing but hurt us. They steadily take our money. It’s disgusting. And it’s sad because a bunch of good men and women are caught between a scumbag company and a scumbag union.”

Dan commented that he grew up with the belief that “the more you work, the more you make.” But “the turmoil we’re living through now is that it’s not true anymore. I’m not afraid to work, but it doesn’t matter. All the money is going to these billionaires.”

Caleb, a 23-year-old small-package warehouse worker, contacted the WSWs to declare his support for a united struggle with freight division workers. “It’s ridiculous and divisive that the union says we are different from the freight workers,” he said. “I’m in a warehouse that handles everything. I’m right next to an airport. We have stuff that’s going to our air department. We have freight stuff and small package. A lot of the work we do is the same.”

Caleb said that in recent days the hub had received a lot of irregular packaging, including larger packages and plastic trunks, which typically are stacked on pallets and delivered through the Freight division. “There’s really no discussion about it because there’s no one to raise it to,” he said. “The union is never here. It’s crooked. They’ve used the loopholes and the voting structure here at small-package to push it through. To UPS Freight workers, I want to say that you’re not alone.”

“It is so blatantly obvious,” said Mark, another Florida driver with 15 years. “They’re saying we can’t strike the small-package facilities. The union allowed the company to get rid of the Freight and says we can’t strike any place else but empty buildings.”

He said that the union had told workers, “Vote for the contract, or you’ll be out of work.” “We pay the union every month,” he said. “We signed the card that says they

work in our interest. But since the beginning, they’ve been with the company against us. The union officials get \$174,000 to travel all around the country, do absolutely nothing, and prevent any sort of change.”

Roger, the Chicago dockworker, said that in the warehouse, workers “were just told to start loading everything and that we can’t leave no freight behind.” Since Monday, all the workers have been called off. “They called us and said ‘don’t come to work, we’re too light.’ ”

Roger said he approached a Teamsters Local 705 official to ask what the Teamsters union was proposing. “It was messed up,” he said. “I introduced myself and ask what we should do. He said, ‘You’re a dockworker so you’ll probably vote no.’ I asked: ‘Then what? Will we strike? What will you fight for?’ ” Roger told the official that “dockworkers are treated at the bottom of the bottom. He replied: ‘Didn’t you know that when you signed up for the job?’ ”

The *WSWS UPS Workers Newsletter* calls for UPS workers to reject the conspiracy of Teamsters and UPS management and to organize a struggle against it. A united fight must be waged by small-package and Freight workers to break the isolation imposed by the Teamsters. The small-package division contract has no legitimacy: The workers voted against it. They should consider it null and void.

The organization of a united struggle requires that workers form their own rank-and-file workplace committees in the hubs, independent of the Teamsters union and directly controlled by workers themselves.

We urge UPS workers who want to organize such a fight to contact us today.

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