

Break the isolation of UPS Freight workers! Form rank-and-file committees to unite workers against the company!

The WSWs UPS Workers Newsletter
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More than 11,000 United Parcel Service (UPS) Freight drivers and warehouse workers across the United States are due to conclude voting tomorrow on a concessions-filled contract backed by the Teamsters union and UPS management.

Workers already voted overwhelmingly to reject the contract on October 5. On October 26, the Teamsters announced that workers would be forced to vote on a virtually unchanged agreement. If approved, it would create a new tier of lower-paid drivers, maintain poverty-level wages of part-time warehouse dockworkers, and continue the undermining of full-time positions through the proliferation of subcontracting.

The vote is now taking place under conditions of blackmail and intimidation by the Teamsters.

Workers have reported voting practices by Teamsters locals aimed at reducing the turnout in the vote below 50 percent. Some are allowing only 30 minutes a day for workers to vote, excluding many drivers; others are holding votes only on Sunday morning; others are forcing workers to drive an hour to vote.

These crude measures are intended to allow the union to use the same constitutional loophole that it used to ram through the sellout contract on a quarter of a million small-package parcel workers, in defiance of a 54 percent “no” vote last month. The Teamsters constitution states that if less than half the workforce votes, a two-thirds majority is required to reject the union’s proposal.

After the Teamsters announced the vote on October 26, it sat by and allowed UPS to instruct workers over an entire week to clear all the freight from its system, and thus reduce workers’ leverage in the event of a

strike. Both management and union have openly threatened workers that a “no” vote could lead to a lockout.

Any organization that was in any way committed to defending workers would respond to such declarations by immediately preparing to expand the struggle by workers against the company. On the contrary, the Teamsters has already told workers that in the event of a lockout or a strike, it will isolate them by instructing the parcel workers at the same company to continue working.

A strike “would only be directed against UPS Freight, and not against UPS Parcel or any other UPS entity,” the Teamsters UPS Freight Negotiating Committee Co-Chairman Kris Taylor told workers on November 1. UPS parcel workers have reported receiving additional larger and irregular-sized packs in the last week, indicating that the company is processing freight through its parcel facilities.

To the threats by UPS management against workers, the Teamsters has added its own. It has refused to answer requests by workers as to whether their healthcare coverage would be maintained in the event of a strike or lockout by Teamcare, the healthcare fund jointly controlled by the Teamsters.

The union has stated that its sellout agreement is the company’s “last, best and final offer,” and declared, “There is nothing more to be had at the bargaining table at this point. The company says there is no more. Not a penny, not half a penny.”

The Teamsters takes workers for fools. Workers know that UPS just released its third quarter financial report, showing a 20 percent increase in profits to \$1.5 billion in just 90 days of operations. The freight

division alone recorded a profit of \$260 million, a more than 30 percent year-on-year increase, and approximately \$23,000 for every freight worker. And this does not include the \$3 billion that will be handed out by UPS in dividends to its billionaire Wall Street shareholders this year.

Certain basic conclusions that must be drawn from this situation. Workers cannot fight corporations as individuals. They know that they must be organized. The Teamsters, however, is not a working-class organization, but an arm of company management, controlled by a layer of wealthy business executives and tasked with dividing workers and preventing any struggle.

The first step for workers to fight is therefore to take the struggle into their own hands, by forming organizations that they directly and democratically control, independent of the Teamsters. The *WSWS UPS Workers Newsletter* urges workers to form rank-and-file workplace committees, composed entirely of workers themselves, in every hub, to give expression to the sentiments and will of workers and provide a forum for them to decide on how to organize their fight.

The first task of such committees would be to provide a means for breaking out of the isolation and division between freight and parcel workers. They would issue a direct appeal for a common struggle and preparations for a nationwide strike.

There is widespread support for such a struggle. In the month since the Teamsters rammed its sellout contract down the throats of parcel workers, the initial shock and outrage has only hardened. The new contract is illegitimate. The workers voted it down. It should therefore be considered null and void. UPS Freight workers should likewise vote “no” to this rotten deal that they have already rejected.

Workers know that they possess immense power. They are approaching the peak delivery season, the most critical period for the profits of UPS. This is why the Teamsters and management are so determined to ensure that no united action takes place.

As for the Teamsters United and the Teamsters for a Democratic Union, these supposedly “militant” factions of the Teamsters apparatus are no less terrified of any struggle by workers. The TDU website has posted nothing at all about the situation confronting freight workers.

The Teamsters United’s Sean O’Brien (salary \$300,000) and Fred Zuckerman released a statement on Facebook calling for a “no” vote, but claimed that “there’s still a chance to make [Teamsters president] Hoffa work for the members. A NO vote would force the company and the union back to the table.”

Every action by the Teamsters demonstrates that it is utterly impervious to the wishes of the membership—and yet only increases the TU’s insistence that workers appeal again and again to the Hoffa leadership. Both factions of the Teamsters are terrified that workers will break out of their control and organize themselves.

The *WSWS UPS Workers Newsletter* will provide every assistance to workers who want to take forward a fight and encourages them to contact us today.



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