

After campaign of threats and intimidation, Teamsters announces “yes” vote on sellout UPS Freight contract

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In a conference call last night, the Teamsters announced that its concessions contract covering 11,600 UPS Freight workers was approved by 77 percent.

Far from being an endorsement of the sellout agreement, the vote—to the extent that the figures reported by the union are accurate—is the outcome of a campaign of blackmail, intimidation and threats by the Teamsters and UPS management against workers. It is a declaration of no confidence in the Teamsters by workers, who know that the union would not wage any struggle for their interests.

Workers had rejected virtually the same agreement on October 5 by a margin of 62 percent. The union and company then implemented a strategy to force workers to vote again and to vote “correctly.”

As workers were voting last week, UPS publicly ordered all freight to be cleared from its systems, threatening workers with a lockout in the event of a “no” vote. Workers concluded voting on the weekend with all the warehouses empty and trailers moved away.

While facilitating this action, the Teamsters declared that it would do nothing to expand the struggle against UPS in the event of a lockout, and that it would instruct the much larger UPS Parcel division, which employs a quarter of a million employees, to continue working throughout a strike. The UPS small-package workers voted “no” by 54 percent to another sellout agreement on October 5, but the Teamsters defied the vote and rammed through the contract with the use of a constitutional loophole, thus allowing the union to isolate the freight workers.

The Teamsters also threatened workers that they

could lose their healthcare benefits in the event of a strike, even though the fund they are covered by, TeamCare, is jointly controlled by the union itself. It declared that the company’s offer was “last, best and final,” and told workers there was “no more money to be had” from UPS, which reported a record third-quarter profit of \$1.5 billion this month.

“This is a shit show,” a driver in South Carolina told the WSWWS on Sunday night, immediately after the vote was announced. “Have you ever seen a union and a company go after a ‘yes’ vote together so hard? They forced a ‘yes.’ They scared everyone. There were things the union could have done to stop UPS from clearing the freight from their system. They chose not to do it. I’m done with the union.”

The driver added, “I think really they’re restructuring the company, and a few months down the road we will find out something we don’t know.”

Another worker commented before the vote was announced, “We’ve been voting where they said this is the ‘last, best and final’ contract. If we don’t accept it, they’re going to shut it down. Everyone’s scared of losing their job and everything they’ve worked for.”

Speaking like a Mafioso don in last night’s call—during which workers were not permitted to speak or ask questions—the Teamsters’ Freight Negotiating Committee Co-Chairman Kris Taylor made clear that the “yes” vote would be a green light to UPS to step up its attacks against workers, and that the union would do nothing to oppose it.

As a result of its provocative actions in refusing to take on any new freight last week, Taylor said that UPS may have lost customers over the past week, and that workers may lose their jobs. “Members who are not

called back should file for unemployment compensation just like any layoff,” he said. “It’s my understanding that the other union freight companies are hiring. Members who are not recalled this week should submit applications there, because they’re looking for workers.”

“The next few weeks and months will require professionalism and cooperation to get things back up and running,” Taylor intoned. He instructed workers to “contact the company and let them know you’re ready, willing and able to return to your jobs.”

Under the contract, warehouse dockworkers earning as little as \$10 an hour will remain on poverty-level wages. Future and in-progression drivers will be on a permanently lower top pay scale, and nothing will be done to reduce the company’s expansion of the use of subcontractors to erode full-time driving positions.

The Teamsters for a Democratic Union and Teamsters United, which present themselves as a more “militant” wing of the Teamsters apparatus, played a key role in carrying out the union’s isolation and threatening of UPS Freight workers.

Over the past two weeks, their websites did not publish a single statement opposing the union’s actions against freight workers or any call to unite UPS Freight and Parcel workers in a common struggle. The TDU has spent the past month instructing parcel division workers that they cannot organize any strike action against the illegitimate contract because it would not have the “backing of the International,” which openly sided with the company.

Within minutes of last night’s vote announcement, however, the TDU released a pre-written statement declaring that UPS Freight workers are “stuck with another five-year deal.” It declares that “sold out Teamsters are moving from ‘vote no’ to ‘vote them out,’”—i.e., for the election of TDU members to the leadership of the Teamsters. The TDU’s sole concern is to keep workers straitjacketed to the corrupt union apparatus while securing a greater share of the leading and highly paid executive positions in the union for itself.

Among UPS workers, however, there is widespread support for a struggle. A UPS small parcel worker from Local 705 in Chicago, Illinois, told the WSWS last night prior to the vote, “There’s a lot of so-called ‘progressive’ leaders in the Teamsters. They say a

wildcat would get you fired and a sick-in will get you fired. They won’t let you do anything. They say the union would get sued and would go bankrupt. But I think we’re ready for some kind of wildcat.”

Conor, a FedEx worker, told the WSWS last night, “We do see what is happening at UPS. The behavior of the Teamsters is almost synonymous with the shift union boss stealing out of your back pocket... We don’t trust the Teamsters. We don’t want to have to pay union dues for the privilege of being betrayed.”

He said that if UPS workers issued a direct appeal for a common struggle with FedEx workers, “I think it would win an immense response. Many people are interested in organized struggle...”

To carry out a struggle, workers must take the initiative. The *WSWS UPS Workers Newsletter* urges workers to form rank-and-file workplace committees in every hub, independent of the Teamsters and democratically controlled and run by workers themselves, to coordinate and organize opposition to the Teamsters’ illegitimate contracts, obtained through blackmail and outright fraud.

We urge UPS workers who want to take up this fight to contact us today.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact