

Teamsters union releases new sellout contracts for 15,000 Midwest UPS workers

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Two months after the Teamsters union imposed a concessions-filled contract on a quarter of a million United Parcel Service (UPS) workers across the US, the Teamsters Locals 705 and 710—which cover thousands of UPS employees who work under a separate contract—are seeking to impose a virtually indistinguishable sellout.

In October, the Teamsters utilized an anti-democratic constitutional loophole to despotically override a 54 percent “no” vote by tens of thousands of UPS drivers and warehouse employees. It then imposed a separate sellout contract on 12,000 UPS Freight workers, forcing them to vote again on an agreement they had already rejected and threatening that they would be locked out and lose their healthcare if they resisted the pro-company deal.

Local 705 covers workers in Chicago, Illinois, including more than 9,000 workers at the large Chicago Area Consolidation Hub (CACH). Local 710 covers more than 6,000 UPS workers in Indiana, Illinois and Iowa. Both have maintained separate contracts from the national master agreement since the 1960s. The Teamsters released the local agreements last week, and workers are due to conclude voting on January 11 for Local 710, and January 26, 2019 for Local 705.

Both include all of the fundamental attacks on workers’ wages and conditions contained in the national agreement. These include the creation of a new “hybrid” driver/warehouse employee, who will be paid less than existing drivers, and will be used as a first step for extending the conditions of part-time work from the warehouses to the delivery drivers. Wages for new part-time workers will also be set at the poverty level of \$13 per hour.

If passed, these agreements will permanently lower the wages and conditions of tens of thousands of

current and future UPS drivers and warehouse workers, and further boost UPS profits, which are on track to reach \$7 billion this year.

The sellouts are all the more significant because of the central role played by the Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), a rival faction of the Teamsters apparatus, that has presented itself as a militant alternative to the nakedly pro-company leadership of president James Hoffa. David Bernt, a member of the TDU’s national steering committee, is on the negotiating committee for Local 705 and has been a vocal proponent of the agreement. TDU member Daniel Ginsberg-Jaeckle was also involved in the negotiations and has defended the contract.

In the wake of the union’s defiance of the workers’ national vote, Bernt and other TDU members claimed that Local 705 would reject any similar concessions. The TDU was promoted by the publication *Labor Notes*, which published an article on October 12 by its editor, Alexandra Bradbury, entitled, “Chicago Teamsters Mull Strike at UPS.” It peddled all the TDU’s bogus promises and insisted that the union was considering launching a strike against UPS during peak season, the most profitable period of the year stretching from late November through early January.

The article quoted TDU and negotiating committee member Bernt stating that the Teamsters were “not going to put up with this \$13 crap” for part-time workers—the very wage scale included in the proposed agreement. It added that “two-tier won’t fly,” and quoted Bernt stating that the Teamsters is “not interested” in the creation of lower-paid “hybrid” positions, which have also been included.

As for the claim that the Teamsters was considering strike action during peak season, it instead forced workers to remain on the job for six months after the

contract expired, ensuring there would be no interruption for the company throughout its most profitable period.

In an attempt to divert widespread anger over its sellout, the Local 705 agreement provides a \$15 wage—itself a poverty-level wage that is already being paid to Amazon workers—to part-time workers who already have seniority, \$2 more per hour than new hires. This effectively creates a new two-tier system within the part-time workforce and puts a target on the back of all existing part-time workers, whom management will seek to force out or lay off in order to further slash costs. The contract also states that all “general wage increases will not be applied until August 1, 2021,” an effective three-year wage freeze.

Workers responded to the latest sellout agreements with outrage. “Everyone should vote ‘no’ on this contract,” Ben, a part-time warehouse worker with nearly 4 years at the CACH facility, told the *WSWS UPS Workers Newsletter*. “They absolutely screwed every part-timer. In the old contract, I would have had a dollar raise a year for three years and I would have gotten to \$16. Now I get to \$15 a year at the end of 2021.”

The worker added that the \$15 being offered to part-timers with seniority was itself “almost impossible to live on” in Chicago, “even if you had a full-time job. The company makes it impossible to advance unless you’re a supervisor, who just got a raise to \$18 an hour starting. For the newly hired workers who make \$13 an hour, it’s not worth the cost to your body over time.”

“The issue is the lack of full time jobs more than anything,” he added. “People have waited 20 years to get a full-time job at UPS... The union doesn’t have my interest at all. It completely screws me.”

After the TDU’s Ginsberg-Jaeckle posted a Facebook comment defending the agreement, another UPS worker commented, “I remember the video [where] the principle officer [Secretary-Treasurer Juan Campos] said he would not accept any contract with 22.4 [‘hybrid’ drivers]... it looks like he sold out the membership on those issues.” The worker added that Campos and the Local union had threatened to “strike at peak... now he turns around and presents a contract that is the same as the national master. You can’t bad mouth the master and then claim the 705 contract is a big victory.”

The TDU’s actions demonstrate that it has no fundamental disagreements with the Hoffa leadership. Wherever it has the opportunity in power, it works to impose no less savage attacks on the workers’ conditions to boost company profits. It seeks a greater share for its own leaders of the highly-paid positions on the Teamsters executive and control over the billion-dollar worker healthcare fund. That is why it is instructing workers to vote for TDU members to the leadership of the union in 2021.

The central concern of all factions of the Teamsters apparatus is that workers will break from this corrupt and pro-corporate organization and establish their own independent organizations of struggle. The *WSWS UPS Workers Newsletter* urges UPS workers to take this path by forming their own rank-and-file workplace committees, independent of the Teamsters and democratically controlled by and for workers themselves, to organize a fight against the UPS-Teamsters sellout contracts and for large wage rises, and decent working conditions. These committees would reach out to link up with UPS and other workers across the US and internationally.

We urge UPS workers who want more information about building rank-and-file workplace committees to contact us today.



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