

# Vote “no” on the sellout agreement at Hunts Point! Form rank-and-file committees to expand the strike!

Statement of the Socialist Equality Party  
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The Teamsters union is moving to shut down the strike of 1,400 Hunts Point produce market workers in the Bronx. Teamsters Local 202 has called a mass meeting for Sunday morning, likely to carry out a snap vote to end the strike. Local 202 President Danny Kane announced a tentative agreement late Friday night.

The Teamsters has not released any information to the membership on the terms of any deal. However, by all indications it will propose that workers accept less than the meager dollar-an-hour wage increase at the center of the strike and seek to force workers to return to work.

The Socialist Equality Party calls on Hunts Point workers to vote “no.” We urge workers to reject any attempt to halt the strike prematurely just as it is winning mass support from the working class in New York City.

On Thursday, Kane effectively dropped the call for a dollar more an hour when he told workers, “Please believe me, it’s more important than a little nickel here or a nickel there, it’s what you did.” Yesterday, the local distributed a leaflet to strikers telling them. “If these current negotiations bear fruit, and the results are reasonable, we intend to hold a Ratification Vote.”

The fact that the Teamsters are forcing a snap vote, before workers have had the time to study the full proposal, can only mean that the deal being worked out with management is a sellout.

Workers must stop this betrayal by forming a rank-and-file strike committee, elected democratically by workers themselves, to take the conduct of the strike and negotiations out of the hands of the Teamsters and fight for the expansion of the struggle throughout the city and beyond.

Workers should demand a 40 percent wage increase to make up for more than a decade of falling real wages, along with fully funded health care benefits and immediate vaccinations.

Workers are fighting for more than just the wage increase. The strike reflects mass anger over the homicidal response of the ruling class to the pandemic, which has resulted in the death of more than 400,000 people in the US. As a direct consequence of the effort to reopen workplaces and schools, the virus is once again raging out of control.

As many as 400 Hunts Point workers have been infected by COVID-19 to date, and six have died. Workers continue to struggle with poverty-level wages, while no expense has been spared to inflate the stock market and rescue the fortunes of the corporate and financial elite.

Conditions are extremely favorable to develop the strike into a broader struggle, involving teachers, transit workers and other sections of the working class in New York and beyond to fight back against inequality, poverty and the spread of the pandemic.

Workers are eagerly supporting the strike. Hundreds of ordinary workers have visited the picket lines, and thousands of others have expressed their support on social media. They rightly see it as the beginning of an offensive against the ruling class which has gained so much from the misery imposed on millions of people.

As one social worker told the *World Socialist Web Site*: “Myself and other social workers definitely support the Hunts Point Market Strike! It’s important especially during these times that people stick together and not accept less than what they deserve! I’m sure the workers at Hunts Point are overworked and have

families that depend on them. Without the employees at Hunts Point Market a lot wouldn't be possible! It's also unfair that businesses get these loans and grants and do not provide an increase in wages for employees."

The importance of the strike's location, in New York City, is not lost on workers. Only miles away from the picket line, Wall Street has spent the last ten months feasting on mass death, in the form of the biggest rise in share values in history. US billionaires alone accrued more than \$1 trillion in new wealth last year. Meanwhile, over one million New Yorkers have lost their jobs and over 26,000 people have died, including six at Hunts Point.

The potential for a broader united struggle is precisely why the Teamsters is seeking to end the strike. Indeed, the Teamsters has sought to isolate the struggle as much as possible. It has not even called out the entire workforce at Hunts Point. It has made no effort to mobilize hundreds of thousands of UPS workers and other Teamsters members, whom they have done nothing to defend throughout the entire pandemic. Moreover, it sought to starve out the striking workers by not providing any strike pay.

The Teamsters, controlled by wealthy bureaucrats, does not represent the interests of the workers but of the employers.

The trade union executives are trying to strangle the strike because they fear it can become a catalyst for a broader movement of the working class, which would quickly develop into a direct conflict not only with New York Mayor de Blasio and Governor Cuomo but the incoming Biden administration.

That is why they have brought a parade of Democrats, including Congresswoman and Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) member Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, to the picket lines.

These photo-ops were designed to cover up the fact that the Democrats, no less than Republicans, defend American capitalism and are opposed to any measures to halt the pandemic which impinge upon profits.

Indeed, it is the Democratic Party which is the chief author of the social catastrophe in New York during the pandemic. Their real attitude towards the strike was exposed earlier in the week when Mayor Bill De Blasio sent riot cops against striking workers.

The first task of a rank-and-file strike committee will

be to spread the strike to workers at other Hunts Points markets, including the meat market and the fish market.

They must also send out delegates to every section of the working class in the city, including educators and other city workers, transit workers, UPS workers and Amazon workers for coordinated strike action and a set of demands that answer the needs of all workers.

We propose that workers adopt the following demands:

- Living wages and genuine protection for all essential workers. Not \$1 an hour, but a 40 percent wage increase for all workers. Conditions in every essential workplace must be overseen by a rank-and-file committee, that, working with health care professionals, has the ability to shut down operations if they are not safe.

- The immediate shutdown of all non-essential production, along with schools and universities. Emergency action must be taken now to stop the spread of the deadly virus until a vaccine is available and the virus is brought completely under control.

- Full income for workers until production reopens, to be paid for through the expropriation of the wealth of the capitalist oligarchs who have profited amidst mass death and social misery.

The Socialist Equality Party and the *World Socialist Web Site* will render every assistance possible to help workers communicate with each other and set up an independent rank-and-file strike committee. There already exists an Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee in the city, which is mobilizing teachers, school bus workers, and custodians against the unsafe reopening of schools.

The most basic principle of this fight is that the measures needed to address the immense public health, economic and social crisis must be based, not on what the billionaires and corporate-controlled politicians claim they can afford, but on what is necessary for workers and society as a whole, not the profits of the rich.

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