

King Soopers workers: Reject the sellout contract! Demand the restart of your strike! For democratic control by the rank and file, not union bureaucrats!

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24 January 2022

Are you a King Soopers worker? Contact the World Socialist Web Site today to discuss your reaction to the shutdown of the strike and the way forward for grocery workers.

The *World Socialist Web Site* calls on King Soopers workers in Colorado to reject the tentative agreement pushed by the United Food and Commercial Workers in voting meetings today. The strike must be immediately re-started, after the UFCW abruptly canceled it after 10 days without giving you the chance to even see the contract which you are now being made to vote on. You must form a rank-and-file committee to fight for the principle that workers themselves must decide how their struggle is conducted not privileged union bureaucrats!

The flagrantly undemocratic methods through which the UFCW is carrying out the ratification vote can only mean that the contract is a sellout. Not only are you being made to vote on the contract after the union shut down the strike and without any chance to review or discuss the full contract, the union is imposing arbitrary burdens on workers by holding the ratification meetings 30 miles away from Denver near the airport. It is also forcing those who have already returned to work to request time off from management, opening them up to the possibility of harassment.

Shortly before the deal was announced, management obtained an injunction against picketing at stores. According to press reports, the union and the company remained far apart in negotiations. How could any deal have been reached so quickly under those conditions unless the union agreed to virtually every one of

management's demands?

On principle, any contract being put to a vote under such circumstances should be rejected. You must demand copies of the full contract and at least a full week to study and discuss it with your coworkers before a vote.

King Soopers workers confront the parent company Kroger from a position of immense strength, not weakness. Before it was canceled, the strike was having a serious impact. Shelves at stores remained empty as the company was unable to hire enough strikebreakers to maintain operations, and, even more significantly, workers across the whole city refused to cross the picket lines by shopping at other stores.

Moreover, you have at your backs a growing movement of the working class across the country and even the world against poverty, inequality and the sacrificing of human lives in the pandemic for the sake of profit. Indeed, the same day that the UFCW called off your strike, high school students across Denver became the latest to walk out of classes to demand the shutdown of schools and a return to online learning. They know that the drive to reopen schools, one of the main centers of transmission for COVID-19, is being dictated solely by the desire to get their parents back to work producing revenue for major corporations.

The UFCW, to put it bluntly, called off the strike not because it was isolated but because its attempts to isolate and weaken the strike had manifestly failed. It kept King Soopers workers at Colorado Springs on the job with no explanation, even though they also voted almost unanimously in favor of strike action. The union

also extended the contract at Safeway, which was due to expire shortly after yours, and many Safeway workers have been forced to pull 14-hour shifts in order to keep pace with increased demand from shoppers refusing to cross your picket line. Finally, the union limited the strike in advance to three weeks, giving management advance notice of how long they would need to hold out.

The UFCW and the official unions long ago ceased to be workers' organizations and are now little more than a bureaucratic police force over workers which helps companies drive down wages by enforcing sellouts. Even as union membership has fallen, union assets have ballooned; the UFCW has more than \$1 billion in assets, which it uses not to organize struggles but to finance a small army of officials making six-figure salaries, such as Local 7 President Kim Cordova, who makes more than \$200,000 per year.

This is why the unions respond to popular pressure by betraying workers even more shamelessly and openly. Over the last year, the United Auto Workers shut down strikes at Volvo Trucks and John Deere, forcing workers to vote again on the same contracts which they previously voted down by wide margins. The Chicago Teachers Union, whose playbook the UFCW is following at King Soopers, shut down a job action earlier this month against in-person learning by forcing teachers to vote on a new deal with the city's Democratic mayor, after the union had already sent them back into the classrooms.

During the pandemic, the UFCW has helped keep workers in the food supply chain on the job in spite of major outbreaks. UFCW Local 7 has not lifted a finger to shut down production at the JBS beef plant in Greeley, forcing workers to launch a wildcat strike after six of their coworkers died of COVID-19 in the opening months of the pandemic.

In Waterloo, Iowa, the UFCW local even colluded with Tyson management at a pork plant to implement perfect attendance bonuses during the initial surge, even as management was privately taking bets on how many workers would become infected. At Kroger, the union has also called off strikes or forced workers to stay on the job without a contract in Houston, Arkansas and elsewhere.

You have a chance to stand at the lead of a massive counter-offensive by the working class, to inspire the

mobilization of millions of working people everywhere. Workers must form rank-and-file committees, composed of democratically elected and accountable leaders who will take up the fight to continue, expand and win this strike.

A "No" vote against this contract would just be the beginning. The 10-day strike must be immediately re-started with no end date set in advance. Meanwhile, delegates from the committee must appeal for support and joint actions with all workers, including your coworkers in Colorado Springs, at Safeway and JBS, as well as teachers and workers in every industry. Teachers, warehouse workers and autoworkers across the country are already building such committees of their own to organize independently of the union bureaucracy.

You should formulate and fight for your own demands and establish an unconditional "red line" without which you will not accept any contract. We propose that these demands include the following:

- A \$20 an hour starting wage.
- The permanent elimination of the tier system.
- The implementation of an automatic Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA).
- The provision of high-quality masks, regular COVID-19 testing and pay for workers who have contracted coronavirus. To ensure these measures are not undermined, workers themselves must have oversight at each workplace, including having the authority to collectively decide to shut down locations when necessary.
- The rejection of any "no strike" clause in the new contract.

Contact the WSWS to learn more about how we can help you form rank-and-file committees in your workplace. Place the struggle of the working class back in your own hands. Fight to expand the strike! Fight to build rank-and-file committees!



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact