

Democratic House Speaker Pelosi to rail workers: Accept a pro-company deal or we'll force you to

WSWS Railworker Newsletter
16 September 2022

Railroad workers: Tell us what you think about the White House deal. Contact us by filling out the form at the bottom of this page. All submissions will be kept anonymous. Contact the Rail Workers Rank-and-File Committee at railwrfc@gmail.com.

Among those praising the tentative rail agreement, worked out in the middle of the night between Wednesday and Thursday, is House Democratic Speaker Nancy Pelosi. In a statement issued yesterday, Pelosi heaped praise on the Biden administration and “the representatives of the labor unions who wouldn’t leave the table without achieving justice for their workers.”

What “their workers” think of the “justice” that has been achieved at the table with Biden and Labor Secretary Marty Walsh is evident in the outpouring of anger at the deal worked out behind their backs.

Pelosi, with a net worth of \$135 million, is one of the richest individuals in a Congress composed largely of millionaires. When Pelosi declares that the agreement is “good for our economy,” she really means it is good for Wall Street. When she adds that it is good “for our security,” she means that blocking a strike of railroad workers is a necessary part of American war planning.

After her words about “justice for workers,” Pelosi proceeded to threaten workers that if they don’t accept this “justice,” then other measures will be necessary.

In her statement, Pelosi acknowledged that the Democrats would have sided with the carriers and barred any strike:

With hope for an agreement but concern for the challenges that a strike would present,

Congress stood ready to take action. Congress under the Commerce Clause of the Constitution has the authority and responsibility to ensure the uninterrupted operation of essential transportation services and has in the past enacted legislation for such purposes. Led by the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, the House prepared and had reviewed legislation, so that we would be ready to act, pursuant to Section 10 of the Railway Labor Act.

That is, Pelosi and the entire political establishment (Democrats and Republicans alike) stood ready to bar a strike and force through an agreement that workers rejected.

Lest anyone think that this threat applies only to the past, Pelosi added: “Thankfully this action *may not be necessary*. We congratulate the unions and railroads for coming to an agreement, because it is in the national interest that essential transportation services be maintained” (emphasis added).

The implications are clear enough. Accept this “justice,” Pelosi is declaring to workers, or else we’ll force you to.

Rank-and-file rail workers had their own say the day before Pelosi’s remarks. At a mass meeting held Wednesday night by the Railroad Workers Rank-and-File Committee, workers voted by 98 percent to endorse a resolution that stated:

1. We will not accept any act by Congress that

violates our democratic right to strike and imposes upon us a contract that we do not accept and has not been ratified by the rank and file.

2. We demand a contract that addresses our needs, including a major pay increase to make up for years of declining wages; cost-of-living adjustments to meet soaring inflation; an end to brutal attendance policies; guaranteed time off and sick days; and an end to the push for one-man crews.

3. We inform the unions that any attempt to force through contracts that we do not accept and that have not been voted on, or to keep us working without a contract, will be in violation of clear instructions given by the rank and file.

The unions, the Biden administration, Congress may have blocked a strike from happening this morning, but the conflict between the workers and the whole corporate-union-political establishment is only in its initial stages.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact