

Rank-and-file workers resolution: Congressional imposition of railroad contract is “completely illegitimate”

The Railroad Workers Rank-and-File Committee
1 December 2022

On Wednesday evening, the Railroad Workers Rank-and-File Committee (RWRFC) and representatives of rank-and-file workers in other industries met to discuss their response to moves by Congress to force through contracts that workers have rejected. After extensive discussion, the meeting unanimously adopted the resolution below.

To join the Railroad Workers Rank-and-File Committee, email railwrfc@gmail.com or text (314) 529-1064.

This representative meeting of rank-and-file workers, with delegates from the railroads, auto plants, West Coast docks, graduate students and others, resolves:

1. We declare Congress’ move to impose a contract on railroaders that they rejected to be completely illegitimate. It is an attack on the democratic and Constitutional rights, including the right to strike and the right to participate in a meaningful contract vote, not only of railroaders, but of the entire working class. If it succeeds, it will set a precedent that will be used against other sections of workers in the future.

2. As representatives of rank-and-file rail workers, we declare that, as far as we are concerned, there is no contract, whether Congress passes legislation or not. Congress, one of the most hated institutions in America, has no right to override the democratic rights of workers. If the apparatus of the unions signs these agreements, they do so in violation of the express will of the rank-and-file. Therefore, railroad workers reserve the right to organize and prepare collective action.

3. The union bureaucracy bears responsibility for this situation because it repeatedly violated clear instructions by the rank-and-file and sabotaged their struggle. The rail unions worked with Biden and the

carriers to try and ram through the contract that workers rejected. Instead of lifting a finger against the danger of congressional intervention, they used it to try to convince workers to approve the deal. Meanwhile, the contract votes and strike deadlines were delayed for weeks, without consulting workers, strengthening Congress’ hand and giving them time to prepare anti-strike legislation.

4. Biden and Congress cynically claim that an injunction is needed to spare “working people” from shortages. But working people don’t support an injunction; they support the railroaders. They want to join with them in a common fight for decent wages and working conditions. This is what Congress really fears.

5. The issues that railroaders face are common to all workers. They include brutal scheduling and overwork, understaffing, and a decline in real wages due to skyrocketing inflation and rising cost of living. But on the basis of massive exploitation, the railroads and all of the major corporations are making record profits.

6. The support of the working class, combined with their central role in the US and world economy, gives railroaders enormous power. The fact that Congress was compelled to rapidly intervene to try and block a strike is a sign of weakness and fear on the part of the corporate oligarchy. But their advantage is that they are aware of this weakness, and have responded with a coordinated, well-organized campaign against railroaders.

7. The representatives of rank-and-file workers outside the rail industry pledge to use all means available to us to mobilize our coworkers to defend railroaders. Experience has proven that this is a battle that can only be won through the independent

organization of workers themselves, outside of the control of the corrupt union apparatus. We cannot let railroaders fight Congress and corporate America on their own.

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