Who is Teamsters bureaucrat Lindsay Dougherty, head of the union's Motion Picture and Theatrical Trade Division?

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As the Writers Guild of America strike continues into its third week, Lindsay Dougherty, secretary-treasurer of Teamsters Hollywood Local 399 and director of the Teamsters' Motion Picture and Theatrical Trade Division, has become an overnight sensation in the corporate media. A recent *Los Angeles Times* profile described her as "The writers' strike's top ally: an F-bomb-throwing Teamster with a Jimmy Hoffa tattoo."

The promotion of Dougherty is a media operation, aimed at falsely promoting her and other union bureaucrats as militant workers' leaders in order to rein in a rank-and-file challenge from below.

In the immediate sense, the aim of this campaign is to enforce a separation between Teamsters working in the entertainment industry from the striking writers. But the Teamsters bureaucracy, which has the highest political and state connections, is emerging as a critical prop for enforcing "labor peace" across the US. General President Sean O'Brien, elected in 2021 on the lowest turnout in the history of direct elections in the union, is being promoted as a militant fighter. Dougherty herself was elected Western Region Vice President on O'Brien's Teamsters United slate.

Teamsters United, in turn, was also endorsed by the Teamsters for a Democratic Union faction as well as the Democratic Socialists of America, who voted last December in Congress to ban a strike by railroad workers. The DSA has launched a nationwide "strike ready" campaign at UPS, where talks are ongoing for a contract covering 340,000 workers, aimed at bolstering the credibility of the O'Brien administration and the Democratic Party.

The promotion of O'Brien, a former close ally of the previous president James Hoffa Jr, is a facelift of the apparatus. Last year, O'Brien played a key role in coordinating with the White House to delay a rail strike in order to buy Congress time to pass an anti-strike law. He has pledged to strike at UPS if a new deal is not in place by July 31, in response to rank-and-file anger over the 2018 contract, which was imposed by the bureaucracy over a majority "no" vote by the membership. But the Teamsters are already violating their own negotiating pledges in a clear sign that they are determined to get a deal done before their self-imposed deadline.

The main basis for the promotion of Dougherty, aside from her gender, is her role in supposedly ensuring that Teamsters members honor the WGA picket lines. "If we all want to get what's ours, we are going to have to fight for it tooth and nail," the *Times* quoted Dougherty as telling WGA members earlier this month. "If you throw up a picket line, those f— trucks will stop, I promise you."

In reality, Dougherty and the Teamsters have set up loopholes big enough to literally drive a truck through. They are instructing their members to work if they work from home or do not encounter an actual physical picket on the way into work. Accounts have circulated on social media of Teamsters truck drivers arriving early in the morning or late at night in order to avoid physical pickets. Teamsters members are also banned from actually participating in the writers' picket lines, even during their off hours, on the grounds that their own contract contains a "no strike clause."

Dougherty is a career official in the Teamsters union. The amount of money she makes in this position places her in a different social class from the workers she claims to represent. In 2022, she made a total salary of

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$262,048, according to Department of Labor filings. She has been a full-time official for the Teamsters since becoming a business agent in 2014, when she made over $150,000. Her appointment by O'Brien last year to head the union's Motion Picture and Theatrical Trade Division added an additional $32,884 to her take-home pay.

All told, she collected nearly $1.7 million in salary drawn from workers' dues money between 2014 and 2022.

She has been involved with the union as early as her childhood, walking on the sets of films with her father when she was as young as 12. Her father, Pat Dougherty, was a former business agent and secretary-treasurer in Local 337 in Detroit, and retired with a gross salary of $106,695 in 2016. Lindsay Dougherty joined the Teamsters union in 2004, moving to Los Angeles in 2006 where she joined Local 399 after college.

In the same *LA Times* article, Lindsay Dougherty boasted that their family benefited from union-provided health insurance. "I was always under Blue Cross, like a great Cadillac healthcare plan, because of the Teamsters," Dougherty said. "I noticed the difference in even my friends, how my father being in the union made that difference." But the Teamsters bureaucracy has a history of blackmailing members into accepting a sellout contract by threatening them with the loss of their health insurance if they vote "no," as they did for UPS Freight workers in 2018.

In 2021, Dougherty was the lead negotiator for Local 399 with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP). That contract contained a pathetic 3 percent annual wage increase, well below inflation, that was praised as a "victory" by the *LA Times* in an earlier interview with Dougherty in 2022.

Dougherty also has helped oversee a revolving door between union officials and management. Recently, Local 399 hired Kay Kimmel, former senior counsel for Netflix, to serve as in-house counsel for Local 399 and the Teamsters' Motion Picture and Theatrical Trade Division. "We feel very fortunate to have Kay joining our team," Dougherty said. "She has always been a fair and respected lawyer, even while working for the employers."

Dougherty has also joined O'Brien in praising International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees President Matthew Loeb, who "ratified" a sellout contract in 2021 against a majority "no" vote in much the same way that the Teamsters did in 2018. Last July, O'Brien and Loeb established a "Mutual Aid and Assistance Pact" in order for both unions to "work together to achieve shared goals and initiatives," according to a Teamsters press release.

Among Teamster rank-and-file members, both in the film and TV industry and as a whole, support for the strike is extremely strong. But in mobilizing that support, they face an obstacle in the union bureaucracy, in which Dougherty is a leading figure.

The way to organize support for the writers is through a fight against the corrupt union bureaucracy. This requires the formation of rank-and-file committees, which will connect the fight for solidarity and joint actions with the writers with a struggle against the apparatus in the Teamsters.

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