

Car haulers remained locked out at a CSX railhead facility

Leon Gutierrez
26 May 2023

Forty car haulers under Teamsters Local 355 are fighting a lockout at a CSX railhead facility in Annapolis Junction, Maryland. The facility is also operated by Total Distribution Services Inc. (TDSI), a CSX subsidiary responsible for various vehicle handling services, such as loading vehicles onto rail trains.

The lockout occurred following a breakdown in talks on May 9 between auto service contractor Auto Warehouse Company (AWC) and Local 355. The details of the talks have yet to be reported.

In a statement, Teamsters General President Sean O'Brien declared that CSX will be held accountable for the lockout, that the company's "reckless actions have far-reaching consequences," and that locked-out workers have the full support "of the entire Teamsters Union in this fight."

Teamsters Carhaul Director Avral Thompson said the facility has been "a long model for properly unloading vehicles from the rail. CSX should be ashamed." Their shouts of solidarity are abstract. O'Brien and the union bureaucracy have not called for any concrete mass strike against CSX, objectively leaving the protesting workers isolated.

Despite claims that the Teamsters bureaucracy is supporting the workers, they are merely appealing to the railroad corporation to reconsider their contractor. In a statement on its Facebook page, the Teamsters raised the demand that "CSX immediately ends this lockout and bid the work to a responsible contractor. CSX should remember that without Teamsters, there are no profits to prioritize."

The corporations are emboldened by the betrayal of the Teamsters bureaucrats of both the railroaders and the car haulers in national contracts last year, in defense of Wall Street interests and in collaboration with the

Biden Administration. Two of the three largest rail unions, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLET) and the Brotherhood of Maintenance Way Employee Division (BMWED), are under the Teamsters umbrella. After failing to ram through a sellout contract brokered by the Biden administration, the rail unions delayed as long as possible to buy time for Congress to ban a strike and impose the contract.

The bureaucracy also remained silent earlier this month on the slashing of railroaders' benefits as the Biden administration went on the assault against the working class by tying their benefits to the debt limit. However, they have to grovel before railroad CEOs on the question of sick days, after promoting a contract which contained none for rail crews.

CSX and several other railroads have announced limited deals for a few days of sick pay in recent months, which have cost them virtually nothing when compared to annual profits but earned them fawning praise from the union apparatus. When CSX announced it would give four days of paid sick leave to maintenance workers, BMWED President Tony Cardwell praised the railroad's CEO Joe Hinrichs for "responsible corporate governance."

In June 2022, O'Brien and Avral Thompson pushed through a sellout national contract for 3,000 car haulers, including mechanics, truck drivers and yard workers. They attempted to present a concessionary contract to car haulers as the most "lucrative" car haul agreement in history. In reality, it included only slightly above-inflation wages for car haulers, and it pushed onto car haulers a two-tier system, where any new "business" for the union resulted in car haulers getting paid half the standard rate.

The bureaucracy's role in the railroad and car haulers contracts were a prelude to current UPS talks, where a

national contract covering 340,000 workers expires on July 31. In April, O'Brien told a crowd of 500 UPS workers that his frequent guest visits at the White House were to boast to the president about the "impact" of a UPS strike. He lied to the workers about the railroad struggle, claiming that Biden had not "interceded" against the railroad workers.

Then, this month, the Teamsters violated their own pledge not to pursue national talks with UPS until all regional supplemental contracts are completed, an indication that they are under intense pressure to get a deal in place before the July 31 deadline. O'Brien's administration, under pressure from UPS workers furious over the 2018 contract which was imposed against a majority "no" vote of the membership, has repeatedly pledged to strike UPS if a deal has not been ratified by the time the current one expires.

Will, CSX worker and member of the Railroad Workers Rank-and-File Committee which was formed last year to organize workers against the companies, the rail union bureaucracy and the government, spoke to the WSWS about the lockout and the role of the Teamsters. He said the Teamsters should "immediately call for all rail union employees not to handle railcars bound for any TDSI facility." Pointing to the necessity of the struggle for workers to organize independently of the union bureaucracy, he added, "Any inaction on the part of the trade unions only strengthens the argument that workers must act independently of the inept trade unions. We do not cross picket lines, and we will not supply scab labor."



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact