

Teamsters declared ABF contract “overwhelmingly ratified” without providing vote tally

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30 June 2023

Work at ABF? Tell us what you think about the contract and the announced voting results. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

The Teamsters union has announced the passage of all but two supplements in its contract negotiations with less-than-truckload (LTL) company ABF. After a week of voting, the Teamsters Freight Division declared that the contract was “overwhelmingly ratified,” but without releasing a vote total on the master agreement and its regional supplements.

Voting ended Tuesday evening, but it took until Friday afternoon for the Teamsters to declare victory in the contract vote. The two rejected supplemental contracts, for the Southern Garage and Western States Pickup and Delivery, will be renegotiated.

As of this writing, there is no reporting from the Teamsters as to the vote total tally of the contract to support the claim of an “overwhelming” vote in favor. In fact, discussion among workers on social media and information shared by workers with the WSWs all indicated strong opposition to the contract.

Reports from workers indicate that locals in Reno, Arizona, Tampa, New York City and Long Beach all rejected the contract. Long Beach rejected the contract 38 votes to 2 and Local 553 in NYC voted 70 percent against, while Local 657 in Texas voted 19 to 4 against and Local 952 in Southern California voted 24 to 19 against.

However, according to the Teamsters, Local 492 in New Mexico voted by 183-18 in favor of the contract. Vote totals for Local 63 in California, one of the larger locals with 700 members, have not been reported as of this writing.

With 137 locals voting on the contract, and no official

vote count, it is impossible to verify the claim that the contract passed with substantial support. Given the level of opposition that has been expressed against the contract, workers should demand a detailed breakdown of the totals for each local. It is a basic democratic right for workers to know just how many workers cast ballots for and against. If the Teamsters are unwilling to provide such information, which all members are entitled to know, then there is no reason to accept the claim that the contract was passed at all.

Opposition to the contract centered on several factors, including that it did not pay enough. Even with wage increases of \$6.50 an hour for full-time workers, pay would barely keep up with the rate of inflation. Adjustments to contract language on pensions allows the Teamsters pension fund to expel ABF from the program if its contributions are not high, indirectly allowing the company to abolish the pension system in favor of a 401k.

An ABF worker who spoke with the WSWs was not satisfied with the contract.

“I don’t think it was good enough on the financial side of things, with inflation being as high as its been,” they said. “Plus, the company has been doing very well for many years and we never got our 7 percent wage concessions back.”

“We gave the company 7 percent in wages and a week of vacation in 2013. We got the vacation back in 2018, but not the wages. The company has spent close to a billion dollars buying companies in the last 10 to 15 years but they tell us they are hurting financially.”

“[Former Teamsters General President] Hoffa was very easy on the companies for whatever reason. I don’t believe ABF needed the money. They were debt

free at the time. They wanted the same concessions [Yellow Corp] received.” Yellow is currently \$1.6 billion in debt after years of concessions on wages and benefits were surrendered by the Teamsters to keep the company afloat. Now Yellow is so desperate for cash it has sued the Teamsters for \$137 million in a desperate bid to stave off bankruptcy.

“When I started at ABF we made about \$2 more than all the non-union LTL companies. Now they make \$6 to \$8 more per hour. Yes, our benefits are more costly, but they always have been. ABF has taken advantage of [Yellow’s] problems by demanding concessions of their own, and Hoffa catered to them. Non-union LTL hourly [is] \$33-36. We are at \$26.68.”

“I was hoping to strike and demand our 7 percent on top of the contract.. . It would be a fair deal if the 7 percent was included.”

Taking to social media, many workers expressed their frustration over the contract passage.

One worker said “The contract passed without transparency or real good communication. This whole ordeal was an absolute joke. You cannot tell me that this deal wasn’t signed, sealed and delivered months ago.”

Another added “Another bad contract and the union’s happy! No wonder we’re f***ing doomed.”

“They’re going have to raise the casual pay!” said one worker. “I started over at CF, Overnite, and Roadway. Now with Yellow collapsing, us older guys can’t work the dock for that kind of pay. I made \$14.45 as a dock casual in the mid 90s. So, just \$3 dollars an hour more, in almost 30 years.” Pay for casual part-time workers will increase to just \$17.50 an hour under the new contract, rising to a paltry \$18.50 by 2028.

The results at ABF are a prelude to the struggle at UPS, where workers are facing similar demands from the company for new tiers and concessions on wages and benefits. It also completely exposes the theatrics from General President Sean O’Brien and other top bureaucrats, designed to create the appearance of “tough bargaining.” Behind closed doors, the same bureaucracy which rammed through such a contract at ABF can only be working out a sellout at UPS.

UPS workers must take note of the struggle of their fellow Teamsters at ABF and Yellow, who have been forced to pay the price for corporate profits and debts. This is a serious warning that, unless UPS workers

organize themselves now, forming rank-and-file committees as alternative structures capable of challenging the authority of the bureaucracy, the only possible result will be another Teamster sellout.



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