

Teamsters promote strike-breaking Democrats as UPS contract nears expiration

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The contract for 340,000 UPS workers is set to expire at the end of the month. Last week, the Teamsters announced that talks between the company and union negotiators had “collapsed” and that a strike was “imminent.”

UPS workers, as evidenced by a 97 percent strike authorization vote last month, are ready to fight. But that is the last thing that the Teamsters bureaucracy, led by General President Sean O’ Brien, wants. It has been compelled by the scale of opposition from below to make constant statements pledging to strike by August 1 if a new deal is not in place by then. But this only means that the bureaucracy is working desperately behind the scenes in order to get a sellout deal done.

One of the clearest indications of this is the Teamsters’ constant promotion of the “support” from Congress, which voted last year to ban a strike by 120,000 railroaders and impose a pro-company contract. As of this writing, the Teamsters’ Twitter account has retweeted statements from over 45 sitting members of Congress. Most of these lawmakers, or more likely someone on their staff, tweeted out statements declaring they were “standing with” the Teamsters as they “fight” for a “fair contract.”

Out of these 45 House representatives, 30 lawmakers, mostly members of the Democratic Party, voted in favor of House Joint Resolution 100 to ban the strike on the railroads. These include several House members from the Democratic Socialists of America, a pseudo-left faction of the Democratic Party.

The first four statements retweeted by the Teamsters union were issued by Democratic Representatives Sheila Jackson Lee (Texas), Melanie Stansbury (New

Mexico), Brendan Boyle (Pennsylvania) and Gerry Connolly (Virginia) on June 29. All of them were retweeted by the Teamsters with a caption of “solidarity.”

“I support 340,000 UPS @Teamsters...They deserve a fair contract...” wrote Boyle. The post was promptly retweeted by the Teamsters account, “Thank you, @CongBoyle! Solidarity [fist emoji].” This was followed by Representative Connolly, who tweeted a similar statement that was also retweeted by the Teamsters.

In a coordinated fashion the following day, statements of “support” for UPS workers were issued by Democratic Georgia Representative David Scott and Adam Schiff, former chair of the House Intelligence Committee. The Teamsters account retweeted a letter Schiff sent to UPS CEO Carol Tomé that “urged” Tomé to approve an agreement that provides “safe working conditions” and “fair wages.”

Other notable strike-breaking Democrats promoted by the Teamsters include Representatives Debbie Dingell (Michigan), Katie Porter (California), Ilhan Omar (Minnesota), Pramila Jayapal (Washington), Minority Whip Katherine Clark (Massachusetts) and former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi.

On July 6, the Teamsters thanked strike-breaking California Representative, and former chair of Bernie Sanders presidential campaign, Ro Khanna for “supporting” the Teamsters after the lawmaker tweeted his “solidarity” with the union bureaucracy on July 5. The Teamsters did not inform workers that Khanna voted against the rail strike, nor did it feel compelled to

admit that within the last year, per Capitol Trades, Khanna had purchased between \$32,000 and \$130,000 in UPS stock.

Khanna is one of the most prolific stock traders in Congress. Before voting to block the railroad strike last year, Khanna bought and sold shares of Berkshire Hathaway, Warren Buffet's multinational conglomerate that owns a controlling stake in BNSF, and Blackrock, which owns a 4.5 percent share in Union Pacific. He also bought and sold shares in CSX, Kansas City Southern and Norfolk Southern.

The Teamsters union has also retweeted statements of "support" from Democratic Socialists of America members Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Jamaal Bowman (New York) and Cori Bush (Missouri). All these fake socialists voted with right-wing Republicans to ban the rail strike.

While the bulk of the statements of "support" retweeted by the Teamsters have come from Democratic Representatives, the union has also sought to promote strike-breaking Republicans as well. On July 3, the union thanked Pennsylvania Representative Brian Fitzpatrick, who also voted in favor of H.J. Res 100, for "supporting UPS Teamsters."

The promotion of strike-breaking politicians by the Teamsters is a warning to UPS workers. The union is preparing, with the help of these politicians, to stab them in the back and prevent a strike. None of these lawmakers, as shown in the dictatorial votes last year, are "friends" of workers. They are bourgeois politicians who serve at the pleasure of Wall Street and the military-industrial complex.

The chasm that exists between the rank and file and the bureaucracy only becomes more apparent as workers are determined to carry out a struggle. To cover up this chasm and to sow confusion among workers, the bureaucracy is increasingly relying upon the services of groups like Teamsters for a Democratic Union, a one-time self-declared "reform" faction which is totally integrated with the O'Brien administration.

On Sunday, TDU held another one of its online meetings aimed at sowing illusions in the bureaucracy and the O'Brien leadership. In the nearly 50-minute

meeting, TDU and Teamster bureaucrats refused to answer workers' questions. Instead the various speakers continued to push "practice picketing," while begging workers for donations to cover the cost of the Zoom webinar, which they claimed cost \$2,500.

Fed up with the lack of information, angry workers took to the overflowing comment section.

"I am ready and willing to strike, but this is a waste of my time. I'm out."

"Why don't we have a real Zoom call that gives us information? You can't tell us anything because of the non-disclosure agreement."

"What is [Rep. Ocasio-Cortez's] involvement with our strike?"

"I'm out...I have heard nothing for 35 minutes."

"My local is doing their first practice picketing today...Sunday, when no one is there. What the hell is this for?"

"Thank you for wasting my time with zero useful information."

The duplicitous role of the union bureaucracy must be countered by the independent initiative of rank-and-file workers. As the WSWS wrote last week, "real preparations for a struggle require that rank-and-file workers take the initiative out of the hands of the bureaucracy and organize themselves. This means forming rank-and-file committees in every warehouse and workplace."

The *World Socialist Web Site* is prepared to assist UPS workers in building the UPS Rank-and-File Committee. All interested should fill out the form below.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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