

“We have to show them we’re not going to retreat, we’re not going to concede”: Southern California warehouse worker speaks out against UPS contract

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Attend the online public meeting “The way forward against the sellout Teamsters contract at UPS,” hosted by the UPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee, this Saturday, July 29, at 7:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Register for the event here.

Then, tell us what you think about the tentative agreement at UPS by filling out the form below. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

Workers are outraged over the sellout tentative agreement announced this week at UPS. The Teamsters union reached the deal, which falls far short of workers’ demands, to head off a national strike by 340,000 workers, which would have started next Tuesday.

The WSWS recently spoke about the contract with a worker from Southern California with nearly 20 years seniority. His name has been changed to protect his identity.

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WSWS: *What are your thoughts about the tentative agreement?*

Frank: I haven’t gone over the whole proposal yet, but just from the face of it, it doesn’t look like it’s a very good contract. I don’t think anyone is too satisfied. It’s middle of the road and more of the same as usual. People who are full-timers are still stuck in the four-year progression. If you’re part-time, you’re still going to be living on poverty wages. It’s sad to see. If you’ve been there a long time, the “longevity” raise or whatever is up to \$1.50 for like 20 years. So if you’ve been there eight years, you’re getting 75 cents probably.

We had thought we’d be getting some kind of retroactive paycheck for COVID pay. But from the looks of it, it doesn’t seem like it’s in the contract. The union was talking that they wanted to get people who worked through the pandemic \$1.50 per hour more. So, I guess that went out the window. It’s a sorry contract.

I’m in California, so maybe for me it seems a little bit skewed. Maybe if you’re somewhere in the Midwest where cost of living is a lot cheaper, maybe it feels better. But in my hub starting pay was already like \$20.50 [due to Market Rate Adjustments]. So I’m thinking, the union is allowing the company to set the wage so low at \$21, which in five years with inflation is going to be a joke. The company wants to keep the starting wage low, and then whenever they need to, they can just bring in an MRA for new hires, and screw over the workers who are already in that building because they won’t get the MRA.

I’m looking at the wages, I’m looking at paternity, because me and my wife want to have a child. In California, we have I think six weeks of paternity leave, but I think the policy for UPS as a whole is no maternity leave, no paternity leave. I’m looking at that, and you would think a union company would have some kind of paternity leave or maternity leave, some kind of leave when you have a child.

I haven’t looked into the pension, but if that’s the case [that pension contributions are frozen for the Teamsters Western Conference], that’s horrible, just horrible. It’s historically bad then.

In January or February of this year, the company just did a \$5 billion stock buyback. It’s insane. It’s a scam

that all the CEOs do. It's not just UPS. But pay yourself in stock options, do a stock buyback, now your stocks are through the roof. Who gives a damn how the workers are doing? The stock is soaring, the shareholders are happy, the UPS brass is happy. That's where you would think Teamsters would be stepping in and be like, 'No, we're going to get you guys a good deal.' But I read the WSWS, so I already knew O'Brien was a Hoffa Jr. stooge, you know.

WSWS: *What did you think about the union's pledge to strike by August 1 without a deal, and its "practice pickets"?*

Frank: That was all theatrical. That idea, we're walking away [from the bargaining table], and then you really come to an agreement within 24 hours after restarting talks? And it all worked magically within a few hours. I just feel like that whole thing just stinks. It doesn't seem right.

We're in Local 63 here in Southern California, and I want to say that in the last week, maybe two weekends ago, they started "practice pickets." They told us, "Oh, yeah, come over on Saturday morning for a 'practice picket.'" But I work nights. I'm usually waking up at 10 or 11. You know, what about people who work nights?

WSWS: *What did you think about the way the strike authorization vote was conducted?*

Frank: It was super hasty. I didn't even get a chance to vote in it. Again, I work nights. The people who were collecting the votes were only there in the daytime. So everybody who works nights, unless you take it out of your own time to go down to the union hall in the daytime and go down there, you couldn't have voted. You have to deal with traffic, you have to deal with the commute itself. Just to go check off yes or no. I thought it was really stupid how the union pulled that whole card off.

I am familiar with who the president of the local is [Sam Stewart, who made \$241,514 last year]. I know these guys are not fighters. I know who these guys are. What can you call it? At most, they're Democrats, at best.

So, yeah, my expectations were already pretty low. And, you know, the contract surprisingly didn't really shock me. I wasn't expecting much, so when I saw the contract, I was not totally surprised. Definitely wouldn't call it "historic," definitely. But not totally

surprised at the way things are playing out at this point.

A question I have is how we're going to vote on it? Are you going to send the ballots out? Are you going to go to work at 5 or 4 in the afternoon, and I come out at 2 or 3 in the morning and I'm walking out and there is no one there?

So my plan is to vote no on the contract itself, as soon as I can. But I'm sure they'll come out with some freaking other mechanism like they did last time [when the Teamsters overrode a "no" vote to impose the 2018 contract] to shove that contract down our throats. But we're under no illusions that they'll go back and renegotiate it.

Of course, the union is supposed to represent us. We're the workers. We pay the dues. Yeah, man, that's not the way the union works. Unfortunately, the union is there to suppress the class struggle.

Workers shouldn't be as divided up like "I'm an electrical union," "I'm a plumber's union." They should have subdivisions, but they should be subdivisions within a bigger structure. With the way the economy is now, it sounds ironic because things are bad, but that's the best time to be militant in my opinion. It's the best time to show them, "Hey, we're not going to retreat, we're not going to concede."

So I just feel like as workers, not just UPS workers, but as workers, as members of the working class, we should have a general strike.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact