

“Vote this trash pile down”: UPS workers speak out against new tentative agreement

Our reporter
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UPS workers from around the country have been writing in to the World Socialist Web Site to express their opposition to the new five-year tentative agreement proposed by the Teamsters. While the union and the corporate press are hailing the deal as “historic,” it contains substandard pay and benefits. The deal was announced only days before an August 1 strike deadline, blocking a struggle by 340,000 workers.

We are publishing a selection of these comments below. To send in your thoughts about the TA, fill out the form below. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

Then, take up the fight against the contract and the sellout union bureaucrats by joining the UPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee. To contact the committee, email upsrankandfilecommittee@gmail.com.

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From Louisville, Kentucky: I am a very upset millennial, who just wants to buy a house and start a family. I have stood by my union proudly as they talked such big game, only to read how poor of a contract they are now celebrating with teary eyes.

I happen to be one of the part-timers that is just under five years with the company. The figures that America is being sent, and what the Teamsters members are being told in this contract do not match. The \$21 an hour had been our rate all during COVID [due to Market Rate Adjustments]. Some hubs were pulled back to the initial pay rate from pre-COVID, which was \$16 and some change. However, I would like it to be noted that not all hubs did this. So some of us are going to see our pay rate literally go from \$21 down to \$16 and back to \$21 again.

This contract “win” throws all of us (new hires to five years) back from \$21 to \$16 and change, to only THEN give us the “raise” of \$2.75, to around \$19.25. After that, UPS and the negotiating committee “graciously” got us all up to \$21, which sounds amazing, except right now \$21 is the new \$7.25 [i.e., the de facto minimum wage].

The older seniority are pissed the “new kids” make as much at “walking in” as they did after a decade. The reasoning for this is simple: inflation. UPS and the old contracts have kept the workers at bare minimum for decades now. Even now, the Teamsters shake hands and pat their backs saying, “Wow, we really did it.”

But let me get this straight. Nothing is really added in for benefits, health and safety except that the drivers get AC. No changes to pensions, COLA or retention bonuses. You actually had the audacity to wrap all of this, plus the [\$21] up into a “proposal” of pretty words and a pretty bow? And you think we can’t see through all of this? A \$7.50 raise over five years? No. If you’re under five, even if you’re at 4.8 years, your pay rate is \$16 and some change. Then it will go to \$21.

If anyone is under \$25, anyone, they should be pushed to \$25. Then add on a percentage based on years of service, or how ever else to do it. But \$7.50 over the course of 5 years is trash. Especially when \$21 isn’t even keeping up with inflation as we speak.

Their attitude is: “You’re drowning? Here’s one singular brick to stand on. In a year I’ll give you another singular brick.”

Now for the people who yell and scream and cry “get a second job” and “part-time isn’t supposed to be a living wage,” firstly, it takes decades to go from part-time to full-time at UPS. Decades, not years. Decades. In the meantime, the people who have been with the company for 15, 20, 25 years don’t deserve a living wage? What about people who can’t work full-time because they’re disabled? What about people with kids, families and conditions that keep them from being able to go full-time?

You have every right to be mad. Get pissed, but at the right people. The new hires aren’t your enemy. More money for part-time or new hires doesn’t take away from your raise or money. Every person deserves a living wage. ... Look at that example, then the example of how many billions of dollars this company brings in, especially after COVID. On August 8, UPS has to post their earnings. I guarantee it will still show a positive. Their profits are our wages!

Vote this trash pile down. We, the young, old, new hires and retirees deserve a living wage.

From Northern California: In the past, pensions were paid on all hours worked. Now it is only paid on eight-hour days, not overtime. Everyone works overtime at UPS, especially during Christmas. So our pension should reflect all hours worked, especially overtime hours, which are the most difficult.

I do not want to give my name, but I am writing as someone

who just recently retired and worked 35 years as a driver and someone who worked part-time for UPS. Pensions don't even cover my rent in San Francisco. It is ridiculous, and if you retire before 60 years of age, which I did, I am only allowed to work 14.75 hours a week, or my pension will be suspended.

Please do not forget the people who made UPS what it is. We now have health issues with injured backs, plantar fasciitis feet and sleep apnea due to the 70-pound limit packages we carried every day on our backs, for 35 years running up and down stairs.

From Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: We worked six days a week during COVID-19. After taxes and what not, I was bringing home maybe \$1,400, which is good money, but everyone else was getting \$650 staying home with their families. Basically, I was working over 50 hours a week when nobody knew much about COVID, and this company was raking in record profits, for \$750 a week compared to those who were not working because of the pandemic. No catch-up pay, no thank you compensation, nothing from UPS.

From Atlanta, Georgia: First, I think it [starting pay] should be \$25 an hour coming in the door when hired at UPS because of the inflation rates.

Second, long-term part-timer longevity raises for those who have been with the company for more than 15-plus years should be \$5 [not \$1.50], no exceptions.

Third, as far as the pension goes for part-timers, a whole lot of us can't do 35 years and make it to see \$2,450 a month. That's a slap in the face. If you are lucky enough to make it to see 25-plus years, you only get less than \$1,500 a month in pension. How is that fair?

From Portland, Oregon: Let's get the power back to the people, away from UPS and the Teamsters. The Teamsters need to remember that they work for us, not the other way around.

From Cincinnati, Ohio: Right now it's so hot and humid in there [the hub]. They didn't get the pay for part-timers, let alone our pensions. They're going to hire new people at what we're making. They give us breaks one hour after we are there, and it's only for 10 minutes.

From Rockford, Illinois: There are air operations part-timers, and there are hub operations part-timers, and within the air operations, there is a subcategory of air drivers. Overtime for part-timers is, for 5 hours or more you get time and a half. But air drivers, which are part-timers, must work eight hours to acquire time and half. So, working for air cargo you get four hours with no overtime and split shift, you drive and do pickup air routes ... working 3.5 to 4 hours, with no overtime, even though you are part-time. Part-time overtime should stand no matter what department one works for.

From Louisville, Kentucky: I work at Worldport. It took me 20 years to get a full-time job. Then we were put on a pay freeze while other workers got raises and cost-of-living adjustments, because after 20 years I made more than their progression scale [for full-timers]. So it's OK to make people

wait that long, then wait another four years to pay them what they are owed?

Years ago there was no progression, or it was two years, but now it just keeps getting worse. People have to ride two buses into work, and sometimes it takes over a half hour to get in and a half hour to leave. You don't even get paid for that. People's cars get towed because the parking is awful. Then you have people who work here 15 years making just a few bucks more or the same as new hires. It's a slap in the face. Yes, we have good insurance, but we also tear our bodies up working here. It's really true, we are underpaid slaves.

Another worker from Louisville, Kentucky: Me and my roommate work at UPS, and we're pissed off. The second we get the opportunity we're going to vote no. When I first heard about the deal, I thought it was a joke. When I realized this was actually serious, I was dumbfounded and flabbergasted.

This is no deal. The pay is going to be the same thing that the night shift has been getting for two years. The union wants to treat this like it's the biggest thing ever. It's not. It's an extra dollar.

If we were going to go on strike, it would be for extra hours and actually better pay. They didn't do anything. In the end, we'll be lucky to get \$5 more every week. It is negligible. It won't make a difference, while they're still making their billions.

This is my first contract, and it's entirely new for most of us. When the union started talking about a strike, I said, "Hey, this could help us pay bills." I don't think so.

Other workers at UPS, like the retail and healthcare workers who aren't in the union, are really mad about this. They were saying we're behind you if you strike. In fact, anybody who had anything to do with UPS and wasn't making a lot of money, wanted us to win.

It was a deal for the union leadership and company, not for us. I can see if O'Brien is bringing home a nice little paycheck of \$350,000 a year, why he'd go for this.

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To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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