

UPS workers in Chicago and New York speak out: “Sean O’Brien talks out of both sides of his mouth and insults us with this garbage contract”

George Marlowe
13 August 2023

Attend the online public meeting, “The ‘No’ vote at UPS and the next stage of the battle against the Teamsters bureaucracy,” hosted by the UPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee, this Sunday at 7pm Eastern. Register for the event [here](#).

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 upsrnkandfilecommittee@gmail.com or fill out the form below.

UPS workers in Chicago and New York spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* over the weekend about the national tentative agreement, as well as the low pay and poor working conditions they face daily.

While the Teamsters bureaucracy led by Sean O’Brien and the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) have hailed the contract agreement as “historic,” rank-and-file workers across the country have opposed the sellout deal as completely inadequate to meet their needs with the cost-of-living crisis they face.

Many workers in Chicago and New York already make more today under UPS market-rate adjustments (MRAs) than the starting wage brought back by the Teamsters of \$21 an hour. These MRA pay raises are carried out by UPS management itself because the existing contractual pay rates are so low they are unable to attract enough workers in areas with high costs of living.

Part-time workers and drivers at one of the largest UPS facilities in the country, known as the Chicago Area Consolidation Hub (CACH), spoke out against the low pay and horrendous working conditions they endure. Opened in 1995, the massive 240-acre UPS complex just southwest of the city of Chicago in Hodgkins, Illinois, was formerly a General Motors Truck and Bus manufacturing plant. It is currently the largest packing/sorting facility in the world.

Over 9,000 part-time workers—many between the ages of 17 and 25—work at the giant CACH facility to sort and handle the packages that come through, and a number of feeder drivers also stop there, handling over 10 percent of nationwide UPS package volume. Packages also come into the facility via the intermodal rail terminals, including BNSF, CSX, Norfolk Southern and Union Pacific.

Chicago: “UPS exploits workers like us”

“I’ve been here since May,” one young part-time worker said. “It’s really been a lot—physically demanding, even if you wanted a part-time

schedule. Sometimes we actually have to deal with what we’re given. They want everything to be perfect.

“Physically, it will leave me drained. I work other jobs because I need other sources of income. When the sort is light, it’s okay. When it’s really heavy, and it’s hot in all the trucks, that’s when it becomes a lot more physically demanding. Sometimes we’re short-staffed due to people not feeling well, or we just don’t have enough people.”

When it came to the UPS-Teamsters contract agreement, the young part-time worker said, “The contract—I did like it at first, but then I thought about it,” he said. “Over the span of five years, it’s not guaranteed that I’m still going to be here.

“Honestly, I think we should be making between \$27-35. I’m not the only person who feels like that. It’s a lot of people that work here that have a lot of personal things going on in their lives. And they need the money. In this day and age, it’s really hard to try and get by. You can’t live somewhere without having to pay an arm and a leg. I do think it would be a positive incentive to give it their all to be able to make a real living.

“The cost of living,” he added, is making it harder to survive with the low pay. With roommates, “I pay about \$400 for rent right now, but I’m moving out so I’m going to be paying \$1,500. I currently have 4 jobs. I do a lot to have an income flowing in so I can make sure I’m straight and I can get back and forth to work and I’m okay.”

A number of workers also reported they have not even seen the contract or gotten any information about the vote from Teamsters Local 705.

“I’ve worked here since November, and I was hoping for more pay,” one worker said. “I was hoping for up to \$30. We work pretty hard, and it’s a lot of work. It’s hot inside, and we put a lot of work in. I’m 18, and I’m enrolling in college this semester. I don’t think it’s right that the companies keep making these profits. I haven’t seen the contract yet—they sent me a text or something. They didn’t say anything about the vote.

“It takes me 25 minutes to get here. Gas, I spend \$60 a week. It’s pretty expensive. Gas prices are going up. For a better future, I want a nicer house. I want to afford one. I hope the prices drop. Everything’s going up. I currently live with my mom. I’m just trying to save as much money as I can and helping my mom out.”

Another part-time worker said, “I’ve worked here for about a year. I’m 18 and a high school student. I want to work here for a couple more years. But it’s a really hard job here. You’ve got to fill up all the trailers with super heavy boxes.

“It’s not really worth it for the pay right now. I live really far, almost an hour drive for me. Basically, half of what I get paid in a day goes straight to my gas tank. It would be good if we can get a big raise. They’re

“UPS exploits workers like us. It’s crazy. They made billions in profits too. They’re increasing their shipping costs too. If it goes to \$30 an hour, that would be good. Their profits come from us. I travel 30-40 minutes to come here. A decent amount goes into gas. We have inflation, and our wages have not been keeping up.”

“We did a poll on Telegram, and 87 percent who took the poll said they’re voting no. Whether they do that is another matter. I don’t know how many people were in the poll. As far as feeder drivers, we got no

“My parents were both members of the UAW, and they struck a couple of times,” he said. “They always seemed to get what they wanted. I was in a union with guys that started in the 1940s. Their opinion was you always voted down the first one. There was always more to get. That’s when unions were powerful. That’s when being in the union meant something. Then people like Hoffa Jr. and SOB take control and other stooges who are company-minded or government-controlled, and they’re more interested in power than the people they represent.”

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