

Rank-and-file investigation into the UPS contract

UPS halved pay for former air drivers in Washington, DC area ahead of ratification of new contract

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Provide testimony to the Rank-and-File Investigation into the UPS Contract by emailing upsrankandfilecommittee@gmail.com. No identifying information will be published without your explicit consent.

United Parcel Service (UPS) cut wages in half for former air drivers in the Washington D.C. area the week before the ratification of the new national contract, workers have informed the UPS Worker Rank-and-File Committee. The Committee has launched an investigation to expose how workers' rights have been violated by both the new contract and the methods with which it was passed by the Teamsters bureaucracy.

Until recently, the affected workers had worked as air drivers for the company at the Chantilly hub in Fairfax, Virginia. An air driver is a position involving air package delivery and pickups which, "because of time and customer commitments," cannot be "reasonably performed by regular package drivers," according to the language in the contract.

However, the workers' positions were eliminated by the company. "They have us working inside of the building," said one former part-time air driver. "I don't know if all other facilities are the same, but [ours] cut out the air driver" position, he said.

Instead, he had been reassigned to a car wash position. While this is a menial position normally paying a lower rate, he had been promised by the company that his pay rate of \$33 an hour, the top rate he had obtained as a driver, would not be changed.

"Come last week," he said, "I'm not getting the top pay anymore." The worker stated he had checked his

rate and found that whereas they had previously been making the top rate, his pay had been cut in half, from \$33 down to \$18 an hour.

Another former part-time air driver supplied the WSWS with a copy of their most recent pay stub. The pay period ending July 22, 2023 shows an hourly pay rate of \$33.94. The second paystub, covering the period of August 13 to August 19, shows a rate of \$17.85, a cut of over \$15 an hour.

"Look at how they treat us in here," the worker said irately. The company "waits until the last minute [before the balloting results are announced] and they cut our pay."

"I talked to the shop stewards and they said they would talk to [UPS] and see how it goes," the worker said. "I'm paying the union dues and they're not representing me."

Another UPS worker said they had tried to complain about her situation to a shop steward but she was told there was nothing that could be done and that she should feel "lucky" she even has a job. "They still want me to pay dues for all of that crap?" she said.

The timing of the cut is significant, coming only days before the August 22 end of voting for the new five-year contract. By kicking these workers down to the lower pay scale before the new contract takes effect, they will be able to more than cancel out the modest pay increases under the new deal.

One of the main selling points pushed by the union bureaucracy for the new contract was that all existing part-time workers would be eligible for general wage increases of \$7.50 spread out over five years, as well as

longevity increases of between 50 cents and \$1.50 for those with five years or more of service.

However, while part-timers who had attained seniority by August 1 are eligible for these wage increases, most new part-timers will begin at the new starting rate of \$21 per hour, rising to only \$23 after four years. Newly hired part-time air drivers will be on a four-year progression starting out at \$23 per hour, and will be eligible for general wage increases after they attain the top rate.

Including the first year's general wage increase of \$2.75, part-time air drivers making top rate will earn \$36.69 per hour once the new wages take effect starting this weekend. However, a part-time worker currently making \$17.85 would be bumped up to only \$21, the new minimum for all part-timers.

The wage cuts for these former air drivers can only heighten workers' concerns that UPS is actively trying to cancel out these supposedly "historic" pay increases. During the contract vote, many UPSers were also concerned that the contract contained only vague language protecting Market Rate Adjustments from being reversed to offset general wage increases. These are pay increases, enacted and revoked at the sole discretion of management in specific areas of the country, in order to attract sufficient new hires. Starting pay is so low for part-timers that MRAs are in place at hubs all over the country.

While the Teamsters bureaucracy continuously denied that MRAs would or could be reversed, evidence is mounting that this is in fact taking place in at least multiple areas around the United States. The Rank-and-File Investigation will report more on this soon.

The workers who spoke with the Investigation said that they felt the years spent at UPS had been wasted, as the new pay has reduced them to a poverty level. Moreover, other UPS workers say that air drivers are "an endangered species companywide," in the words of one online commenter.

"Now that FedEx is rolling everything into their ground operation, UPS will get rid of the remaining Air Drivers. The two companies are always tit for tat," the worker said. "Undoubtedly, there is a push to layoff (and fire) drivers, because of the new contract. UPS might have to make 7,500 [full-time] jobs [as stipulated in the new agreement], but nothing is stopping them

from firing 7,500 drivers."

Other workers commented that the new contract, which the Teamsters had declared ratified under extremely dubious circumstances, was a "net zero" cost for the company. "Didn't think that new contract was coming out of investors' pockets did you?" one said.



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