

Molson Coors brewery workers strike in Fort Worth, Texas

Alex Findijs
18 February 2024

Work at Molson Coors, Anheuser-Busch or another brewing company? Tell us what your working conditions are like by filling out the form below. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

Workers at the Molson Coors brewery in Fort Worth, Texas, went on strike Saturday. The 420 members of Teamsters Local 997 voted by 93 percent the previous weekend to reject a company contract and authorize strike action against the second largest brewer in the United States. Pickets began Saturday but were not active on Sunday, with plans to resume Monday morning, according to NBC 5.

The strike at Coors is potentially the prelude to an even larger nationwide strike by 5,000 workers at Anheuser-Busch, where workers voted to authorize a strike by 99 percent. The current contract at Anheuser-Busch expires on February 29.

This is the first strike at the Fort Worth Coors brewery since it opened in 1969. It is also the first strike against a major employer in Fort Worth, the fifth largest city in Texas and 13th largest in the country, since the 1970s. Fort Worth is also the second-largest city in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, which has a population of more than 7.6 million.

Talks between Coors and the Teamsters have been ongoing for months. No details on the rejected contract proposal have been released by either the company or the union, but a statement by the Teamsters announcing the strike provided some insight into the regressive demands from management. The company's last offer reportedly included just a \$1 per hour raise "for the majority of Teamsters members." The statement added that workers are seeking the "elimination of two-tiered health care and retirement benefits."

Local 997 Treasurer Rick Miedema also told Fox 4, "Their offers were absolutely horrendous, they were ridiculous in the current market, offering workers about 2

percent wage increases, that barely puts any food on the table."

However, that the Teamsters would even bring such a contract to a vote is a warning that it will seek to ultimately impose a contract favorable to management. Last year, the union pushed through a contract at UPS which it falsely called a "historic" victory. In fact, it has paved the way for over 12,000 job losses, on which the union has maintained a guilty silence. This is part of a general offensive by corporations worldwide to use automation and artificial intelligence to eliminate huge sections of the workforce and smash the growing resistance of the working class.

Fox 4 also quoted Coors worker Cameron Elim Sr., who said, "They offer pennies whenever we go, and they start off with what they're going to take instead of what they can potentially give."

Jeff Pruitt, another Coors worker, said in a video posted by the Teamsters on X (Twitter), "All we are asking for is our fair share. It's not even about being rewarded; it's something owed to us. We all work hard and need to take care of our families. We're just fighting for our just cause."

A \$1 an hour raise over the last contract is a provocation by management. Since the last contract went into effect, inflation has reached its highest levels in 40 years.

According to a company fact sheet, the average wage for a Coors worker in Fort Worth is \$36 an hour. There is no reason to believe this, given that companies routinely inflate workers' pay during strikes in order to cast workers, and not management, as "greedy." However, even assuming it is accurate, this means workers would need a pay increase of around \$6 an hour just to keep pace with inflation over the past three years. The \$1 "raise" proposed by Coors is in fact a massive cut in real wages.

At any rate, Coors has experienced six years of profit growth, which it used to pump \$2 billion into stock

buybacks last year.

The company is digging in its heels. Adam Collins, Coors' chief communications officer, told NBC 5, "While we respect the Union's right to strike, we have strong contingency plans in place, and those plans are already well underway. We deliberately built up distributor inventories across the country in recent weeks, our five other U.S. breweries have extra capacity, and we are well equipped to ensure that consumers will be able to buy their favorite Molson Coors products." In other words, the company is using its workforce at its other breweries to scab on the Fort Worth workers.

The Fort Worth facility is the only brewery that services the Western United States for brands such as Topo Chico, Yeungling, Pabst, Simply and others. However, Coors has made repeated statements leading up to the strike that it was preparing for any eventual work stoppage and to minimize losses.

The union bureaucracy has employed militant-sounding rhetoric both at Coors and Anheuser-Busch about "not making concessions" and doubled strike pay at both companies to \$1,000 a week. They are clearly responding to the enormous anger of the rank and file.

But this only in order to get out in front of workers' anger before it escapes their control. "Making concessions" is something that the Teamsters apparatus has done for decades.

General President Sean O'Brien, a former top ally of his predecessor James Hoffa Jr., has overseen historic concessions since taking office in 2021 as a bogus "reformer."

This includes his deliberate decision to delay strike action in 2022 by Teamster railroad workers after they voted down a contract brokered by the Biden administration. Biden and both parties in Congress used this critical time bought by the union bureaucracy to prepare legislation to ban a strike and impose the contract that workers rejected.

While O'Brien and the Teamsters have close ties with the Biden White House, they are also seriously considering Trump in the 2024 elections. O'Brien met with Trump in Mar-a-Lago in January and the Teamsters' General Executive Board held a closed-door "roundtable" with the fascistic ex-president in February. Their ties to both corporate parties show the bureaucracy is an instrument of the ruling elite.

This was followed by his decision to simply allow the destruction of 22,000 jobs at freight trucking company Yellow, whose assets are now being picked apart by Wall

Street.

Neither O'Brien nor the International union has even acknowledged the massive layoffs underway at UPS, which the new contract does nothing to protect against. The militant public posturing at Molson Coors recalls similar statements during UPS talks, where the Teamsters union claimed to be organizing a "strike ready" campaign only to announce the sellout contract at the last minute.

Speaking on the strike, Miedema said, "We're going to withhold our labor until they come back to the table and want to come back to the table and want to bargain a fair contract for the workers." This suggests that the Teamsters could call off the strike the moment Coors is ready to "bargain." Ending a strike to resume negotiations or to vote on a tentative agreement is a common tactic used by union bureaucracies to derail a strike's momentum, allow the company time regroup and demobilize the rank and file.

In both the struggles on the railroads and at UPS, workers formed rank-and-file committees to fight the betrayal of the union apparatus and fight for the workers themselves to take control. These committees warned consistently about the impending sellouts and organized public meetings, informational pickets and other actions to prepare workers to fight. Now, the UPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee is calling for a broad counter-campaign uniting workers at UPS with workers in other industries to defend the right to a job and a decent standard of living.

"The situation calls for the independent organization of the rank and file. It cannot be left in the hands of the bureaucracy," the Committee said. "Everything the Teamsters said in order to pass the contract last summer is now being exposed as the pack of lies it was. Nobody can doubt that they knew these cuts were coming all along and kept quiet about it."

Coors workers must build their own rank-and-file strike committee and link up with workers at UPS, as well as at Anheuser-Busch. In particular, they must be on guard against any and all attempts to isolate the struggle at either brewery and turn out for the broadest possible support from workers across the US and the world.



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