

Molson Coors strike in danger as it enters second month

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19 March 2024

Break the isolation of the Molson Coors strike! Contact the WSWs for assistance developing a rank-and-file committee by filling out the form below.

Striking Molson Coors workers in Fort Worth, Texas entered their second month on strike on Sunday. The 420 members of the Teamsters are striking against the second largest brewer in the United States, which operates breweries across North America and around the world. Workers struck after rejecting an insulting company contract that offered just 99 cents in pay raises over three years.

In addition to picketing, workers also began stalling trucks from entering the facility last week. Rick Miedema, secretary and treasurer for Local 997, told NBC 5 that workers were stalling vehicles for five minutes. A judge then ruled last Tuesday evening that workers could only stall the vehicles for 90 seconds before allowing them in. Even this limited interruption has reportedly caused traffic to back up on the road next to the brewery.

To mark the 30th day of the strike, the Teamsters bureaucracy hosted a rally outside of the brewery with major union and Texas political figures attending. Teamsters General President Sean O'Brien, Secretary-Treasurer Fred Zuckerman and Southern Region International Vice President Brent Taylor spoke at the rally, as well as Texas Democratic politicians Congresswoman Jasmine Crockett, Texas State Representative Cassandra Hernandez and Fort Worth City Councilman Jared Williams.

The presence of so many leading Teamsters bureaucrats and Democratic politicians was not a indication of support for the workers, but a warning sign that the bureaucrats have their sights set on sabotaging the Molson Coors strike.

At the beginning of March, Molson Coors workers

could have been reinforced by 5,000 Teamsters striking at Anheuser-Busch. Instead, the Teamsters called off strike action a day before the contract expired and forced through a sellout contract that gave the company free rein to close breweries and destroy workers' livelihoods.

The contract vote was a complete sham, with workers given no time to review the contract and told they would see their strike pay cut in half and lose their healthcare if they did not ratify it. Through this blatant voter intimidation, the Teamsters claimed ratification of the contract by more than 80 percent.

While the Teamsters described the contract as "historic," it was nothing of the sort. The 23 percent average wage increase barely makes up for inflation over the past three years and keeps wages below what they were in the late 1990s, adjusted for inflation.

Significantly, the Teamsters declared that the contract would protect against job loss, but the exact opposite is the case. While the contract supposedly prevents direct layoffs, it allows the company free rein to close breweries and upend workers' lives. Workers who lose their jobs in brewery closures will be offered a chance to relocate across the country to work as part of a "non traditional" workforce with no guarantee of equal pay. Instead of security for workers, it is providing profit security for the company.

O'Brien and his fellow bureaucrats are turning to Molson Coors next. The O'Brien administration, which came to power at the start of 2022 presenting itself as a "reform" leadership, has made a specialty of dishonest militant talk right before enforcing historic sellouts. This includes railroad workers, where the bureaucracy bought Washington time to ban a strike at the end of 2022, to freight trucking company Yellow, which they allowed to go bankrupt without a fight, destroying

20,000 jobs overnight, and at UPS, where more than 12,000 layoffs are underway following another “historic” victory that was claimed last year.

Central to O’Brien’s comments over the weekend was the call for a boycott of Molson Coors, which the Teamsters have promoted recently. This is not new for the company. The last major strike at Coors was in 1977 at Coors’ flagship brewery in Golden, Colorado. After a year on strike the union was smashed and workers were sent back on the job.

The strike occurred at the same time as a nationwide boycott campaign supported by the AFL-CIO in opposition to racist and discriminatory practices against Blacks, Hispanics, and gays and lesbians by Coors. A decade later the AFL-CIO would abandon the boycott in exchange for a union vote at the Golden facility, which the Teamsters lost. That brewery remains non-union to this day.

Underlying O’Brien’s focus on boycotting Coors is his need to cover up the isolation of the Fort Worth workers that he has created. By shifting the focus of the struggle onto consumer protests the Teamsters are hoping to obscure this fact.

Fort Worth is a critical location in the corporate plans of Molson Coors. Over the past few years Molson Coors has invested tens of millions of dollars in the Fort Worth brewery to make it a leading location in the company’s shift towards “beyond beer” products, like hard seltzers and non-alcoholic drinks. This gives workers power in interrupting management’s plans.

However, Coors, the fourth largest brewer in the world, claims that it is doing fine in the face of the strike. Management says that it has continued production at the plant with salaried staff, and contingency plans by the company to build up stock and shift some production to other breweries. But its biggest asset is the isolation of the strike by the union bureaucracy.

Workers must organize now to oppose the sellout of the strike. If it is to be successful, rank-and-file workers must establish direct lines of communication with Anheuser-Busch workers, UPS workers, and workers in other industries. They must defeat the isolation of their struggle by expanding it and developing to all Molson-Coors locations, both union and non-union.

The alternative is a settlement which includes massive concessions. Companies are placing jobs on

the chopping block in effort to beat down demands for better wages and to increase profits for Wall Street. Layoffs across all industries are now at their highest point since 2009 and the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. Central to this is the push towards automation and the destruction of jobs.

These experiences at Anheuser-Busch and across the global economy demonstrate the need to build rank-and-file committees in every brewery to unite all workers at Molson Coors and Anheuser-Busch, as well as at UPS, the auto industry and beyond, in a united struggle to defend wages, benefits and jobs. And just as these are international corporations this struggle must be an international one, unifying workers around the world to wage a counteroffensive against the corporate assault on the working class.



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