

Strike by Fort Worth Molson Coors in danger after provocative five-cent wage offer

Alex Findijs
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Resumed talks between the Teamsters and Molson Coors ended almost as soon as they started last week, after the company upped its previous paltry offer with just an additional five cents an hour over three years. Around 420 workers at the company's brewery in Fort Worth, Texas have been on strike for six weeks after rejecting an earlier offer of 99 cents an hour raise over three years.

On March 27, the Teamsters issued a statement claiming that "boycott pressure" had brought the company back to the bargaining table. Jeff Padellaro, Director of the Teamsters Brewery, Bakery, and Soft Drink Conference, said, "Now that this company has come back to the negotiating table, we expect a contract that values working people or we will fight for as long as it takes to ultimately get it."

However, the complete opposite occurred. On March 28 the Teamsters announced that negotiations, which involved a mediator, "broke off" after the company made its provocative offer. Responding to the developments, Teamsters General President Sean O'Brien called Molson Coors a "total disgrace" and claimed the company was trying "to drive the union out of the brewery in Texas. Molson Coors wants to break the workers."

It is certainly true that the company wants to break the strike. Molson Coors is undergoing a modernization plan that involves the implementation of new automation and the upgrading of the facility in Fort Worth to lead production in many of the company's "beyond beer" brands.

Fresh off of record-breaking profits, Molson Coors is determined to streamline production and cut down on labor costs even further. The five-cent offer was an open insult to workers and a direct provocation

That the company feels it is able to play hardball is,

above all, due to the fact that the Teamsters bureaucracy is deliberately isolating the strike. At the start of March, the contract for 5,000 Anheuser-Busch workers was due to expire, raising the possibility of fresh reinforcements for embattled Coors workers and the expansion of the fight into an industry and nation wide struggle.

Instead, the Teamsters announced a last-minute deal, and rammed it through before Anheuser-Busch workers had sufficient time to study it. The deal was a total sell out which paved the way for brewery closures. It contained wage increases of \$8 over five years which does not keep pace with record inflation. Worst of all, the deal isolated Molson Coors workers on the picket line, emboldening the company.

The sellout at Anheuser-Busch was a repeat of an historic betrayal last year at UPS. After months of pretending to make preparations for a national strike, the union announced a last-minute deal which it hailed as one of the best in history, produced through a "credible strike threat." Instead, it opened the door to some of the deepest job cuts in 100 years at the company, which is planning to close 200 facilities and use automation to eliminate tens of thousands of jobs. UPS' CEO Carol Tomé cited the UPS contract and "labor certainty" as critical to their plans.

According to *Vine Pair*, the Teamsters sent a counter offer to Molson Coors several weeks ago requesting similar contract conditions to those at Anheuser-Busch. Even if the company had accepted this offer, it still would have been a betrayal. But the company, having been handed all leverage by the Teamsters bureaucracy, clearly saw no reason not to push for even deeper concessions.

Having isolated the strike, the bureaucracy is attempting to cover its tracks with a boycott campaign.

For several weeks the Teamsters have campaigned on X (Twitter) encouraging the general public to support the strike by refusing to purchase Molson Coors products.

Boycotts are a common way of supporting a strike, however, the Teamsters are offering it as an alternative to mobilizing the working class. They are directing workers into the dead-end of middle-class “consumer advocacy” tactics.

There is a long history of boycotts against Coors. From 1957 to 1987 Coors was the target of an organized boycott campaign over its discriminatory practices towards Hispanics, Blacks, and members of the LGBT community. This period also saw a year-long strike at Coors’ flagship brewery in Golden, Colorado in 1977 that saw the strike defeated and the union crushed. Ten years later, the AFL-CIO called off its support for the boycott in exchange for a union vote for the Teamsters at the Golden brewery, which the union lost.

During this period, Coors would suffer reduced profits and change some of its policies, but it came out of the boycott stronger. At the start of the boycott Coors only operated in 11 western states. By the 1990s, it would be present in every US state and the company would go on to become the second largest brewer in the US and fourth largest in the world.

Molson Coors cannot be defeated by a simple boycott. It is an international corporation with operations around the world. Since 2021, the company has placed heavy emphasis on growing globally, with sales outside of the US making up an increasing share of the company’s profits. The nationalist politics of the Teamsters bureaucracy has no answer to this international organization of capital.

Moreover, the fact that the Teamsters claimed that boycott pressure had forced the company back to the bargaining table shows that they are using the campaign to try and wind down the strike itself and impose concessions on the workers, with at most some token sops by the company to help ensure its passage. Similar to Anheuser-Busch and UPS, the bureaucracy will try to portray the eventual contract to be the result of mass “pressure.”

But the breakdown of re-started talks and the insulting five-cent offer amounts to a declaration that Molson Coors will not accept anything less than an

open and humiliating defeat for workers.

The strike at Fort Worth has reached a crossroads. As long as it remains under the control of the union bureaucracy, the strike will remain isolated and eventually defeated. The alternative is for workers to organize themselves independently, against both management and the union apparatus; to break the isolation and prepare a broader struggle involving Molson Coors workers across the country—both union and non-union—Anheuser-Busch workers and workers in other industries.

This requires the construction of a rank-and-file strike committee to take control of the struggle into the hands of workers themselves. This will also link up the strike with the growing worldwide rebellion by the working class. Similar committees are being set up by workers all over the world, affiliated with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

To learn more about rank-and-file committees, fill out the form below.



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