

“The rank and file was absolutely not involved in these contract discussions”

UPS workers denounce sellout deal “in principle” between company, Teamsters

By our reporters
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United Parcel Service (UPS) workers have reacted with anger to the sellout deal reached in principle last week between the company and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

The Teamsters are seeking to impose historic givebacks on UPS workers, who have voted by 93 percent to authorize a strike against the giant package delivery corporation. The union-company deal would create a second tier of lower-paid “hybrid drivers,” a major assault on one of the few remaining decent-paying jobs at the company. Earlier leaks that the Teamsters had originally proposed this new category of drivers prompted widespread outrage among the rank and file.

Roughly two-thirds of the company’s 230,000 workers are employed part-time and are paid as low as \$10 per hour. The contract would increase the starting part-time wage to \$13 per hour, increasing to \$15.50 by the end of the contract in 2023, leaving these workers at poverty-level wages. The proposal, moreover, starts out at even less than the \$15 per hour, which facilities on the West Coast are already beginning to pay in response to high turnover.

Displaying contempt for the intelligence of the membership, lead Teamsters negotiator Denis Taylor claimed in a statement released Thursday that the deal “is among the very best ever negotiated for UPS members.”

Taylor also warned UPS workers not to “rely on the misinformation that is circulating on the Internet.” Taylor, union President James P. Hoffa, and the rest of the Teamsters bureaucracy are terrified that workers

will take to the social media to cut through the union-company lies and organize independently and in opposition to the unions, as took place at the United Auto Workers in 2015 and among teachers in West Virginia and Oklahoma earlier this year.

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to worker from UPS’s massive Manhattan hub in New York City and another hub near Portland, Oregon, about the proposed agreement.

Asked what he thought of the contract replied, Ray said: “It’s BS. They are offering us \$4.15 an hour [for full-time workers] over five years. That is 83 cents added every August. The company has made massive profits and they are getting a tax break from Trump, while we are breaking our backs.”

Randy, a UPS worker with 15 years of experience, said: “I’m not that familiar with the contract, but the stuff about the weekend deliveries [the addition of the new tier] I don’t like. It might trickle down to us. The volume we are dealing with at work is already a lot, and I’m just hoping that the pensions will still be around by the time I retire.”

A driver of 31 years said: “We just want a fair contract because we work hard. They are making a lot of money and we are the ones making it for them. They want things cheaper and will hire cheaper workers to do the same work for less. The first of us that will be impacted are the ones already doing excessive work because they don’t want to pay us overtime.

“Things in there are the worse that I have seen them since I started. They just keep us overloaded all the time and they want more work in less time.”

VC, a driver with 25 years seniority, told WSWS reporters: “The company is in tough competition with others such as Amazon, which is becoming a monopoly. And so, to make Sunday deliveries, which they don’t do now, they want to create hybrid drivers.

“I heard these hybrid drivers will get a lot less in pay,” he continued. “Under the new contract, it will take five years to get to top pay. Over the years, the time to get to top pay has increased. It used to be six months, then one year, two years, three years and four years. It also took longer and longer to get medical benefits, and the co-payments for medical benefits have risen.”

VC scoffed at the proposed \$4.15 wage increase for full timers. “The wage proposal is clearly less than the rate of inflation.”

VC described the conditions he worked under as a driver for UPS. “I live in Long Island and so I have to get up at 5:30 in the morning and I usually do not get home to around 10 to 12 at night. Due to mandatory overtime, I have been missing time with my son all these years.

“The major issue is company harassment of the workers. The company has a GPS system, so they can follow the driver wherever he goes.

“When something goes wrong like an accident, they want to blame us. They will ask you, ‘Did you look to your left, did you look to your right?’ and so on. They do the same if the worker gets injured. This is a form of intimidation. Management does this all the time to put pressure on the workers.

“Due to the increase of orders over the Internet, the volume of the packages has been increasing every year. The company does not hire enough drivers. The size of the packages has increased tremendously. If the package weighs more than 70 pounds, we are supposed to get help, but sometimes we do not get anyone to help us. As a result, we are getting injuries in our knees, shoulders, elbows and back.

“I had to have a hernia operation due to carrying all these packages, while the company is making a lot more money on the increased volume of ever-bigger packages.”

Heather, a part-time loader from Portland, Oregon, who previously spoke to the WSWS about the conditions inside the nearby Tualatin hub, told reporters, “It seems highly unlikely to me that the

majority will be satisfied with these changes, especially considering how happy management is about this handshake agreement.

“I know quite a few employees who will be incredibly upset once they realize that no proportional raise is intended and that no back pay will be issued. UPS and the Teamsters will do their best to convince us of the generosity of this contract, despite the fact that so few of us, especially in major cities, make anything close to a living wage.

“We’re treated as completely disposable. I wouldn’t be surprised if, with a little pushing, this event resulted in a mass break with the union. Rank-and-file workers were absolutely not involved in these discussions or in considering these terms. We would have insisted on, at the very least, a proportional raise, if not back pay as well.”

The World Socialist Web Site urges UPS workers to form rank-and-file committees to take the conduct of the struggle out of the hands of the Teamsters. These committees should establish lines of communication between all UPS workers and campaign now to reject the sellout agreement and prepare a struggle to eliminate all tiers, convert all part-timers to full-time positions and fight for a 30 percent across-the-board wage increase.

UPS workers must unite with Amazon workers and workers at the United States Postal Service (USPS), who are facing the threat of privatization by the Trump administration, to prepare a common fight. The WSWS will do everything to assist in the formation of rank-and-file committees. We urge all UPS workers to contact the WSWS.

To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>