

“Take control of the struggle!” Logistics workers at UPS and FedEx support GM strike, warn of union treachery

By George Marlowe
21 September 2019

Throughout the United States and around the world, the strike of nearly 50,000 General Motors workers is being closely watched by workers of all industries. Logistics workers at UPS, FedEx and Amazon are speaking out in support and want to unite with autoworkers in a joint struggle against the exploitation of the profit system.

“Keep fighting and I wish I could help more. What you’re doing is a strike for all of us. The workers shall rise,” said Mike, a UPS warehouse worker in Chicago about the GM workers on strike.

Mike went through the experience of the betrayals of the Teamsters union in the 2018 contract struggle, which resulted in the maintenance of poverty wages for part-time UPS warehouse workers and a two-tier system of delivery drivers. The Teamsters rammed through a sellout contract, which was voted down by a majority of workers, using an anti-democratic loophole in the union’s constitution. The anti-democratic maneuver sparked seething anger by more than 250,000 UPS workers, who had voted by more than 90 percent to go on strike against the logistics giant.

“They caved on issues that they promised they wouldn’t accept,” said Mike, “like the 22.4 [lower-paid hybrid warehouse and delivery drivers] and they screwed over the part-time employees by not increasing the amount of full time jobs.”

Conditions in UPS warehouses across the country are “unsafe to say the least,” he said. “Between the fires and other issues we face daily, not to mention filthy conditions, they cut housekeeping in half. The roof is sinking in some places and will leak for days.”

While the Teamsters under Hoffa have feigned sympathy for GM autoworkers and have claimed to

honor the workers’ strike pickets, the reality is that the Teamsters union is as deeply corrupt as the United Auto Workers (UAW) union that GM, Ford and Fiat-Chrysler workers are fighting today. Just like their counterparts in the UAW, the Teamsters today are business outfits that defend the interests of the corporations against the working class.

“The union and the company both need to be taken down,” said Mike. He agreed with the call by the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* that rank-and-file committees need to be built by GM workers and the rest of the working class in opposition to the outmoded unions that function as little more than appendages of management today.

“The rank and file part absolutely needs to be implemented, but not just here—for everyone everywhere. We’re the workers. We need to realize we have the power.”

Marty, a UPS worker in Detroit, spoke out against the corruption of the Teamsters and the UAW, which is embroiled in a federal investigation that has resulted in multiple indictments.

“Corruption all the way up to the UAW president. No surprise there,” said Marty about the recent corruption charges brought against current UAW president Gary Jones and former president Denis Williams. “I just wish they would indict or charge more crooked Teamsters like Hoffa, Hall, Dennis Taylor and the rest of the red-vested criminals.”

Speaking for rank-and-file UPS workers who refuse to cross picket lines, Marty said, “We are honoring them at UPS.” He contrasted this with the phony support of Hoffa and the Teamsters bureaucracy who have no interest in genuinely fighting for UPS workers,

let alone GM autoworkers on strike. When asked if he trusted the Teamsters leadership, he replied “Not in the least.”

Marty said of the theatrics of the Teamsters bureaucracy, “Hoffa is a piece of colluding garbage. I just wish we could prove it. He and his lieutenants are all dirty.”

Ronald, a FedEx worker in Chicago spoke against the abysmal \$250 weekly strike pay by the UAW, which only kicks in on the second week of the strike. “A lot of these people probably have rent coming up in two weeks. A lot of folks are living paycheck to paycheck and I doubt even \$500 covers their rent.”

“I’m proud of them,” Ronald said. “They’re facing immense pressure to submit to corporate pressure from both their employer and their union, but they are still standing up for their rights.

Regarding the UAW, “it looks like they are trying to play both sides. Tentatively supporting a strike, but not too strongly so they don’t actually have to confront the corporations that they work with. It’s pretty astonishing to be honest and it’s pretty clear that the union has no interest in a struggle with the major auto companies.”

“That’s the crux of the matter. I believe that the people in charge [of the unions] have more interest in keeping business moving as smooth as possible. And from what I’ve seen, they’ve done very little do disabuse me from that belief.”

Ronald added, “At the very least the workers need to organize outside of the capitalist labor unions and actually advocate for their interests without corrupt union bureaucrats acting as roadblocks. They need to understand that their power and their rights come their ability to act and their relationship to the means of production, not because some middle man says they have it.

“And the road forward from there is understanding that they are stronger together and not separated by union or nationality. Operating within the capitalist labor union system, that sort of collective action is just not possible.”

Speaking of the need for rank-and-file committees, Ronald said, “I one hundred percent agree with that demand and the need for direct workers control of the strike through committees. It’s pretty clear that the rank-and-file workers can’t depend on the union

bureaucrats to advocate for their rights and interests, so they need to take control of the struggle directly.”

Dameon, another UPS worker in Illinois, spoke out in defense of all autoworkers. “I told my wife, who is a Fiat-Chrysler worker, that I would demand strike pay right now and refuse to work. They should be demanding to stand in solidarity with their brothers and sisters.” Speaking of the need for the working class to fight back, Dameon said, “I’ve talked about a revolution for years. I know the people have the power. We’re all one union of people. It’s time for change.”

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