



NEW DAY AT UPS

NEWS FOR UPS WORKERS, BY UPS WORKERS!

NEW DAY AND THE CONTRACT CAMPAIGN: CONCLUSIONS

by the MA, RI, NC New Day Committees

The tentative agreement was ratified and commenced the week ending September 2. We think it is important to sum up the results of the contract campaign and explain how we tried to take a principled stand against the IBT's systematic deception and intimidation of the members.

As for the national voting results, 130303 voted for the TA and 20694 voted against it, or 86.3% vs 13.7%, with the participation rate sitting at about half of all UPSers. We are once again in a situation where only a minority approves of the contract. We just had ten years of contracts that a majority voted against, and now we have five years of a contract a minority voted for. And how many of those votes were people swindled by the massive public relations push, and how many of those voters will even still be working here by the end of the contract? (There is also the fact that the vote, like everything the Teamsters touch, had a certain level of shadiness to it. There was a 15% spike in participation claimed over the last weekend. There were reports of people not getting their ballots, and there was no authentication of any kind or confirmation after the fact for changing votes.) Almost all of the supplements were ratified with similar margins.

The August edition of New Day already explained the concessionary nature of the TA and the problems with the entire contract process and how it was basically a sham set up to dupe the UPSers. In fact, there is no evidence the IBT even presented workers' proposals to the company, since the contract talks were concealed with a non-disclosure agreement and fairly simple low-cost proposals such as moving time clocks (brought up at local 170's proposal meeting) are not in the contract. It is worth noting, however, that we made some fairly important claims and took our own countermeasures well in advance of the IBT's betrayal at the end of July:

As far back as December of 2022, we were warning people that O'Brien helped thwart the rail workers strike and would certainly do the same to us, that he is paid hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to keep the logistics workers in line, and most importantly, "If the UPS workers do not take matters into their own hands, if we wait for the IBT 'leaders' to take the initiative, we have nothing to look forward to but more concessions from the IBT." Then in March, we came out against the IBT's hollow sloganeering around "unity",

and explained the real material basis for unity among the UPS workers, which has nothing in common with the IBT's attempts to subordinate UPSers to them while subordinating themselves to the needs of UPS and the government.

In May, we stated: "Will the company union plan and execute a strike? We do not think so. Repeatedly, workers vote overwhelmingly for a strike, the IBT rushes into backroom negotiations, and then uses every bureaucratic maneuver to get the workers to accept whatever garbage tentative agreement they cook up with management. [...] And every time, there are a handful of aspiring "reformist" officials ready to exploit this for their own gain! The IBT cannot be relied on to lead a strike because of its own record of mishandling and outright wrecking them, and all their talk of strike preparations is completely empty." All of this has come to pass exactly as we said it would. This prediction was based on the actions of the IBT over the last several decades, the last few UPS contracts, and basic materialist analysis of the IBT's role in the production process. Our way of thinking has been proven undeniably correct on these matters. In July, on the eve of the supposedly "imminent" strike, we pointed out that the strike preparations were carried out with almost no participation from the membership, that there was no strike platform or terms set for ending a strike, and declared, "There is also the ever-present possibility of the IBT thwarting a strike with a last-minute concessionary tentative agreement with UPS." Through July and June, we tried to organize around our strike program (based mainly on the needs of the inside workers with consideration given to previous UPS-IBT agreements and current market conditions) and actively prepared UPSers for the imminent betrayal of the IBT. We did make one major error in this work: we did not specify under what conditions our strike program could be carried out successfully. It required either the IBT undertaking an aimless strike for a short time (like in 1997) or a regional wildcat strike breaking out (like in 1976).

These are the basic facts. At no point were the New Dayers swindled by the IBT nor did we help them swindle other UPSers. We tried to inform our coworkers about what the IBT was doing while pointing out the extremely narrow limits the IBT imposes on all of us. We fought to advance beyond those limits, and we did succeed in building some basic infrastructure for doing so in the future.

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Despite rumors of “sectarianism”, New Day never refused collaboration with UPSers organized into other groups. Our main role in the contract process was relentlessly exposing the opportunism that dominates the IBT, and this was done on the shop floor, where the vast majority of New Day activity takes place and where the actual strength of a union is located.

It bears mentioning that the IBT local representatives unanimously endorsed the TA when they convened in DC. Not one representative took a stand against it on the grounds that the union violated their repeated promises to not make us work past July 31 on the old contract. The fact that the TA was rife with concessions, including major ones from the recent past, was swept under the rug. Allegations of a “militant”, “class struggle”-focused minority within the IBT remain spurious, to say the least. In fact, Jill Dunson, an unelected member of the National Negotiating Committee, even wrote an article for Newsweek outright attacking critics of the TA, openly declaring that, “We’re not interested in any activist fixations on a proletarian revolution.” The IBT is absolutely, avowedly dead-set on keeping the workers out of power—but this issue will be covered more extensively in the future in the context of the IBT’s political spending and endorsements. In the context of the contract, what is of note is that basically no officials took a public stand against the backroom dealing, the fact that dues money was given to the Berlin-Rosen public relations firm to sell us our own contract, or the endless lies and half-truths. The IBT even hid its plan in the event of a majority no-vote.

Lastly, amid all the talk of pay and benefits, the actual role of the contract at UPS has barely been discussed by its supporters and opponents. The fact is, the stewards are still grossly under-equipped when it comes to enforcing it, and most UPS workers will never read even a page of it. Even if this was not the case, the contract simply does not limit fundamental parts of the job like the speed of the work. At its core, the Teamsters contract is both a shield and a club for the company, defending it from economic action and keeping penalties/legal liability to a minimum while allowing maximum maneuverability when it comes to managing us. (And in the rare event that the contract allows for economic action, such as during the health emergency triggered by COVID19 or UPS’ regular payroll “errors”, the IBT just refuses to authorize it, hanging us out to dry legally and financially. There is no indication the IBT will ever spend a cent of their \$350 million strike fund on UPSers.) An actual “historic” contract would give UPSers some level of control over their work, but this would require a “historic” mobilization of logistics workers that the IBT is both unwilling and unable to carry out.



“Life is killing me” -graffiti inside a UPS truck heading to Independence, Texas

IMPORTANT POINTS FROM THE QUARTERLY REPORT

by Frank Loder (WORMA)

Less than two weeks after the supposedly “historic” tentative agreement was made public, UPS released its quarterly report. This report holds valuable operational information, but even more importantly, it represents UPS’ view of the contract and what its plan is going forward. Consider the following figures: for the three month period of April, May, June, the company’s average daily package volume was 20,902,000 pieces. The operating profit for this period was \$2,780,000,000, out of a revenue of \$22,055,000,000. The average revenue per piece is \$13.92. This means that the profit per piece was \$1.75. (This means a five cent piece rate raise for loaders is possible and would result in a \$15/hour raise for someone with a 300 pph. Obviously, neither the company nor its union representatives would voluntarily accept this because it would mean directly reducing the loaders’ rate of exploitation.) How does UPS corporate explain their massive profits? The report states:

“Lower compensation expense for both the quarter and year-to-date periods due to a reduction in direct union labor hours resulting from volume declines, as well as incentive compensation program design changes. These decreases were partially offset by contractual rate increases and cost of living adjustments for our union workforce. [...] Lower employee benefits expense for our union workforce in the second quarter as service costs for our company-sponsored pension and postretirement plans decreased, driven by increases in the discount rates used to measure the projected benefit obligations of these plans.”

“Total cost per piece increased 4.2% for the quarter (up 5.1% year to date), and adjusted cost per piece increased 3.7% for the quarter (up 5.0% year to date), for the reasons described above. We anticipate the cost per piece growth rate for the second half of 2023 will be consistent with that of the first half of the year, as increased costs arising from the tentative new national master agreement with the Teamsters are expected to be largely offset by the impacts of average daily volume increases, network improvements and productivity initiatives, as well as reductions in fuel cost.”

In other words, UPS has been consciously following a plan of slashing hours and paying out less in benefits, and these measures are to be accompanied by “volume increases, network improvements and productivity initiatives”. Our supposed win will be offset by better business, cheap fuel, and speedups. Its interesting as well that the company acknowledges that they are spending less on pension and retirement plans. UPS has an extremely high turnover rate, which the union goes along with because high turnover means fewer people earning the seniority to withdraw from the retirement funds. Its no wonder the company is declaring the contract a win, given the actual state of the operation right now: management is still pursuing its numbers with total disregard for human life, and the IBT just unanimously showed that it is okay with the current situation for another five years, pending limited wage adjustments that the labor market has already forced the company to adopt in many places.

New Day is a newsletter produced by UPS workers to rally our coworkers against UPS corporate and their agents in the Teamsters. New Day Committees are for gathering information and disseminating the basic outlook of the revolutionary UPS workers to the rank and file in the operation, as well as a base that our coworkers can use as a launchpad for campaigns around more immediate issues. Our long-term goal is the creation of a revolutionary industrial logistics union.



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