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NEW DAY AT UPS

NEWS FOR UPS WORKERS, BY UPS WORKERS!

2023 IN REVIEW: MASSIVE LOSSES IMPOSED ON WORKERS

by Frank Loder (WORMA)

There is a lot of talk about "historic victories", supposedly won by "labor" in 2023. This has absolutely no basis in reality. The only people putting forward the line of "historic victories" are scam artists and left-wing grifters, people trying to cover up their actual role in recent events, and ignoramuses. What actually occurred in 2023 was an offensive against the workers carried out by the Biden administration at the behest of various finance and industrial conglomerates. Consider the following:

PBS reported that homelessness increased by 12%, with the homeless population reaching its highest point since the point-in-time counting system was first utilized in 2007. "6 million people have lost Medicaid coverage and millions more are expected to follow well into 2024"—according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities—which is important considering that, "The number of people with incomes below the poverty line in 2022 rose a sobering 15.3 million, today's Census data show, reflecting the expiration of pandemic relief programs including the expanded Child Tax Credit. The poverty rate for children more than doubled from a historic low of 5.2 percent in 2021 to 12.4 percent in 2022…" "There is wide variation in disenrollment [in Medicaid] rates across reporting states, ranging from 62% in Texas to 10% in Maine." Per KFF. At the same time, worker injuries and fatalities have risen recently, with the Bureau of Labor Statistics reporting in November that there was a "total of 5,486 fatal work injuries in 2022, up 5.7% from 2021." [The BLS counts lag behind a year.] The Economic Policy Institute estimated that around $50 billion is outright stolen through wage theft each year.

Federal student loan repayments (over 43 million people hold federal student loans with an average balance of $38,000—per the Department of Education) were resumed on October 1 after a three year pause. Total household debt reached a new high of $17.3 trillion, over $1 trillion of which is credit-card debt, notorious for its obscene interest rates and rapid accrual. According to Experian, the average household has over $100k in debt, up 11% since 2020. US News reported in October that home prices had risen 5.8% since the beginning of 2023, and SmartAsset reported that, "On average, rents increased 5.45% over the last year [this was reported in July], exceeding the inflation rate during the same time. But some areas saw much steeper increases than others – up to a 63% hike." The Federal Reserve Economic Data shows that in November 2023, the average weekly earnings of production and nonsupervisory employees were $828, compared to $819/week in November 2022. But over the same time period, consumer prices were up 3.1% (according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics), amounting to a slight average loss in pay, which would need to be $843/week to have kept up with inflation. The third quarter of 2023 saw corporate profits of 2.7 trillion, compared to 2.5 trillion over the same time period in 2022. (According to FX Empire.) The federal government spent $6.3 trillion on its parasitic bureaucratic-military apparatus and hundreds of billions more from state and local budgets was spent on policing and prisons. New camps were set up for imprisoning migrants, with Democratic mayor of Chicago Brandon Johnson signing a $30 million contract with GardaWorld Federal Services to build more tent cities, and billions of dollars worth of munitions and grants were given to various US proxy forces, including the NATO puppet government of Zelensky in Ukraine and the fascist state of Israel which is actively carrying out a genocide of the Palestinian people.

That all this represents a net loss for the workers is beyond dispute. The Biden administration has overseen a slight decline in workers' real incomes while the landlords, insurance and education industry leeches, the vast state officialdom, corporations, and militarists have been allowed to run roughshod over the people without the slightest limitation put on them by the government. Biden now has a 55.6% disapproval rating to show for it (per Project 538) and his approval rating is actually below the last seven presidents at the same point in their presidency, including Trump.

Yet the representatives of "labor" continue to promote Biden. In an interview with Boston magazine, IBT General President O'Brien raised Biden as potentially the "most pro-labor politician" alongside Ed Markey and Elizabeth Warren. AFL-CIO president Liz Schuler and O'Brien are both directly integrated into the Biden administration through the White House's Advisory

Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations. Biden's entire career is pandering to the needs of the firms that use Delaware as a tax haven—in fact, according to OpenSecrets the biggest donors throughout his career include Alphabet Inc (Google's parent company), Microsoft, Amazon, Apple, Kaiser Permanente, Meta (Facebook's parent company), AT&T, Disney, Wells-Fargo, JPMorgan Chase and Co, and IBM. How is it that "labor" ended up in an alliance with these companies through Biden? Could it be because these firms have the workers' best interests at heart? Or rather, is "labor" so completely bankrupt that it has nothing better to do than shill for the worst elements in the country?

The IBT is such a joke that it actually had an art installation made in Local 25 commemorating the 2023 contract, which was reported in a Teamsters' press release. At the same time, TDU reached a new low this year, even going so far as to reject a resolution at its convention in November calling for an end to negotiating contracts in secret. That is where "the labor movement" in this country is—in fact, only five percent of labor organizations audited by the Department of Labor received unqualified passes, proving that embezzlement schemes and graft are basically omnipresent in "the labor movement". The union bureaucrats are too busy enriching themselves that they didn't even notice that from 2020 to 2023, "Compensation for union workers in the U.S. is up 11.5% […] compared with 14.6% for nonunion workers." [per Bureau of Labor Statistics reported by CNBC]

Most UPSers would probably be surprised to learn that they were supposedly going to go on strike in December. A December 7 press release from the Teamsters reads, "This fall, approximately 35 specialist and administrative workers at UPS's Centennial hub successfully organized with Teamsters Local 89. They voted overwhelmingly to join 340,000 UPS Teamsters nationwide who just finalized the most historic union contract this summer in the history of the company. Today, despite the ruling of an independent arbitrator, UPS shamefully laid off these workers, falsely claiming their labor should be performed by management. The Teamsters are fighting hard for our members at DHL right now. But Louisville is red hot. If UPS doesn't get its act together, they'll be on strike next. Local 89 is currently filing unfair labor practice charges against UPS. Our union will not hesitate to act, and we will not back down. The Teamsters will protect all our members in the delivery and logistics industry no matter the cost. UPS has been given notice it has until Monday to rectify this situation." This is what Teamsters thinks of UPSers and strikes. There is no need to hold a strike vote, no need to actually organize the poorly paid warehouse workers, if they have to be put out of work during peak season (when people try to rack up as many hours as possible to save up for the rest of the year) so the IBT can reap the dues money of the better-paid white-collar workers, then so be it.

Or, the more likely option, there was never any intention of striking, it was just public posturing to get the desired outcome from UPS. In either case, the IBT completely disregarded the UPSers, resorting to chest-beating to advance its own interests. In fact, when UPS announced in late December that the same Louisville building would have layoffs and would eliminate the day sort starting February 16 (according to a UPS spokesperson quoted in WHAS11), the IBT had nothing to say. Such is their complete disregard for the hundreds of inside workers who will be impacted by UPS' decision.

One important "labor" action in 2023 New Day did not discuss was the United Auto Workers' "stand-up strike", a "strike" in name only. In reality, the UAW's "stand-up strike" was nothing more than a lockout aimed at softening up the auto workers for a similarly "historic" agreement that partially walked back decades of concessions. The UAW strike, even at its peak, included a tiny minority of auto workers while the rest continued working under the expired contract, and the strikers (who had no say in which operations would be struck) were sent back to work before the tentative agreement was even ratified. Not only that, but the UAW invented a new rule saying any worker who got a second job that earned more than $500/week would not be paid out of the UAW's strike fund.

What was historic in 2023? For one, the unions continued to reach historic new lows in membership. Second, there was a historically tight labor market —"The U.S. unemployment rate has been below 4% for 21 straight months — the longest stretch since the late-1960s, as former Fed economist Claudia Sahm wrote this weekend." (from Axios) This has created the conditions for "historic victories" (which are actually just completely standard sellout agreements well within the bounds of the labor market) to be exploited in "historic" organizing drives. At UPS, there was something "historic", but it wasn't the contract. It was the complete bankruptcy of Teamsters for a Democratic Union and the expansion of New Day into the Atlantic region. This is important because New Day has always considered the construction of basic trade-union machinery one of its main tasks. It is only through developing themselves organizationally and initiating economic action that UPSers can actually improve their working and living conditions, and it is a huge step that people in the Atlantic region are starting to realize this. In the labor movement broadly, the "reform" caucuses exposed themselves as a public relations stunt for the state unions, and simultaneously, the New Labor Press was established, setting for itself the monumental task of exposing class traitors in the labor movement and uniting workers in the struggle against opportunism. And as for the United States generally, the Biden administration exposed itself as a genocidal fascist-collaborationist dictatorship with zero tolerance for even the slightest criticism against the ethnic cleansing of Palestine. The general election of 2024 and the recent mass protests against the government have once again raised the question for American workers: political independence or subordination?

NEW DAY AT UPS

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.