



NEW DAY AT UPS

NEWS FOR UPS WORKERS, BY UPS WORKERS!

THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TDU PART II: RISE AND SPLIT

by Frank Loder (WORMA)

The first part of the analysis of TDU explained TDU's social basis in student activism and the IBT officialdom, the conditions of outright warfare within the logistics industry surrounding TDU's creation, its stated goal of factional fighting within the IBT as opposed to leading the trade union struggle, and the reactionary historical role it took up within the logistics industry as defender of the IBT. The second part will examine how it came to lead the IBT, what it has done with that leadership, and the future of TDU in its offshoot organizations.

The fierce battles in the logistics industry in the 70s demanded a serious response from the government. The response had two sides: deregulation of the logistics markets, including the landmark Motor Carrier Act of 1980, and simultaneous strengthening of labor discipline in the logistics industry. Deregulate business, regulate labor: this was the conscious policy of the government towards the logistics industry going into the 80s and through the 90s right up to the present. Controlling the logistics laborers demanded a much stronger tool than the decentralized (the first national UPS agreement was not until 1979), corrupt, and inefficient IBT could provide at the time.

In order to strengthen the IBT, the government and TDU undertook a massive overhaul of its reputation. This public relations overhaul hinged on direct government intervention through RICO prosecutions (the Washington Post lamented in 1988 that, "Hundreds of Teamsters officials, including three of the last five presidents, have been convicted of crimes. The union's ties to organized crime have not been cut.") and the setting up of the three-man Independent Review Board which included William Webster, the only man to direct both the CIA and FBI, and a then-member of the Anheuser-Busch board which the Teamsters had collective bargaining agreements with. (Webster only recently ceased involvement in the IRB.) TDU-backed president Ron Carey protested these developments but in reality TDU has supported these measures as a means of strengthening their faction within the IBT. TDU still has articles on their website like "Changes to the Independent Review Board", which complains that, "Hoffa has sought for years to hamstring or eliminate the IRB and its corruption investigations,

which have snared many of his top associates. [...] The Independent Review Board (IRB) has functioned for 24 years to root out corrupt Teamster officials." As the 80s and 90s progressed and the government built up its influence in the IBT, the IBT's membership plummeted by hundreds of thousands of members. From 2.2 million in 1974 to a low of 1.2 million members in 2014, the IBT was bleeding support as it did nothing to defend its members from corporate restructuring, deregulation, or just the day-to-day grind of the logistics industry.

It was under these conditions that TDU was able to take power in the IBT. The IBT was deeply unpopular, and so the officials needed help reigning in the rank-and-file, and the government had created an opening for TDU officials within the IBT bureaucracy through the RICO prosecutions and IRB. Simultaneous with direct government intervention was TDU's efforts to take up the newly-vacated official positions and channel the spontaneous action of the rank-and-file behind their own candidates, culminating in the victory of Ron Carey, the 1997 UPS strike, and the corruption scandal that led to the downfall of Carey. TDU's "leadership" consisted solely in extensive public relations work for the IBT and promotion of their factional supporters. All of TDU's "anticorruption" "democratic" "rank-and-file" sloganeering is completely betrayed by Ron Carey and Sean O'Brien's conduct in office. Carey was caught up in a fundraising scandal, where IBT funds were diverted to donors to his re-election campaign, and he was indicted for perjury and making false statements about it. As for O'Brien, it's very difficult for TDU to pose as an enemy of corruption and defender of union democracy when the guy they endorsed is from one of the most rotten locals in the country (two of the worst Teamster presidents, Dan Tobin and Bill McCarthy, are from 25, and local 82 was so dominated by organized crime that it was legally merged into 25 as a "solution") and who has personally threatened TDU supporters. TDU spent years criticizing O'Brien and did a complete about-face, not because he actually changed but because both sides saw an opportunity for collaboration. In an interview with the labor-liberal magazine Jacobin, O'Brien stated simply, "I need TDU just as much as TDU needs me." TDU, far from being a principled fighter for

Email Us at Newdayatups@proton.me



the membership, simply rallied a section of the membership behind it so that it could trade its limited popular support to the IBT officialdom in exchange for their patronage.

TDU repeatedly claimed the victory of the O'Brien-Zuckerman slate in the most recent election was the result of a mass upsurge in rank-and-file activity and characterized it as the mark of a new, "militant", "insurgent" trend in the IBT. In reality, the slate won an election that had the lowest turnout since the IBT has had direct elections, with O'Brien getting the vote of less than 10% of the IBT membership. (About 115k votes out of 12 million members.) TDU itself claims they are, "Not controlled by any official and answerable only to the rank-and-file, we are an independent voice for working Teamsters." In reality, the TDU Steering Committee is chaired exclusively by IBT officials: Corey Levesque is Assistant Business Agent for Local 251, Sean Orr is a steward for Local 705, Tony Rosario is an "organizer" for Local 804, and Sean Williams is a trustee of Local 71.

While TDU was merging with the uppermost layers of the IBT, TDU itself underwent a factional split. The TDU infighting culminated in the creation of Teamsters Mobilize in the fall of 2022 after the TDU convention rejected a resolution for a caucus for part-timers. (See approximately 24:30 in Teamsters Mobilize Introduction: Principles, History, and Structure from Teamsters Mobilize via YouTube.) Like TDU, they draw their support mainly from students and stewards, and they explicitly reject the UPS workers' criticism of the IBT. Consider how TM talks about the IBT leadership:

"Jennifer Hancock, a part-time package sorter, has worked at UPS for more than three decades. She's an organizer with Teamsters Mobilize [...] Hancock said she thinks the economic elements of the deal could go further, like establishing a \$25 base rate for part-timers. But the fact that O'Brien has challenged the Teamsters status quo and pushed UPS to make concessions, Hancock added, has empowered workers to voice this kind of dissent. The election of Sean O'Brien really motivated people to think that they could make a difference — that we have a new contract coming up, we have a new president, let's try some new things," Hancock said. "That was a signal that things had changed." [from "UPS union negotiated a historic contract" by Danielle Kaye in NPR]

Contrast this with how they characterize rank and file critics of the IBT, and specifically New Day at UPS:

"Let us begin with examining the latter, petty sectarians, as their infantile leftism is often easier to grasp, reflecting as it does, such a blatant and crass impetuosity. These forces are best exemplified by the Gonzaloist grouplet in UPS, which goes under the name "A New Day at UPS" and the Trotskyist sect the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) at the World Socialist Website (WSWS). [...] They thus condemn themselves to remaining marginal and irrelevant forces

in the current UPS struggle and in the US labor movement generally, despite their bluster and bombast. Therefore, these pseudo-Marxists remain isolated and rightly ridiculed by the majority of the US left. They pose little danger at present, as they have little influence." [from "The UPS Struggle and the Tasks of Marxists in the Labor Movement" by Teamsters Mobilize/Revolutionary Marxist Students members in Cosmonaut] According to Teamsters Mobilize, career bureaucrat, Hoffa loyalist and gangster factionalist Sean O'Brien, who was suspended from the IBT for threatening his opposition on video, has "challenged the status quo", "pushed UPS to make concessions", and is "a signal that things had changed" who "empowered workers to voice this kind of dissent". Meanwhile, his critics, and New Day specifically, are "marginal and irrelevant" (this is true of the entire rank-and-file in the IBT, not just New Dayers), "crass", "petty sectarians" and even a "danger"! There could not be a clearer statement of solidarity with the entrenched IBT officialdom and its reactionary leadership against the rank-and-file.

We see a whole series of obstacles placed in front of the rank and file. UPS and the government obviously do not want any pushback whatsoever from the UPSers. The IBT explicitly bans economic action for the five-year period of the contract, and has a huge financial incentive to ram through contracts. On top of this, there is TDU and TM demanding the rank and file conform to the strictures of the IBT, with nothing but vague promises if the rank and file gives them dues and fundraiser money and votes in IBT elections. These groups are important to study because they sell themselves as "militant" "activists" representing us, but they never actually get around to organizing any economic action against UPS that would benefit the rank and file. In our view, the best action to take right now would be a coordinated slowdown, as hours are being cut and work rates increased. In January, a UPS driver committed suicide in Covina, California. It has been known since 1993, when the University of Illinois and Illinois Public Health Department studied UPS drivers, that UPSers are subjected to way more stress than the rest of the population to the point of elevated risks of alcoholism, drug abuse, mental illness, etc. Yet nothing has been done about this and in fact it seems to be getting worse. On top of this, a 46 year-old was fatally hit by a vehicle in February at the UPS Worldport hub in Louisville. The IBT and UPS are both in court. The IBT was ordered to pay \$2.9 million out to a bunch of people from the Organizing Department over a racial discrimination lawsuit, and UPS was ordered to pay \$150,000 to settle a disability discrimination lawsuit after they told a diabetic employee that they would be allowed to take short breaks to check their blood sugar then denied the accommodation and fired the employee. We are the ones who end up having to pay for all this. We end up having to pay union dues, taxes, shareholder dividends, executive compensation, management (which is as counterproductive as ever) pay, plus legal fees and operating costs for all these parties, and on top of this TDU and TM want us to give them our money and time when they have been working with the very same people responsible for UPS' problems? I think we cannot give them anything. These IBT factions, which will continue to crop up so long as the IBT is rich, are simply profiteers and wreckers of the trade union struggle.

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.

