



NEW DAY AT UPS

NEWS FOR UPS WORKERS, BY UPS WORKERS!

PROSPECTS FOR PEAK SEASON ORGANIZING

by Frank Loder (WORMA)

As UPS enters peak season under the shadow of automation and sort closures, it is worth laying out the problems confronting the bulk of UPSers, how they can be resolved through trade union organizing, and the subjective obstacles that must be overcome.

Unite in the Trade Union Struggle

There are three groups that are spontaneously developing trade union consciousness under the present conditions of automation, consolidation, and increased work rates.

The largest and most decisive group, the mass of part-time inside workers, continue to be the most productive and exploited strata of UPSers. Organizing them means assigning responsibilities in the shop committee system (i.e. selecting work area representatives) and working out the particulars of a slowdown plan. We should be organizing for full time jobs for those who want them, and those who don't, we should be fighting for better staffing, equipment, work rates, management discipline, and other relevant conditions. (Such as translation services for the growing number of non-English speaking workers.) Regarding the persistent shortage of full-time bids, it's important to note that Article 55 Section 1 of the New England Supplement says, "Part time employees who work eight (8) consecutive hours for a total of thirty (30) days in a sixty (60) day period, excluding coverage and seasonal period, shall create a 223 position." UPS has weaseled its way out of creating new 223 jobs through the widespread use of supervisor labor and systematically speeding up sorts. A slowdown would force an extension of the working day and put pressure on UPS to make whole the part timers who want a 223 bid. The only reason part timers who want them can't get full time jobs is because UPS doesn't want to have to pay top rate and the Teamsters don't feel like organizing a fight for jobs. This group is the most militant section of UPSers and no economic action can be carried out without them.

Secondarily, there is the smaller mass of senior inside workers: the long-

term part-timers and 223s. This group (which includes myself) has two aspects: the first aspect is that objectively, they are better paid and sometimes better treated than the main mass of inside workers. Therefore, since they have more to lose, they spontaneously capitulate to UPS and the Teamsters. The second aspect is that subjectively, they have more experience with UPS and the Teamsters' wrecking tactics, making them less likely to vacillate by joining management, quitting UPS, or becoming content with minor payouts from the IBT. This group should be fighting to reform short term disability pay (which is absolutely abysmal, especially considering the physical toll of UPS) and the pension and healthcare plans. This group is the most reliable bulwark of trade union consciousness at UPS and must take on the responsibility of organizing the main mass of UPSers and leading the part-time supervisors.

The third group is the part time supervisors, who recently took a pay cut and have had their hours capped. (This in spite of the fact that there have been supervisor shortages, UPS dumps more paperwork onto part-time supervisors, and full time management utilizes them as off-book labor.) The ability of this group to make a positive contribution to the trade union struggle at UPS hinges entirely on the organization of the hourlyies and their ability to lead. However, they cannot be written off entirely, as there are a lot of production issues that need to be worked out at UPS, and they should be overcome through the establishment of a new type of safety committee run independently by the hourlyies and hourly-approved part-time supervisors. Staffing, equipment, holding full-time managers accountable, training new hires—all these can be improved so long as part-time supervisors help the hourlyies struggle against UPS.

Thus, there is in fact a strong basis for an advance in the trade union struggle right now, which is made all the more urgent given the "Network of the Future" initiative (which threatens managers' jobs too as well as ours) and the continued assault on the trade union movement and logistics workers. This offensive is sure to continue after the Biden administration

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regardless of the election outcome. The main issue is the lack of organization of the rank and file UPSers. People aren't thinking about their problems in terms of the trade union struggle or they simply are not organized. In short, the subjective element is lagging behind the objective conditions, which are heightening conflict through layoffs, speedups, and the relative reduction of UPS' total wage bill. UPS just reported it has closed 45 operations so far this year, including nine buildings, with an 8% increase in productivity as measured by parcels per workforce hour. This is with increased volume, specifically, 6.5% year-over-year increase in average daily U.S. volume in Q3. (See "UPS cuts daily volume capacity by 1M in efficiency push" from Supply Chain Dive.)

Teamsters: Enemies of Trade Union Consciousness

Regarding the subjective element, namely, the trade union consciousness and organization of the UPS workers and part time supervisors, it must be noted that the Teamsters play an exclusively negative role. It will suffice to cite a few examples from recent history.

In 2021, when UPS had barely emerged from the COVID crisis and new hires in WORMA were getting paid more than 22.3s in progression as well as part-time supervisors thanks to UPS' market rate adjusted wage, part-time supervisors at WORMA planned a walkout to force UPS to raise their pay. This was thwarted after they were ratted out by a supervisor and their jobs were threatened by upper management, which caused them to capitulate. (Without the support of the hourlyies, they had no choice.) The Teamsters naturally had no interest in organizing managers at that time, when they had spontaneously developed militant trade union consciousness and were suffering under the same extreme conditions at UPS as the hourlyies.

A more recent example from the mainstream media: NBC interviewed a Teamster running for union office in Texas named Otis Keys. (See "This UPS driver is making \$22,000 less than last year in a shift shakeup" from nbcnews.com.) Did "brother" Keys take this opportunity to lay out the issues with the Teamsters' contract, UPS' automation drive, or broader issues in the logistics industry? No. Instead he decided to smear migrants and make UPSers look like idiots by ignorantly claiming, "Our country is prioritizing billions and billions to non-U.S. citizens, but I just don't think I'll ever understand that when you have Americans struggling." Non-US citizens work at UPS. Actually, UPS likes to hire those people because they rarely make it through progression: all UPS has to do is let their work visa lapse and they are gone. Similarly, the IBT likes them because they won't collect from the pension but pay dues. (And rarely demand anything of the union, frequently missing out on contractual rights they are never even aware of.) UPS was even fined by the Department of Justice in 2023 after it was found that UPS "discriminated against a lawful permanent resident based on his immigration status and then retaliated against him. The department also determined that UPS routinely rejected valid documentation that certain non-U.S. citizens presented to obtain an airport badge, which they needed to perform certain job duties at an UPS airport facility."

(See "Justice Department Secures Agreement with UPS to Resolve Immigration-Related Employment Discrimination Claims" at justice.gov.) Slandering migrants in the media is an open attack on foreign-born UPSers, a negation of trade union consciousness, and helps the media to dishonestly portray UPSers as pampered conservatives.

Another example: in WCHNC, where the night sort was already closed down and management claims the entire building will be closed down within a matter of months, an hourly went to his steward looking for answers. The steward's response to the hourly's inquiry? "Don't believe everything you hear." They not only refused to answer the question but try to deflect it back onto the hourlyies, like we are wrong for expecting the Teamsters to conclusively know whether we will have jobs 6 months from now! Fair enough—the rank and file should not believe everything they hear. For instance, the Teamsters recently put out a press release claiming the O'Brien administration organized 50 thousand new members. (See "Teamsters Organize 50,000 New Members in Less Than Three Years" at teamster.org.) According to Department of Labor filings, this is a flat out lie. The total number of workers covered by elections involving Teamster representation since March of 2022 is approximately 21 thousand. From October 15 2014 to October 15 2024, less than 80k workers filed for Teamster representation. If we deduct the tens of thousands of layoffs from Yellow, UPS, Anheuser-Busch, etc, it's a reasonable assumption that membership is either about the same as under Hoffa or even slightly declined.

One final example of how the Teamsters liquidate trade unionism at UPS. Local 170 was supposed to have elections this month, but they were canceled owing to a lack of participation. Some might see this as an opportunity to condemn the UPSers for alleged lack of interest in trade unionism—in reality, it's yet another example of the colossal failure of Teamsters "organizing". Why bother with a lengthy election process involving mass assemblies to discuss trade union policy when you can just write "the most democratic union in the world" on the local's website and call it a day? (Not to mention, who wants to run for office in a local that got sued by their opposition and won in 2020—see "Hogan v. Teamsters Local 170" at casetext.com.) Doing away with elections altogether is the logical conclusion of the IBT's efforts to liquidate all rights and activity of the rank and file.

Many UPSers complain about corruption. Corruption on this scale simply does not happen by accident. The problem is not corruption, the problem is an alliance between a minority of workers with UPS against the majority. The IBT represent the negation of trade union organization at UPS by buying off a tiny privileged minority who demoralize the UPSers from within. The Teamsters have nothing positive to contribute to the trade union struggle and in fact are an obstacle standing in the way of genuine trade union consciousness and organization. They have no sense of responsibility to the workers and have created a situation at UPS that only gets worse for the workers. But the rank and file cannot tolerate this forever.

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.

