



# NEW DAY AT UPS

**NEWS FOR UPS WORKERS, BY UPS WORKERS!**

## **CORRECTING THE RECORD ON STRIKES**

**By: Frank Loder (WORMA)**

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. Every time without fail, not just at UPS, the IBT proclaims for itself the sole right to lead the workers, then does nothing and takes advantage of the ensuing confusion and demoralization to ram through concessions. (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.

In reality, the whole point of the IBT at UPS is to prevent stoppages. The national master contract plainly states in Article 4, "In the event the Job Steward or the designated alternate has led, or instigated or encouraged unauthorized strike action, slowdown or work stoppages in violation of this Agreement he/she may be singled out for more serious discipline, up to and including discharge." The New England Supplement makes it even clearer in Article 48 Section 4 that, "The Union shall undertake every reasonable means to induce such employees to return to their jobs during any such period of unauthorized stoppage of work mentioned above [...] The Union shall make immediate effort to terminate any strike or stoppage of work which is not authorized by it." And the executors of this contract, we are told, are going to now do a complete heeltorn and lead a strike? (The decisive factor in any strike is the discipline of the workers as a class. This discipline must be based on the shared, immediate interests of the UPS workers. What do the UPSers want, and what are they willing to do to get it? Everything hinges on this question.)

The IBT has thus prevented any hope of a legal work stoppage by building roadblocks at every step of the process: nothing can be done without "authorization", "authorization" cannot be acquired during the life of the contract and even then depends on a number of unelected officials, and nothing can be done about the officials without participating in their joke elections. Is it conceivable that the people whose paychecks depend on preventing a strike will turn into brilliant strike leaders and champions of the workers once the contract expires? Or is it more likely that they will do nothing come August 1, wait for national to tell them a tentative agreement has been reached, and then immediately go back to their routine? Yet a number of people inside and outside UPS Teamsters continue to distort and outright lie about the role Teamsters has had in historical strikes and about the upcoming potential strike.

The 1997 strike was the result of a breakdown in the machinery, since at the time the union was being remolded by the federal government and the holdouts from the Hoffa era were trying to reassert themselves. The atrocious handling of the strike, from the vague demands (which are almost verbatim the same as the demands being put out by the union right now), delaying its start, to not paying strike pay from day one, to ending it without a vote by the strikers, is a testament to this. In reality, like every UPS Teamster contract, the one following the 1997 strike introduced new tiers (in that case, 223s, who currently work longer hours for lower pay than anyone, at least in buildings with MRAs), left unaddressed the vast majority of issues, and was promptly followed by layoffs. In fact, UPS at the time characterized the agreement pretty positively.

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Company spokesman Ken Sternad said, "It gives us some stability to look forward to. And it falls within the financial parameters that we had set for ourselves when we started negotiations," and the CEO James Kelly described it as "affordable" and "said it would allow UPS to remain competitive". (Quotes from CNN, 20 Aug 1997, "It's official: Teamsters End UPS Strike") Frankly, the most damning thing anyone can say about the 1997 strike is, look what it led to. Are or are not the vast majority of UPSers laboring in sweatshop conditions for trash pay, pay that barely rivals fast food workers, pay which (depending on location and job class) is actually less than our non-union counterparts? We absolutely are, and the fact is the IBT has been there every step of the way to make sure there is no stoppage that could potentially throw a wrench into UPS' operations.

Some truly desperate propagandists for the IBT think they are clever bringing up the 1934 Minneapolis general strike. This city-wide rebellion, in which Teamster workers played a massive role, is exploited by some as a symbol of the power of the Teamster union. No doubt this is done in order to give the IBT bureaucrats a façade of militancy. But the fact is that the current Teamsters union has nothing to do with the 1934 Minneapolis rebellion. After suppression of the general strike, the IBT completely dismantled the Minneapolis local and rebuilt it from scratch to make sure no such rebellion would take place again. Even before the 1934 general strike, when a general strike broke out in Seattle in 1919, the Teamsters local there scabbed. The current Teamsters leadership exists in *opposition* to previous uprisings, they are the descendants of the betrayers and sellouts, not the rebels.

As for the upcoming potential strike, what is there to say? There have been no preparations whatsoever. There is no date for a strike vote, or even a concerted campaign to educate the members on a potential strike and all the responsibilities and liabilities (and potential life-changing gains) from carrying one out. The Teamsters is not preparing for a strike, but on the contrary, trying to disorient and demoralize UPSers. O'Brien continues to lie and bluster his way through "negotiations", including the brilliant tactical move of declaring national negotiations delayed until UPS makes progress on supplements then promptly moving ahead with negotiations anyway. But all the bluster in the world about "union strong" cannot conceal the fact that UPS is carrying out layoffs, wage cuts, speedups, and uncountable contract violations right now with the tacit approval of the Teamsters. Their entire history is a history of collaboration with UPS and wrecking strikes. And therefore the Teamsters cannot be counted on to lead a strike.



UPS strikers in 1997

**Have contract demands you want to fight for? Want to represent your job classification or work area in the struggle against UPS and their Teamster lackeys? Talk to your distributor about joining your building's New Day Committee!**



New Day is a newsletter produced by UPS workers to rally our workers against UPS corporate and their agents in the Teamsters. Teamsters is controlled by white collar bandits who undermine our fight for better pay and working conditions. We aim to build a rank-and-file organization that can bend Teamsters to its members will, enforcing and negotiating contracts that improve our lives as hardworking UPSers. Following Teamsters can only mean more concessions, and only the united majority (composed of all non-management job classifications) can win us a decent contract.

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