

"Our" Leaders, the Blackmailers

We can't trust our leaders. The two big parties, the Democrats and Republicans, are little more than mercenaries in the employ of big business. The time has come to do something about it.

We're on this picket line because we can't trust "our" government to look out for our interests. The people we supposedly elect, who were supposed to represent us — where are they? Where have they been? Where were they when UPS told us to get lost, that they aren't bargaining any more, that they aren't even going to give us a last, best offer?

We deserve more.

What do we deserve?

We deserve better pay. No one working at UPS should make less than \$25 an hour.

The time has come to **end the two-tier wage system** that makes our temporary-worker siblings second-class workers, and keeps their families in poverty.

We deserve to have days off — without forced overtime.

We deserve more guaranteed full-time work, rather than being treated as disposable. Everyone who works for UPS deserves the protection of full-time work.

We deserve safe working environments. We deserve to be protected from abuse and harassment from managers.

Our demands are reasonable. We aren't asking for too much. UPS has no business, no products, and no profits without us. Who staffs the warehouses and drives the trucks? We do. Every dollar that UPS makes, it makes through our labor. When was the last time you saw a manager driving a delivery truck or moving boxes in the warehouse? When was the last time you saw the CEO of UPS, Carol Tomé, working in one of the warehouses?

So why does Tomé make over \$10 million dollars a year, while we're fighting for a modest \$25 an hour? Last year she made \$19 million dollars! UPS has the money to meet our demands.

And where is Biden, who bills himself as the "most pro-union president in history"? **The Biden government hasn't helped us one bit.** Where has "our" president and his administration been for the last three years?

We watched as hundreds of our brothers and sisters died, first under Trump, then under Biden, during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic — from a preventable disease. Millions have been killed in this country, and millions more worldwide, by the mismanagement, greed, and avarice of our capitalist leaders. The men and women who claim to be our "representatives" send us back to work without protections; they watch as millions of workers fall sick, all for the precious profits of our bosses; then they clap their hands and announce, with the death toll still rising by the hundreds daily, that the pandemic is "over."

Fighting COVID was never going to be easy, but it didn't have to be this hard. We watched in real time as the government and business leadership threw working people into the wood-chipper, ground us up for mulch, and went home and pocketed the profits. Corporate income is way up. And whenever the economy started to go sideways, the Federal Reserve yet again bailed out the banks, while millions across the U.S. sank into poverty. The free money tap was on, and it flowed and flowed... and now we, the working people, are dealing with the result: Out-of-control inflation. Chronic unemployment. Breakdowns in supply chains and shortages of essential medicines. So what has Biden done for us, this union-friendly president, this President of Labor? He's talked a good game in front of the cameras — when he manages to remember his lines. He talks about being the champion of the unions. But words are cheap. What does he do when he has the chance to put his money where his mouth is? He forces us back to work.

The rail workers on the country's biggest railroads wanted to strike back in December and January. Like all working people, they were suffering. They were suffering like we're suffering. Railway workers aren't even allowed to talk about their working conditions — long hours, low pay, unsafe environments, skeleton crews, and more — or they get fired. These inhuman working conditions are part of the reason why we've witnessed so many major train derailments this year, like the one in East Palestine, Ohio, that caused a regional ecological catastrophe.

President Biden had a chance to support the rail worker strike. The workers trusted him to represent their interests. Instead, he crushed it. He put it to Congress to use an old, arcane law to order the rail workers back to work, and Congress — both Republicans and all but a few Democrats — obliged. He forced the workers to accept a contract they didn't want.

If Biden can find a way to sell out the Teamsters, he'll do it again.

We can't rely on our political leadership. We have to rely on each other. It's time we did something. The first thing we have to do is start talking with our coworkers about our working conditions and educating ourselves about our political situation. Reach out to your local organizers and ask where and when the next political education reading group session will be held. That's how we'll build grassroots workers' power, independent of our bosses, their servants in the two big parties, and our own captured union bureaucracy.

Because we can't just threaten a strike.

When we strike, we have to strike hard.

When we fight, we fight to win.

