

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
February 28, 1976

TO ALL ORGANIZERS AND TRADE UNION DIRECTORS

Dear Comrades,

Several branches have recently inquired about a caucus in the Teamsters Union, Teamsters for a Decent Contract. Attached is material from this group and a reply Frank Lovell wrote the Portland organizer explaining our view of the caucus.

Comradely,

Doug Jenness
Doug Jenness
SWP National Office

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14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
February 11, 1976

Stacey Seigle

Portland

Dear Stacey:

Thanks for sending along the International Socialists stuff on the Teamsters. We have been receiving this material from several branches, and the reports are all about the same. A meeting of 35-40 people chaired by a member of I.S. It doesn't seem to me that this "movement" can get very far because its demands are directed to the union bureaucracy, not the trucking industry. On top of this, the "opposi-tionists" have no way of presenting or struggling for their demands, except by presenting petitions to Fitzsimmons. They anticipate that an "indecent" settlement will be made at which time they will turn it down and presumably go on strike. Against whom and for what? How will such a strike be organized? It can only be organized through the Teamsters union. But what preparations are being made for such a strike? It doesn't appear as if there is any response inside the union as yet. Certainly Fitzsimmons has much more to worry about right now than the petitions for a decent contract that are being laid at his doorstep.

There is a good deal of opposition inside the Teamsters union and resentment against the union officials and the employers for not living up to the conditions of the present contract, never mind trying for another "decent" one. Many members of the Teamsters union would like to get the wages and conditions that are called for in their present contract. The trouble is that special deals are made with trucking com-panies which allow them to pay their drivers below the national contract scale.

There will be some teamsters who show up at these I.S.-sponsored TDC meetings and it is possible to sell a few Militants, maybe some copies of Farrell's books. I think that's the most we can expect to get out of them at this time. We should take a friendly approach, and if we manage to sell some of the books that's all to the good. Someone is bound to learn something from them.

Comradely,
s/ Frank Lovell

Background Information on Teamsters for a Decent Contract (TDC)

Teamsters for a Decent Contract (TDC) was founded in Chicago on August 16, 1975. Thirty-five Teamsters from ten states met to formulate a program of rank-and-file demands that would insure a decent contract. Their aim was to organize the ranks through a petition campaign pledging signers to vote no to any proposed contract which did not include these essential rank-and-file demands. Remembering the woefully weak settlement of 1973 when there was no pressure on the negotiators from the IBT membership, these 35 people vowed not to let the same thing happen in 1976.

The Chicago meeting did a number of things. It formulated the TDC contract program; it pledged itself to carrying out the petition campaign around this program nationwide; it elected a ten-person steering committee to make policy decisions; it established an administrative organization in Cleveland, Ohio. The TDC contract program is spelled out in a brochure entitled, "Stand Together in '76." Over 125,000 copies of this brochure have been distributed.

The response to these demands and the petition campaign has been fantastic. Drivers began spreading the word, handing out brochures, getting petitions signed faster than anyone believed possible. The rank and file are clearly aware that present economic conditions are critical and that serious protections need to be written into the 1976 master freight agreement. Within the first few months of the campaign, TDC has reached over 145 locals in more than 30 states.

The key task of the TDC was to begin organizing this response in a consistent and effective way. On November 22, 1975, 85 persons assembled in Cleveland, Ohio for a National Planning Meeting of TDC. At this meeting a plan for doing this was formulated. It was decided that chapters of TDC be formed in every local area possible. These committees would be responsible for distributing and collecting petitions in their areas, holding public meetings, and organizing the ranks around the TDC program. It was also decided that to fund the ongoing work of TDC, that supporters cards be issued to anyone contributing \$5 or more beyond the cost of literature to the TDC. These two decisions were a major step forward to insuring the coherence and stability of TDC right up through the contract deadline and make it a strong, locally based, nationally organized movement that could make a difference in the kind of contract Teamsters get.

In addition, the meeting decided to undertake a two-pronged effort to get rank-and-file input into the negotiating process. First, it was decided to send a representative delegation to Washington on January 10, the first weekend after the start of negotiations, to present the first batch of signed petitions to Frank Fitzsimmons and the negotiating

team. TDC wants them to know what demands the rank and file want to see included in the master freight agreement. Secondly, TDC planned a campaign to raise resolutions in as many IBT locals as possible to (1) officially endorse the contract program of the TDC and (2) for the right to a separate vote on all supplements.

Finally, the steering committee was expanded to 16 members so that rank and filers who had worked hard on TDC and who had proven experience in union struggles, but who had become involved since the Chicago meeting could be included in the decision-making process.

Since these decisions were made, TDC organizing activity has grown. On the weekend of December 7-8, a meeting of over 100 Teamsters was held in Detroit, Local 299, Fitzsimmons' home local, to organize a chapter of TDC; in Los Angeles over 100 TDC members picketed Frank Fitzsimmons at a \$100 a plate dinner when he refused to meet with them and discuss their contract proposals; in Chicago, over 200 Teamsters working for UPS met to discuss their situation; and in New York 50 UPSers from the entire Northeast Region got together. These last two meetings were sponsored by TDC and UPSurge, a nationwide newspaper of, by, and for UPS workers, which is working in conjunction with TDC around the UPS contracts which are patterned after the master freight agreement now being negotiated.

On the weekend of December 13-14, local TDC meetings were held in Pittsburgh, Scranton, and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Akron, Columbus, Springfield, and Cincinnati, Ohio; Indianapolis, Indiana; Chicago, Illinois; and West Coast cities. Meetings had previously been held in New York, New Jersey, Rochester, Cleveland, Seattle, Portland, Oakland, Los Angeles, and Green Bay, Wisconsin.

In Local 299 in Detroit and Local 249 in Pittsburgh major attempts were made to put the local's support behind the TDC contract program. In Local 299, the resolution to vote separately on all supplements passed overwhelmingly. The resolution backing the TDC contract program was ruled out of order by a leadership afraid of its passage. In Local 249, the motions were ruled out of order despite vocal support for the resolutions from the floor.

TDC will continue this organizing effort among rank-and-file Teamsters right on through the contract deadline. We believe that if the ranks are organized to use our power, that is the best method of getting the kind of contract we need. We do not seek a strike, but we are ready to strike if need be. If the employers know that, they may be ready to bargain more seriously. TDC is building a network of IBTers that are aware of what is going on in the negotiations, clear about what is needed, and ready to act if necessary. Both the trucking industry officials and the IBT leadership should understand that though the negotiations are going on behind closed doors, they cannot be kept hidden from the rank and file of this union.

January 9, 1976

Contact: Ken Paff

On Saturday, January 10, at 1 PM, a representative delegation of hundreds of Teamsters and their families will be assembling at the headquarters of the Teamsters Union, 25 Louisiana Avenue N. W., to present Frank Fitzsimmons and the IBT negotiating team with a set of demands, which the rank and file feel must be included in this year's contract. These demands, formulated and sent throughout the country by a group called Teamsters for a Decent Contract (TDC), have gained the support of thousands of Teamsters as evidenced by the signed petitions the delegation will be presenting. TDC feels that the voice of the rank and file must be heard in these negotiations from the first and are bringing this first batch of 25,000 signatures to Washington as soon as possible after the start of negotiations. The drive to collect signatures and petitions will continue non-stop right up to the contract deadline.

Today's delegation will be drawn from many areas. Car caravans will be coming from East Coast areas including Scranton and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, New York City, New Jersey, Maryland, and Virginia. Buses are coming from Cleveland, Ohio with Teamsters from Cleveland, Akron, Detroit, and Chicago; Columbus, Ohio with people from Columbus, Cincinnati, Springfield, Louisville, and Indianapolis; and Pittsburgh with people from Pittsburgh, New Castle, and Wheeling. Representatives are also coming from Los Angeles, California and Seattle, Washington.

Many Teamsters from Frank Fitzsimmons home local in Detroit, Local 299, who will not be making the long trip to Washington, will be demonstrating in support of the TDC contract program in front of their local union hall today, while this delegation is in Washington.

The Teamsters for a Decent Contract drew up its proposals long before the union made known what it is pre-

senting to the trucking industry. The union's "secret" negotiating package was made public by the TDC on December 3, 1975 and showed that the pressure generated by the TDC campaign has already had some effect. The money proposal by the IBT officials was significantly higher than that expected. However, the package as a whole was not better than expected and was rejected by the TDC as "totally inadequate and unacceptable." There was nothing covering the important areas of job security, health and safety, grievance procedure, working conditions, or right to vote on supplements and riders. Nor was there any evidence that the union would fight for the wage package proposed.

"We have been through the 'promise them anything but give them the shaft' bargaining techniques of the IBT before" said Ken Paff of Local 407, Cleveland, Ohio, Secretary of the TDC. "With rising inflation and high unemployment, a weak contract would be suicidal. The only way to guarantee a decent contract is to organize rank-and-file pressure on the negotiations to come through with what we need. A strike may not be necessary, but we must be prepared to strike if the trucking industry is to take our demands seriously. To disavow the possibility of a strike, as Frank Fitzsimmons has done, is a shocking disservice to the hundreds of thousands of people who are depending on these negotiations"

This delegation and rally is only one step in the campaign of the TDC. Since its inception in August of this year, TDC has been spreading all over the country. TDC is pressing a campaign of resolutions in as many IBT locals as possible to put the support of the local officially behind (1) the proposed demands of the TDC and (2) the right to vote separately on contract supplements for different areas and types of workers. TDC will also continue its petition campaign and will return to Washington with more petitions in the future. The nation's Teamsters are behind the TDC contract program and are looking forward to a contract that includes them. The 435,000 IBT members covered by the master freight agreement and the thousands more covered by supplements and riders patterned after it would not like to be disappointed.