

Yellow workers dealing with lost hours, no severance pay after freight company shuttered operations and declared bankruptcy

Samuel Davidson
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Are you affected by the Yellow bankruptcy, or do you work at another freight carrier? Tell us your story by filling out the form below. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

Following Monday's bankruptcy announcement by freight trucking company Yellow, resulting in the loss of 30,000 jobs, the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke with several workers from the company's dock and warehouse in Columbus, Ohio. Out of concern for the workers' ability to be hired at another company, we have changed their names for this story.

David is a warehouse worker, who had been working on the dock loading and unloading trucks for less than a year. Last month, David spoke with the WSWs about the horrendous conditions in the warehouse and the disrespectful way management treated workers.

Joe, a truck driver with over 20 years experience, has been driving for Yellow Freight for a little over five years. He estimates that there are about 70 drivers working out of the Columbus facility, including 50 line haul drivers like himself, 10 city drivers and 10 drivers that work in the yard.

Workers at the Columbus warehouse and hub were not informed that they are being laid off or terminated. In fact, more than one week since the company shuttered operations they have yet to be contacted by the company on their status. Workers only found out that they were out of a job on Sunday, July 30th when they arrived at the warehouse and found the gates padlocked shut.

Another worker at the Columbus hub wrote into the WSWs to say: "I worked for Yellow for seven years in

Columbus, Ohio. This whole thing is ridiculous because they never gave us a phone call or anything. We all went to work to see the gates locked. Management from the top down are cowards. If they were to reopen I would never go back to work there."

"I just started receiving text messages," said David, who wasn't scheduled to work that day. "People are so mad that they weren't told, they were just thrown on the street. We didn't get severance pay. People are owed vacation pay. We are out with nothing."

Joe, the line haul driver, works nights. "I didn't get notified, I drove by the gate, and it was barricaded. All we have is our last paycheck. There are a lot of people with kids here and they depend on this job; not just for pay, but for their insurance too. A lot of my friends are having a very hard time. Many people live paycheck to paycheck to keep up with bills."

Joe explained that they fired the person who does the payroll before she had finished entering the payroll. "They called our payroll lady Angela and fired her on the spot. She hadn't finished the payroll, I know one driver that lost 15 hours. There are also guys who had five or six weeks vacation that they've lost.

David added, "People have lost their vacation time, their personal time. They are not getting paid for what they are owed. People lost their medical insurance. People lost everything."

Without an official notice of layoff, workers have not been able to file for unemployment. Joe reported that he tried to call, but "I wasn't able to get through. So many people are trying to file."

"This is why people need severance pay," he

repeated.

David pointed out that management received severance pay, but not the workers. “I spoke with a supervisor, and he told me he received severance pay, but we didn’t. He didn’t like the situation.

“I’d like to know why they haven’t paid their employees severance pay. They paid the supervisors but not the employees, which is very unfair. We did the hard work, not the supervisors. The executives don’t know how to operate a forklift. They are not the ones doing the work. We are.”

David also felt that both the company and the union knew this was coming and didn’t tell the employees. “They should have given us a 60-day notice, they knew they were going to do this. They should have given people notice.”

Referring to the fact that the Teamsters called off a strike last month, claiming it had reached a deal to give the company time to pay into its pensions, he said: “They were just using people to clear the docks. But they knew they were going to shut down and people should have been notified.

“Management knew this was coming. They all took their vacation. I knew this was coming and I tried to warn people, but the union kept telling them that everything was going to be alright. The union knew what was going to happen. But they didn’t care, they got their money too.

“With all the money the union collected, they should have been fighting for us. They kept this all hush-hush.

“They were telling us to keep working but it’s all a big hoax. Yellow just wanted to clear the docks. It was a big hoax to use the little bit of people that were still coming in to clear their docks. I’m not happy with the union, but this is not going to hurt them, they have plenty of money.”

Joe too felt that the Teamsters betrayed them.

“I’ve never seen anything like this,” Joe said. “I’ve never worked for a company that treats their people like this. The union is just as much of the problem as the company. Unless you’re in that little clique, you’ll lose out.

“The company will throw you under the bus and the union will throw you under the bus. The union is a joke. They take our money but they don’t do anything for us. We lost insurance, our paycheck and they’ve done nothing.”

Both David and Joe are hopeful that they will find other work, but are worried about their co-workers being able to find work.

“Other companies don’t want to hire us because we worked at Yellow,” Joe said. “I already had two interviews with another company. I was supposed to have a third interview. But somebody told them I have been driving for Yellow and now they won’t answer my phone calls.

“I’ve been driving for 20 years with a clean safety record. I would be somebody they would want to hire, so if they’re not it’s only because I had worked for Yellow. I have a perfect driving record, if they are not hiring me people are going to have a hard time finding a job.

David too has already been looking for work. David went to several other companies throughout the Columbus area looking for work.

“I went to PittOhio (a privately owned transportation company based in Pittsburgh) and they said half the people from Yellow have come over looking for work. Their pay is okay, but they don’t have the overtime option that you had with Yellow. This is very hard on people that they have to start over.

“I think it’s very unfair. The workers are getting the short end of the stick while the big wigs sit back and get rich.”

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