

“The union is doing nothing”: New York City UPS workers speak out as company announces more layoffs

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How have the layoffs at UPS affected your facility? Contact us by filling out the form below. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

On Tuesday, UPS announced it was cutting yet another shift at one of its logistics hubs. This time, the company is cutting the sunrise sort shift at the Western Regional International Air Hub in Ontario, California. Around 135 jobs will reportedly be lost at the facility, one of the largest UPS air hubs in the country. The WSWs has also received reports that the twilight sort has been cut, although this has not yet been confirmed.

The move is part of the accelerating jobs massacre at the company, which earlier this year announced 12,000 cuts to management and administrative positions. The company is also eliminating thousands of jobs performed by members of the Teamsters union by slashing shifts at its warehouses and hubs. The vast majority of these workers are part-timers earning totally inadequate wages, which were only recently increased from a minimum of \$16.65 to \$21 an hour.

The logistics giant is using new advances in automation as a weapon to eliminate huge swathes of its workforce. According to one HR source, technology being implemented at new facilities has the potential to eliminate 80 percent of all warehouse jobs. This is part of a massive international job cutting, which includes the auto industry, the technology sector, healthcare and others. The aim is not only to cut costs at each individual corporation but to smash the rising resistance of the working class through mass unemployment.

UPS workers on social media are beginning to compile lists of layoffs around the country. Based on these, in addition to previous reporting by the WSWs, the facilities with known layoffs include:

- Mechanicsville, Virginia (facility closing)
- Louisville, Kentucky Centennial hub (day sort)
- Baltimore, Maryland hub (day and night sorts)
- Toledo, Ohio (day sort)
- Livonia, Michigan (night sort)
- Mesquite, Texas hub (slated to close for re-tooling as an automated facility)
- Round Rock, Texas
- Portland, Oregon Swan Island hub (day sort)
- New York City, Maspeth (Queens) (day sort)
- New York City, 43rd Street Manhattan Hub

- Windsor, Connecticut (twilight sort)
- Edgerton, Kansas (day sort)
- West Springfield, Massachusetts
- Mount Olive, New Jersey (twilight sort)
- New Stanton, Pennsylvania (day sort)
- Indianapolis, Indiana, 81st Street Hub (day sort)
- Perrysburg, Ohio trailer maintenance shop (facility closing)

If you know of other facilities not listed above, notify the WSWs by filling out the form at the bottom of this article. All submissions will remain anonymous.

To date, the top officials of the Teamsters union have still not publicly acknowledged that cuts are taking place. This is because they are helping to carry them out. The new contract passed last year, which the union dishonestly claimed to be the richest in decades, contains no provisions whatsoever against layoffs.

Secretary-Treasurer Fred Zuckerman, the second-highest ranking bureaucrat in the union, recently visited Portland, Oregon, where hundreds of UPS workers are losing their jobs. He did not meet with workers in the day shift at the city’s huge Swan Island hub, which is being eliminated.

Instead, he proclaimed the issue was one of “contract enforcement,” in line with previous claims by General President Sean O’Brien that the union was conducting an unprecedented “enforcement” campaign. This is not only largely fictitious—workers report they have not been told anything by the Teamsters—it is a red herring, given that the contract contains no safeguards against layoffs.

If there is to be a fight in defense of jobs, it has to be done independently of and against the corrupt Teamsters bureaucracy. Workers must take matters into their own hands, reserving the right to take all measures they deem necessary to force an end to the layoffs. Workers should not be expected to treat last year’s contract, passed through lies and deception, as binding upon them.

The UPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee has issued a statement proposing the development of a counter-offensive by UPS workers, organized around three main principles. First, workers must insist on the right to take action to enforce their democratic will regardless of what the bureaucracy says; second, they must reject the “right” of UPS and other giant corporations to profit and fight for their transfer to public ownership, democratically controlled by workers; and third, they must unite

their struggle with workers all around the world in a common fight against job cuts.

“The union is doing nothing”

Workers at the UPS facility in Maspeth, Queens in New York City recently spoke to *World Socialist Web Site* reporters about the job cuts at their facility.

One worker, formerly on the night shift and now working on the twilight sort, explained, “The elimination of the night shift could be coming with the layoffs scheduled for May 10th. Right now, 80 people have been taken off that shift. They have been laid off for months. There has been no explanation from anyone about what is going to happen to the Midnight shift on May 11 after the layoffs occur.

“I know there are workers now working split shifts, and sleeping in their cars at night in the parking lot. Those split shift workers go to jobs early in the morning at 4:30 am with the preloaders. Because they are saying the volume of work is decreasing, they are saying there is no value to these jobs. Feeder drivers are also being pushed back into warehouse jobs.

“I know it is not declining volume that is behind these layoffs. They are taking work to the new automated hubs that have opened up, including the new ones in Bayonne, New Jersey and in Pennsylvania. These are the Mega-hubs. The company is saying there’s no work to be had, but the lines are being taken over by the automated Bayonne hub.”

A veteran feeder driver said, “The layoffs are bad, but the union has done and is doing nothing. That is the way things are going now. Feeder driver jobs are being eliminated. There are 20 drivers that are going to be laid off in Maspeth. Feeder drivers will be pushed back into regular package driving, which pays less money, but you still keep your job.”

“They are definitely diverting work to Bayonne,” he added. “I have been driving there and delivering work there for a while. Have you seen it? It is a big, new place, and that is where they have been diverting work, as I said, for a while.”

A veteran porter was outraged by the layoffs. “It is very bad. People with 5 years, 10 years or 20 years making this company money are just being laid off. Everyone needs to survive here. The place has plenty of work.

“I was born in the mid-20th century, and the world has changed. Nothing is going right now. With the contract we just had, they give you one thing, like the part-timers getting the wage raise to \$21 an hour. But then they also include so many changes you don’t know about that hurt. So, who really wins? Who got the better deal from the contract? It is the CEO of UPS, Carol Tome. How many millions has she made?

“They tell us they are upset because they didn’t make as much profit last year as they did the year before. But that year was the most profit UPS ever made in a year. So, they want us to increase the profit margin for them every year, and look what they give us. I ask myself what is the union going to do about these terrible

layoffs? They are doing nothing.”

When another night shift worker was asked what he thought, he delayed his response for a minute. He then said, “I was just pausing to think how I could say this without curse words. The layoffs are horrible and disgusting. They are lying about having no work. They have had to double the size of the twilight shift recently.

“How is the union allowing no work on the night shift, but doubling the twilight shift? The union is doing nothing about this.”

A worker coming in for the second half of his split shift said, “People need jobs and we need money. It may have been a ‘good’ contract like the union claims, but people need jobs and not a lot of baloney. Instead, there are fewer workers here.”

Another worker said, “We all have kids. It is unnecessary to get rid of the overnight workers. Instead, they are building that new facility in New Jersey. There should have been some consequences in the contract against layoffs. We are faced with being laid off or going to pre-load jobs, and [lower seniority pre-load workers] will lose their jobs.

Another worker said, “I heard [Teamsters Local 804 President] Vincent Perrone talk about layoffs on Facebook. He said that around January and February, they always have more layoffs. But the economy is not what it used to be. All those people that are making money now, and from the wars, and they are corrupt. The system is corrupt.”

The WSWs also spoke with a part-time worker from the 43rd Street Hub in New York City. “Everyone with under five years seniority [when workers vest into their pensions] is being laid off. Someone said it was going to be for only six months, but when I asked the supervisor who laid me off, he said, ‘I don’t know how long this is going to last.’

“However, they did call us back to work on Mondays to start off each week. I have gone to work on these Mondays with the hope that I can get a full week of work again for that week, but each week they tell us after the Monday work that there will be no more work for the week.

“What is the point of allowing UPS to call me in to work on Mondays when it is only one day a week? We can’t live on that. But the company is attempting prevent us from filing for unemployment benefits, which saves the company a substantial amount of money. And it forces us to continue to pay union dues.

“I was making around \$200 a week before the contract. The union celebrated getting us a raise to \$21 an hour in the contract. But now my pay has been cut to an unlivable \$70 a week as the company comes after us. And where is the union? Isn’t this what they should have shut down?

“How can the union be doing what they are doing now? It is crazy that the union would support Donald Trump. That is not fair. Neither is Biden’s support of Israel carrying out the genocide in Gaza against the Palestinians. They will start World War III.”



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