

Open letter to Teamsters General President O'Brien: We demand answers on layoffs!

The UPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee
21 April 2024

The following statement was adopted by the UPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee, founded last year to oppose the sellout contract pushed by the Teamsters bureaucracy. To contact the Committee, email upsrankandfilecommittee@gmail.com or fill out the form at the bottom of this page.

Updated 4/22/2024: The signature section has been updated to reflect this statement's endorsement by the Independent Teamsters Organizing Committee. To add your endorsement, email the committee at the address above.

To General President Sean O'Brien and the Teamsters General Executive Board:

We are writing this open letter to demand information which rank-and-file workers urgently need to organize a fight against the mass layoffs at UPS. As you know, the company recently announced plans to close more than 200 facilities and “automate everything” over the course of the current contract. Already this year, UPS has announced more than 12,000 layoffs and cut 40 sort shifts around the country.

You and the rest of the Teamsters officials are deliberately concealing this. You have not even issued a public statement acknowledging that the company is preparing to carry out some of the deepest cuts in its history.

To do so would expose the fact that the new contract, which you continue to claim is among the biggest victories ever, is a massive sellout. UPS CEO Carole Tomé herself explicitly cited the new Teamsters contract and the “labor certainty” it provides as critical

to their plans to slash jobs. It contains no provisions against automating jobs, except that union officials be notified 45 days beforehand.

At the recent Labor Notes convention this weekend, you spoke at the reception for Teamsters for a Democratic Union, where you repeated your false claims. When a UPS worker tried to ask you basic questions about the contract, you literally ran away, declaring, “I gotta catch a flight.”

This has gone on long enough. We are not asking. We are *demanding* information which the membership has every right to have:

- Which 200 facilities are being slated for closure? When does the company plan to close them?
- How many jobs will be affected? Once UPS's “Network of the Future” is done, how many part-timers and warehouse workers will be left at UPS?
- How long has the Teamsters General Executive Board and the negotiating team known about this? How much did you know during the negotiations themselves? And why did you not warn rank-and-file workers, and even continue to ignore the issue?

We also demand the public release of all secret documents which the Teamsters union has at its disposal about the layoffs, as well as all transcripts, side letters and anything else from last year's contract talks which is being concealed.

The reason that we are demanding this information is so that the rank-and-file has access to the critical information it needs to organize a fight against layoffs from below. We have a right to this information because we pay your salaries out of our dues.

Layoffs are taking place all over the US and the world, aided by union sellouts. The United Auto Workers, under new president Shawn Fain, also claims to have secured an historic victory in their contract last

year. Since it was ratified, thousands have lost their jobs and more are on the way. This means UPS workers have natural allies among autoworkers, since we are facing the exact same sellouts.

Meanwhile, Fain has become the favorite bureaucrat of President Biden. Every time the two meet, including most recently at a White House dinner for the Japanese prime minister, Biden beats the drum for war. He says Americans have to build “aircraft carriers and tanks” like they did in World War II. He is closing ranks with Fain to keep us under control and impose the cost of war on us.

As for you, while you are also a regular visitor to the Biden White House, you have also met with Trump and signaled your interest in endorsing him. There are no secrets, apparently, between the union bureaucrats and pro-corporate politicians. But when it comes to workers, you will tell us nothing.

We have no illusions that you and the rest of the bureaucracy will suddenly see the light and come to our side. You’ve already given your answer with your stony silence.

Every action you have taken has been to conceal from us, confuse us and try to demoralize us. Recently, one national negotiator even told Teamsters in Portland that UPS “has a right to do what they’re doing.” You are working on behalf of the company, not us.

We workers have every right to take all action deemed necessary to protect our jobs, regardless or whether you choose to sanction them or not. *If you will not fight the layoffs, then get out of the way so that UPS workers can do it ourselves.*

To our coworkers: we want you to join us in demanding access to this information. How many of you have already had shifts closed in your area, or been told your facility is going to to be re-tooled for automation? How many more of you are being left in suspense about whether you will have a job in the next 45 days? If we don’t fight in defense of our jobs and the jobs of the next generation, who will?

We can’t afford to wait on the bureaucracy to do things which they will never do. We have to use our power as workers, the source of all of UPS’s profits, to put a stop to the cuts. We have to reject management’s so-called “right” to make a profit and the domination of the super-rich over the whole planet.

We also have to unite with workers in other industries

across the world who are also facing mass layoffs and union sellouts. In particular, we must join our struggle with autoworkers as well as postal workers, who are also facing mass layoffs being enabled by automation and other new technologies.

The savings from these new techs are being squandered on share buybacks and dividends. But if we the rank-and-file controlled this new technology, we could use them to pay for massive *improvements* to working conditions.

To our fellow UPS workers: Help us to distribute this statement as widely as you can. We want you to join us in building a rank-and-file rebellion against this sellout.

As for you, Mr. O’Brien, we await your prompt reply to our questions.

Sincerely,

The UPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee

Endorsed by:

- The Independent Teamsters Organizing Committee (ITOC)



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wsws.org/contact