

Teamsters bureaucrats feign outrage as UPS announces buyout plans for full-time drivers

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United Parcel Service has announced it will offer buyouts to full-time drivers for the first time in its history. The so-called “Driver Voluntary Severance Plan” is the latest part of the company’s jobs massacre, including plans to eliminate 20,000 jobs this year.

The 20,000 cuts, originally announced in April, were in addition to the 12,000 middle and lower management jobs eliminated last year. Moreover, tens of thousands of warehouse jobs are in the process of being eliminated through the company’s so-called “Network of the Future.” Using automation technology, with the potential to eliminate 80 percent of “inside” jobs, the company has already closed major facilities around the country, with plans for up to 200 facilities to be shuttered and 400 renovated into partially or fully automated warehouses.

The immediate justification for the driver buyout plan is the severe reduction of UPS’s deliveries for Amazon. UPS plans to reduce its Amazon shipments in half by the middle of 2026, citing the high cost of delivery and the lack of profitability. Amazon parcels makes up to a quarter of UPS volume, but only 11.8 percent of revenue according to management.

One UPS worker told the WSWS, “They want the least amount of workforce and those people paid the least amount of money. It’s a slap in the face to the employees who gave up all their personal and family time to keep the company moving forward.”

He added that “a lot of people want out because they are scared of the direction the company is going. Not only that, they feel like they have no protection from our local. Our local president is a puppet for [Teamsters General President] Sean O’Brien, and does whatever he asks of him.”

The Teamsters bureaucracy have responded by denouncing the plan as a violation of the 2023 contract.

A statement from the Teamsters preceding the official announcement from UPS argued that the program “would undermine UPS’s own legal commitment to create 22,500 more jobs under its current Teamsters contract.”

This is a reference to Article 22.3 of the Teamsters contract, which states that the company agrees to “offer part-time employees the opportunity to fill at least twenty-two thousand five hundred (22,500) permanent full-time job openings” and “create at least seventy-five hundred (7,500) new full-time jobs from existing part-time jobs.”

Such statements are utterly hypocritical because the Teamsters deliberately concealed the massive restructuring in order to pass the contract; only weeks later, UPS began laying people off while the Teamsters officials have maintained almost total silence.

Article 22.3 was always an empty promise which the company never had any intention of filling. Indeed, the language of the contract does not really create any “new” jobs. It simply requires that part-time employees be allowed preference in applications to a certain number of full-time job openings, and to convert 7,500 part-time jobs into full-time jobs.

This requirement did not even begin to go into effect until this year with just 1,000 positions required and the rest distributed across the remaining life of the contract.

The contract does state that “The number of full-time jobs created under Article 22, Section 3 of the 1997-2002, the 2002-2008, the 2013-2018 and the 2018-2023 Agreements shall not be reduced.” However, these contract items only amount to 35,000 full-time jobs out of the roughly 150,000 full-time Teamster positions at UPS. Section 6.1 does prohibit agreements with workers outside of the contract, but the Teamsters bureaucracy has not addressed this

contract point, and UPS will dispute any legal challenges to the program.

Teamsters President Sean O'Brien is fixated on accusing UPS of violating its "promise." In a video statement on the buyout, O'Brien falsely claimed that the contract gave up "zero" concessions to management, despite the Teamsters giving up on the demand for \$25 an hour for part-timers and protections against job cuts.

The lie of the "historic contract" is catching up with the bureaucracy, as UPS moves to destroy jobs at an accelerated pace. It is becoming ever more apparent that the contract paved the way for mass layoffs and that the bureaucracy is attempting to cover up their role in allowing it.

The bureaucracy's hostility to the membership was demonstrated during a webinar on the program hosted by the Teamsters. In spite of O'Brien's grandstanding, comments were disabled so that the bureaucracy could avoid questions and criticism from the membership.

O'Brien's and the bureaucracy's response is to call on workers to reject the buyout and to "be prepared to file a grievance." The bureaucracy knows that this will not stop the tide of job destruction. Its only concern is that worker resistance to layoffs might develop out of their control.

But this is exactly what must happen if UPS workers are to defend and fight for better jobs, wages and working conditions. UPS has even dragged its feet on air conditioning in new delivery vehicles (AC units are not even required in existing vehicles), while delivery workers become seriously ill from heat exposure and the Teamsters have done nothing. Hundreds of facilities are slated for closure or conversion into automated operations yet the union bureaucracy has not lifted a finger, instead insisting that the company has a "right" to layoff workers.

The rank and file must take matters into their own hands and wrest control away from the pro-corporate union bureaucracy. O'Brien in particular has shown himself to be a stooge of big business, speaking at the Republican National Convention last year, meeting with right-wing media pundits like Tucker Carlson and boasting of his personal relationship with billionaire and would-be dictator Donald Trump.

Only through a rebellion of the membership against the bureaucracy, organized through the building of the

UPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee, can workers build a movement to oppose the growing attacks by the capitalist class on jobs, wages, working conditions, social services and democratic rights.



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