

UPS closing facilities in Oklahoma City and Vernon, California, laying off hundreds

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UPS will be closing facilities in the Oklahoma City and Los Angeles areas next year, the latest in a wave of closures which has already claimed thousands of jobs.

According to a Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN), the layoffs at the Oklahoma City facility will impact more than 300 employees, including 286 hub workers and 15 pre-loaders, including both unionized and non-unionized employees. The closure will take place on January 15.

The Portland Avenue location is one of four in Oklahoma City, along with others on Interstate 35, Shawnee and Stillwater. The I-35 location was opened just last year. None of the Oklahoma facilities had been previously identified for closure by UPS.

The second facility is the Grande Vista hub in Vernon, California, located just south of Los Angeles. According to a WARN notice, 445 jobs will be affected, although the facility employs around 1,100.

One retired worker, who used to work at the location, remarked: “Grande Vista was the most productive hub, and workers with higher seniority are being offered jobs at hubs that are at a long distance such as San Fernando [30 miles away] even though there are hubs nearby such as Main Street in Lincoln Heights [4.5 miles away].

“I believe it’s probably done on purpose so those who can’t or are unwilling to travel long distances will quit or retire. I personally know of one individual who will retire rather than drive to San Fernando or San Gabriel.”

The layoffs are part of a massive wave of closures as part of the so-called “Network of the Future” plan, which will result in the closure or automation of 200

facilities across the United States. Technology already being implemented has the potential to eliminate 80 percent of warehouse workers, who make up the majority of the company’s unionized workforce.

Previously, UPS also announced the closure of the Commerce City hub in Colorado and the Ontario air hub in California, where 404 and 333 UPS workers were laid off, respectively. The company is also carrying out 12,000 layoffs of white collar and supervisory staff over the course of this year.

In early November, the company boasted to investors that it had already eliminated 45 “operations,” including nine buildings so far this year, substantially reducing the delivery capacity of the UPS network.

The layoffs at UPS are part of a global attack on jobs, with management using automation as a spearhead. UPS rivals FedEx and the United States Postal Service (USPS) are carrying out similar “restructuring” programs; and the auto industry is laying off tens of thousands worldwide as it transitions to electric vehicles as other industries have experienced mass layoffs.

A principal aim of these cuts is to break the back of the rising tide of class struggle over the past three years, as workers have pressed for substantial wage increases and other gains. Right now, over 50,000 Canada Post workers are on strike against plans to slash thousands of jobs, while other major strikes have been carried out recently at Boeing, the US East and Gulf Coast docks and University of California. General strikes have also erupted in Italy and Greece, and another was announced in South Korea yesterday in response to an attempted coup by the country’s president.

The key role in enabling these cuts is being played by the pro-corporate union bureaucrats. At UPS, the

Teamsters apparatus deliberately concealed knowledge of these cuts, which began almost immediately after workers ratified a new contract last year that the union claimed was “historic.” Since then the union has said next to nothing about the cuts, among the deepest in the company’s history.

Teamsters International social media has not made any comment on the closures, and Teamsters Local 886 has made no public statement opposing the destruction of hundreds of its members’ jobs.

The guilty silence is reminiscent of the Teamsters’ role in the bankruptcy of freight trucking company Yellow, which led to the destruction of 22,000 jobs. The bureaucracy allowed this to happen without opposition last year even as it declared it was prepared to call 340,000 UPS workers on strike. While workers were determined to strike, the experience at Yellow showed the bureaucracy made such threats only so it could present the sellout contract as the result of “tough bargaining.”

Instead of addressing the rising threat of automation, Teamsters President Sean O’Brien, a Trump supporter who spoke at the Republican National Convention, has spent his time meeting with Congressional Republicans and praising Trump’s nomination for Labor Secretary, Oregon Republican Congresswoman Lori Chavez-DeRemer. O’Brien pledged his services to Chavez-DeRemer, posting on social media that “North America’s strongest union is ready to work with you every step of the way.”

In other words, O’Brien is ready to serve as a collaborationist to a fascist administration of, by and for the oligarchy. Virtually the entire trade union bureaucracy across the US has hailed Chavez-DeRemer’s appointment and declared its willingness to work with Trump.

Last year, workers formed the UPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee to oppose the sellout contract and to fight to transfer power from management and its bureaucratic allies to UPS workers. As early as January, while the Teamsters maintained radio silence, the Committee raised the alarm about the mass layoffs which were coming and urged workers to organize independently of the union apparatus to fight them.

The stage is now being set for the next stage of this rebellion. The fight ahead for UPS workers will place them in conflict with the Teamsters bureaucracy and

the fascistic Trump administration, raising the necessity for workers to build rank-and-file committees and mobilize the power of the working class in an independent struggle against the capitalist assault on living standards and democratic rights.



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