

Amazon strike in the US poses need for global rank-and-file strategy against hi-tech exploitation

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The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) and the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) hail the stand taken by US Amazon workers in the three-day strike, which began Thursday.

The strikes includes workers at facilities in Staten Island, New York; Skokie, Illinois; Atlanta, Georgia; San Francisco and Southern California. UPS workers have pledged to refuse to cross the picket lines. Workers are striking against Amazon's refusal to bargain for months and even years after they voted to join a union.

We call for a global movement uniting Amazon and logistics workers across the world, controlled and led by the rank and file, in a common fight against hi-tech exploitation. The strike is the latest in a series of global actions by Amazon workers, including Black Friday protests in 20 countries last month.

The organizing cells for such a movement must be rank-and-file committees, consisting of workers themselves and excluding corrupt union bureaucrats. These committees will fight for workers' power against management attacks and sellouts by union officials.

Amazon workers must insist that their strike not be limited in advance by the Teamsters to only three days, which severely limits its impact during the height of the holiday shopping season. Instead, the strike must be guided by a strategy worked out and democratically enforced from below by workers, through rank-and-file committees made up of representatives from every Amazon facility.

Amazon workers should fan out to other facilities, regardless of union status, to prepare for joint actions. They should use social media to link up with Amazon workers and other sections of the working class in other countries. UPS workers and other Teamsters members, who are indirectly participating in the strike by refusing to handle Amazon deliveries, must use this as the opportunity to establish direct links with Amazon workers.

Amazon can and must be fought on a global basis. The power of the multi-billion strong international working class, the source of all the wealth on the planet, must be leveraged against the tiny oligarchy which runs Amazon and society as a whole.

It is for this purpose that the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), which operates in logistics and other key industries around the world, was founded in 2021. It has been active among postal workers in five countries, railroaders in the US and in Canada, autoworkers in North America and Europe and other industries.

Workers are fighting against a \$2 trillion corporation with tendrils across the planet. "Amazonification" is a buzzword in corporate boardrooms meaning low-paid, casual workforces whipped into line through automation and artificial intelligence, with workers thrown into the street once they injure themselves trying to "make rate." Delivery drivers, who are not even considered by the company to be direct employees, have no rights or protections.

Amazon's structure is being emulated by other corporations. Mass layoffs are underway in the auto industry as it shifts towards hi-tech electric vehicles. In Canada, postal workers struck for more than a month against plans for massive restructuring until the government intervened this week to shut the strike down.

In the US, Trump is planning to privatize the US Postal Service, which is in the middle of a vast Amazon-style restructuring effort. At UPS, the company is shutting or automating 200 facilities as part of its "Network of the Future," with tens of thousands of union and non-union jobs on the chopping block.

Amazon founder and chairman Jeff Bezos, with a net worth of \$250 billion, personifies the control of American and world society by a tiny oligarchy. Through Amazon, he controls a key part of the world economy, as well as the media through his ownership of the *Washington Post*. He is a major Trump supporter, backing his plans to slash social spending and corporate regulations.

The essentially criminal interests of this layer are also what is driving war all over the world from Ukraine to Gaza, fought not for "democracy" or "human rights" but to conquer supply chains and foreign markets.

The fight against Amazon and other corporate giants requires a fight against the union bureaucracy. The Teamsters officials,

having limited the strike in advance, are operating not with a strategy for victory but to bolster their own credibility. The Teamsters bureaucracy has carried out a series of major sellouts. Indeed, the Teamsters instructed its own members to scab on the Canada Post strike by continuing to work at the Purolator subsidiary.

Teamsters General President's Sean O'Brien's verbal attacks on corporate greed at Amazon is exposed by the fact that the union is helping impose mass layoffs at UPS, where management has cited the "labor certainty" provided by a new contract as a green light for downsizing. The bureaucracy rammed through the deal under false pretenses last year, after lyingly claiming for months that it was prepared to call a national strike.

The immediate issue in the Amazon strike is the company's refusal to bargain years after workers voted to join a union. But if Amazon has refused, it is because it feels emboldened by the position of the Teamsters, which wants only to establish the same corrupt relations with Amazon management that it enjoys elsewhere, "jointly" imposing cuts.

Nowhere is this bankrupt strategy more exposed than at the JFK8 facility in Staten Island, New York. Two years ago, workers voted in the upstart Amazon Labor Union, months after the rejection of a more established union at a warehouse in Alabama. This is because workers saw the ALU as a more militant alternative to the bureaucratically-controlled official unions.

But the ALU, with no viable strategy for how to achieve this, led workers into a blind alley. Its ties to the rank and file disappeared as it moved into the orbit of the Democrats and to its bigger brothers in the union bureaucracy. This happened until this summer, when bleeding money and beset by factional divisions, ALU officials decided to join the Teamsters.

The bureaucracy's hostility to workers finds its highest expression in the Teamsters' support for Donald Trump. Its top officials met repeatedly with Trump during the campaign. O'Brien spoke at the Republican National Convention, and the Teamsters de facto backed Trump by refusing to endorse a candidate in the November election. Now, O'Brien is praising Trump's "America First" nationalism, blaming foreigners and immigrants for job cuts which the American oligarchs, with the help of the bureaucrats, are carrying out.

Since the election, union officials have flocked to "kiss the ring" of Trump and promise to work with him. In doing so, they are declaring their support for Trump's plans to carry out historic attacks on the democratic and social rights of the working class. This includes gutting any health and safety protections, with Trump reportedly considering appointing former Amazon executive Heather MacDougall to head the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

The union officials only want to make sure there is a place for them in the dictatorship which Trump is trying to build, just as

they have worked with Biden and the Democrats to suppress the class struggle and impose pro-corporate contracts.

The same basic relations are mirrored within the unions themselves. Workers have no control over the organizations, which are run as petty dictatorships by bureaucrats who make six figure salaries off workers' dues money only to sell them out to management.

A rank-and-file rebellion is needed. Just as workers must organize to smash the power of the oligarchy that controls Amazon, they must also organize to smash the power of the union apparatus and restore workers' control.

New structures, rank-and-file committees, are being built to prepare for such a fight. **The three principles of rank-and-file committees are:**

1. The absolute authority of rank-and-file workers, including over contract talks, the conduct of strikes, the use of their dues money and other key issues. Workers have every right to take actions to override the decisions of union bureaucrats violating their democratic will.

2. Fight for what workers need, not what the oligarchy is willing to give up. Workers must fight for a vast transfer of wealth from the rich to the working class, which created this wealth and to which it rightfully belongs. This can be accomplished through transforming Amazon and other major corporations into public utilities run by workers rather than Wall Street executives.

3. The global unity of the working class. The fight at Amazon proves that workers around the world have the same interests and are engaged in a common fight against the same giant corporations. The watchword of the working class must be not "America First," but "Workers of the world, Unite!"

If you agree with this, fill out the form below to contact the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) for assistance in building a rank-and-file committee at Amazon.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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