

Amazon Strike:

A Strategy to Win

Amazon drivers and warehouse workers in a few locations across the country have gone on strike at the height of the holiday rush to win company recognition of the Teamsters as their bargaining agent. While their numbers are small so far relative to the overall size of the workforce, their determination is anything but. The example of the committed few can light a match for the working class as a whole—and Starbucks workers are already following in their steps. Unions are forged in struggle, which has now broken out into the open. What is needed is to pair the workers' fighting spirit with a strategy capable of establishing a strong union in order to transform conditions on the job—and in society more broadly—in their favor.

It is no secret that Jeff Bezos will do anything to keep Amazon union-free. The company lyingly claims that the picket lines are manned "almost entirely" by outsiders, and it has mobilized strikebreaking forces like the NYPD to clamp down on militancy. The cops have set upon workers and made arrests at DBK4 in Queens and massed outside JFK8 in Staten Island, where workers are set to join the strike. Disarming workers on the picket lines, Teamsters reps have praised the cops, who are on Amazon's side. **Drop all charges!**

In the face of an extremely hostile enemy with a global reach and an appetite to relentlessly turn the screws on workers, half measures are not going to get the job done. But half measures are all that tough-talking Teamsters president Sean O'Brien has to offer. Caught between workers demanding immediate relief on the one side and a boss refusing to play ball whatsoever on the other, he launched this strike. But he has limited its potential impact by setting its goal no higher than convincing Bezos to enter into "good faith bargaining." Accordingly, he has confined the strike to what the capitalist rulers consider acceptable as a demonstration to them of his own "good faith." So, forget the class-struggle methods—like solidarity strikes—that built the Teamsters in the first place. Instead, O'Brien works both sides of the capitalist aisle, courting Trump one day and urging Democrats to walk the picket lines the next. In either case, the union will only be crippled by its attachment to politicians who defend the bosses' interests at the expense of working people.

The surest way to unionize Amazon—or Starbucks and the auto industry in the South for that matter—is to rally the strongest possible working-class force to confront the bosses' interests and make them capitulate to the union and its demands, not just play fair. O'Brien, though, is looking for a repeat of the recent UPS "industry standard" contract at Amazon. But UPS

workers remain divided by the tiers that they went into the contract battle looking to eliminate, and many thousands of jobs are now on the chopping block as that company pursues its "Network for the Future." This model—seeking a slightly better deal for the workers while letting the company keep the upper hand—is not going to bring any real relief.

To make that possible, the strike must be extended to the Amazon workforce as a whole. Union militants must dispatch flying pickets to motivate other locations to join the strike, while consciously combatting divisions in the workforce. They can sink deeper and stronger roots for the union by organizing it as a fighting battalion against the bosses' "divide and rule"—against segregation on and off the job, against the abuse of migrant labor, against the discarding of seasonal workers. The latter, desperate to earn some money for their families right now, could be brought out to the picket lines if the Teamsters were to commit to a fight to make temp jobs permanent at decent wages. Organizing the union on this basis would be widely appealing not only to more hesitant Amazon workers, but also the black, Latino and working-class communities where they live.

The gloves need to come all the way off. For starters, the Teamsters should instruct UPS drivers to refuse to move Amazon packages, period. But such solidarity—which would go a long way toward putting UPS Teamsters in a better position to fight against layoffs—is not compatible with O'Brien's effort to keep things respectable for the class enemy. A blanket refusal to handle Amazon deliveries by postal workers would also be a boost in their own contract battle, which now intersects Trump's privatization threats. But this, too, would provoke opposition from their union leaders, who are not about to go up against the government. To give the union a strong foundation, Amazon workers must replace O'Brien's losing strategy with one based on solidarity in struggle with the oppressed and the labor movement nationally and internationally **against** the common enemy:

- **Rally Amazon workers and their working-class allies to build mass picket lines that keep scabs from crossing!**
- **Enlist unionized logistics workers to refuse to handle Amazon packages!**
- **Reject reliance on the Democrats and Republicans!
For a workers party to advance the interests of workers and the oppressed!**

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