

“This is modern day slavery”

Amazon workers worldwide denounce dictatorial working conditions

Eric London
26 May 2017

The launching of the *International Amazon Workers Voice* has provoked a flood of messages by Amazon workers exposing dictatorial conditions imposed by the corporation in workplaces across the world.

Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos is able to make over \$25,000 *each minute* through the exploitation of Amazon workers in every country, forcing them to toil under constant monitoring and work long hours for low wages, subjecting them to constant surveillance by management, and firing them for the slightest sign of opposition.

One Amazon worker in the United States told the *International Amazon Workers Voice* that she was fired for wearing a t-shirt from an old job that had a union logo on it. Corporate management questioned her, threatened her, and fired her for “insubordination.”

The worker described walking many miles each day: “My hands would be swollen after shift. I had to tape my feet up to prevent blistering.”

Another worker called the work “modern day slavery.”

A young worker in the US said that several years ago, a worker fell to his death. “Somebody fell from a second story tower and it took Amazon 4 hours to look for him, just to find out he was dead. I don’t know if this story was ever covered by the news.”

This worker explained, “It’s a mess in these warehouses. My last year I hurt my back and they still had me work and I could barely walk. I took a leave just to take care of myself and then they got mad that I went to my own doctor.”

A worker in the UK said that the company penalizes workers for getting hurt.

“Someone hurt on the job? It gets raised to a leader

who then calls first aid, they take a statement then ask if you are returning to work or going home. Going home incurs a half-point penalty.”

All over the world, the company forces workers to labor at fast, tiring, and often dangerous speeds. The UK worker said: “I still have near misses and collisions from people rushing...now it’s faster, faster, faster. It’s all about being on the go, meeting rates and targets.”

A third worker, an immigrant in the UK, said she was yelled at for talking to a coworker while the two continued to work. “We are not robots to just look at the shelves,” she said. “We do not go to the prisons, we go to work and I think we have the right to talk at work!”

Truck drivers working for companies associated with Amazon also complained of brutal working conditions and humiliation by the company.

A driver in the UK explained how Amazon once told him without notice that he would not be allowed to drive into the plant wearing a hoodie. Since he was wearing two hoodies that day with no undershirt, the company forced him to walk around the facility with no shirt on as an act of punishment.

He said, “These companies take the royal piss out of their drivers and we work like dogs for peanuts. After working a week 5 long days after deductions and fuel we take home less than £200 (US\$250) per week.”

An American driver expressed similar sentiments: “Don’t even get me started on their delivery driving jobs. We’re not even considered Amazon employees so we get NONE of the benefits but all the experience of long days with not enough pay.”

These abuses are not simply the product of Amazon’s greed, they are the product of the capitalist system,

which secures the “right” of the corporations to subject their workers to harsh exploitation. The harder workers labor and the less freedom they have at work, the higher Amazon’s profits will be.

Many workers expressed support for the launching of the *International Amazon Workers Voice*, which will be a center of opposition for Amazon workers everywhere and a place for Amazon workers to share their stories and expose the corporation for exploiting its workers.

“What you’re doing is great,” a worker from the UK wrote. “I think it’s a great video,” said another in the US, referring to the one-minute video published by the IAWV that has been viewed by tens of thousands of Amazon workers worldwide. Another wrote, “I think all the people watching this video are very happy with it.”

Amazon workers around the world: share your stories with your coworkers through the pages of the *International Amazon Workers Voice*! Do you have a story about brutal conditions and management abuse? Message us on Facebook, sign up to receive updates, and make your voice heard.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact