

Amazon Jobs Day: A Tale of Two Americas

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All across the US today, tens or hundreds of thousands of people will line up looking for work as part of the largest job fair in US history.

“Amazon Jobs Day” tells a tale of two Americas.

On the one hand there is Amazon, a corporation awash in cash, always expanding its monopoly, producing ever greater dividends for shareholders. Its stock value has tripled in the last two years, and CEO Jeff Bezos (net worth=\$90 billion) is making \$23,000 per minute, about the same as the average Amazon warehouse worker in the US earns each year. The financial oligarchy agrees with what Barack Obama said in 2016: “Now is the greatest time to be alive.”

On the other hand, living conditions are deteriorating for the working class. The net worth of the average working class family has nearly fallen in half since the 2007-2008 financial crash, and most workers don’t have enough savings to cover a moderate expense like new tires or new medication.

The job fairs are being held in some of the most economically distressed regions of the country.

Urban centers like Baltimore, Maryland and Buffalo, New York have been hollowed out by decades of job losses and population decline. Suburban areas like Etna, Ohio; Whitestown, Indiana; Romeoville, Illinois; and Hebron, Kentucky are among the most heavily impacted by an opioid crisis that killed roughly 60,000 people last year. Former industrial hubs like Fall River, Massachusetts; Robbinsville, New Jersey; and Kenosha Wisconsin were once home to better-paid manufacturing jobs, but are now being transformed into industrial parks for low-pay, low-benefit warehouse work.

The fact that many workers view Amazon warehouse jobs that net \$15,000 to \$25,000 per year as a step up from the minimum wage service industry is itself a sign that corporations exercise an unprecedented degree of domination over the lives of hundreds of millions of

workers. Today, workers no longer have the eight-hour day, pensions, employer-provided health care, or cost of living adjustments in contracts.

The growth in poverty and economic hardship in the working class means the accumulation of wealth and privilege by the ruling class. The top 10 percent of Americans now own roughly three-quarters of all household wealth. The poorest half of the population—roughly 160 million people, own nothing—just 0.1 percent of US wealth.

The growth of inequality is the product of deliberate policies enacted by both capitalist parties, the Democrats and Republicans, which have carried out the same policies of bank bailouts, cuts to social programs, tax cuts for the rich, mass surveillance, the deportation of immigrant workers, and never-ending war abroad.

Trump and his cabal of fascist advisers, generals, and family members did not emerge from nowhere—his administration is the product of decades of war, reaction, and decay within the ruling class and all its official institutions. The present crisis within the administration, marked by high profile cabinet member firings and resignations and unproven allegations of “Russian hacking,” is a fight among the Democratic and Republican factions of the ruling class to control the government and dictate the foreign policy of US imperialism.

The fact that the working class has no allies in this fight is proven by where the two parties agree.

While telling workers there is “not enough money” for wage increases, or to fund social programs, both parties hailed the recent construction of the U.S.S. Gerald Ford, a massive aircraft carrier that cost \$13 billion to build, stuffing the pockets of numerous contractors and war profiteers. In the name of the fraudulent “war on terror,” the ruling class has drained trillions of dollars on wars fought for corporate profit that have left millions dead and destroyed whole

countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen.

Both parties have also expressed their desire to “cooperate” on a health care law aimed at boosting the profits of the insurance, hospital, and pharmaceutical corporations. Under the Democrats’ disastrous Obamacare program, millions are paying skyrocketing premiums for barebones coverage. The Republican proposals use Obamacare as a jumping-off point to make further cuts to workers’ coverage, including by gutting billions from Medicaid subsidies.

The wealth gap that separates the ruling class from the vast majority of the population is made possible through the artificial suppression of the class struggle by the trade unions over the last 40 years. The primary role of the AFL-CIO today is to block strikes and prevent workers from linking up with one another in a common struggle for social equality.

Amazon and other corporations want workers to view one another—including those in line with one another at Amazon’s job fair—as competition. In reality, workers in the US and all over the world are linked by common class interests, regardless of their race, gender, nationality, religion, immigration status, or sexual orientation.

Amazon’s vast international supply chains, spurred by advancements in the areas of communication, transportation and engineering, are transforming social relations, linking the international working class in different industries together in the process of production like never before.

The conditions for bringing the world economy into harmony with the needs of the human race are already present. But under capitalism, these progressive tendencies are turned against the working class and society as a whole. The advances in technology and the global integration of production become weapons in the hands of the capitalist class to destroy jobs and living standards for the broad masses of people, while the conflict between the global character of economic life and the nation-state system of capitalism erupts in the form of militarism and war.

What is required is the socialist transformation of the world economy, expropriating the wealth of corporations like Amazon and turning them from for-profit exploitative giants into international public services, organized and directed democratically by the

workers themselves.

The *World Socialist Web Site* and its publisher, the International Committee of the Fourth International, fight to unite the working class in a mass socialist movement aimed at undertaking these historic tasks. We publish the *International Amazon Workers Voice* (Facebook.com/AmazonWorkersVoice), which exposes exploitative working conditions in Amazon fulfillment centers around the world and serves as a platform for organizing opposition among Amazon workers internationally.

Workers both within Amazon and in other industries must make the WSWS their daily source for news and political analysis. Follow us on Facebook at Facebook.com/wsws.org and join the fight for socialism.



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