

Amazon workers urge Arizona teachers to continue strike

Our reporters
3 May 2018

The strike of nearly 60,000 Arizona teachers and support staff is the latest development in an increasing wave of striking educators both nationally and internationally. The Arizona strike, organized by rank and file teachers on social media and in defiance of the reactionary trade union bureaucracy of the Arizona Education Association (AEA), has struck a chord with workers around the world who recognize the common interests they share in the fight for access to social rights like healthcare, education and decent wages.

The efforts of the AEA on Tuesday to preemptively shut down the strike have been met with disgust and rejection by rank-and-file teachers and workers across the country.

“This is bad. The rank and file is what matters, not the union ‘leaders,’” said a Virginia Amazon worker when asked by the *International Amazon Workers Voice* about the latest betrayal of the trade union bureaucracy. “They [the unions] need to catch up to what the people on the ground want. We saw in West Virginia that the strike can go on without the leaders.”

Amazon Inc., one of the most exploitative employers in the world, whose CEO Jeff Bezos also ranks as the wealthiest human being on Earth, is not immune to the growth of working class anger. Amazon workers, laboring in the Internet commerce giant’s many “fulfillment center” sweatshops throughout the US, spoke to the IAWV about the strike and their own working conditions.

An Amazon worker in New Jersey who had sorted packages for the company for two years encouraged the teachers, shouting: “Keep it up Arizona!” Another worker at the same New Jersey sorting center stated, “I think it is bad what has been happening to the teachers with the budgets being cut and their pay falling so far behind. It should be better for them, and I think they are

doing the right thing by striking.”

A younger worker explained, “It is good the teachers are going on strike because education is so important today. You need a good education and modern, up-to-date textbooks to survive in today’s world.”

The conditions for workers at Amazon demonstrate the increasingly ruthless exploitation workers must endure so that the corporation, which recently posted record profits, may continue to operate. At the New Jersey plant, workers are banned from going to the bathroom or checking their phone messages at all times except for a brief 15 minute break given once a day. Many workers can expect to be pummeled with additional “flex hours,” increasing or reducing their workload on the spot depending on the number of packages requiring sorting on a specific day.

When WSWS reporters asked one Amazon worker about the safety conditions on the job, his father who had come to pick him up spoke first. “Safety should be a big issue here,” he said. “I’m a construction worker, and I don’t work here, but it seems to me this is the kind of workplace with heavy packages that can fall on you and injure you. But they don’t have steel toed boots for you to wear, long sleeves or maybe hard hats as safety requirements. Here you have trucks to unload; pallets to load that can hurt you as well as forklift equipment.” The younger worker relayed that he had been injured by falling boxes several days earlier.

Marcos, a steamfitter whose friend works for Amazon in northern Virginia, told the IAWV that he disagrees with any attempt to end the strikes before teachers get what they are calling for. “I know lots of teachers, and they are treated very poorly. Education is one of the most important things in society.”

Another Amazon worker in northern Virginia spoke more broadly about the significance of the strikes. “I

think they're very good things, but I hope they're only the tip of the iceberg with resurgent labor. Like you said, they're being organized despite the union and political leaders that are supposedly pro-labor. And they've certainly proven that labor still has the support of the masses. But for now they're being settled below what's been demanded, and I hope that teachers across the country continue organizing, and inspiring more workers to do the same."

When told that teachers were actively considering our call for rank and file committees, and that the trade unions were terrified of these efforts to organize outside their control, he said: "Good, honestly. The more worried they are the better things look I say."



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact