

May 1 “general strike” at Amazon: A failed adventure by the Democratic Party and the unions

The International Amazon Workers Voice
2 May 2020

Throughout the day Friday, Amazon and other logistics workers were confronted with a barrage of headlines and news articles proclaiming a “historic general strike” was underway at Amazon.

In reality, hardly any workers participated in this stunt orchestrated by the Democratic Party and corporate media. This was not a real struggle led by the workers themselves; it was a ploy to disrupt and disorient the millions of workers who are yearning for a fight—a real fight—against the corporations, which are using the threat of hunger and destitution to force them to continue working under unsafe conditions where they face the prospect of contracting the deadly virus.

Corporate media headlines referred yesterday to a “mega-strike,” a “historic mass strike” and a “sprawling protest” against Amazon, Target, Whole Foods and Instacart, presenting this planned action as if it were a milestone in the history of the class struggle.

It is a curious fact that the same news outlets praising this “general strike” never report on genuine workers’ struggles and are presently demanding workers to go “back to work,” no matter the health risk, to boost corporate profit. At any rate, those journalists hoping to capture photos of mass pickets or groups of strikers returned from the warehouses yesterday empty-handed. Little more than a handful of workers participated in this Potemkin strike at various locations, and in many cases they were outnumbered by television crews.

In the eyes of Amazon workers, the pitiful result of this stunt will serve to discredit the swarm of “grassroots” organizations in the orbit of the Democratic Party, union front groups, pseudo-left tendencies, and other hangers-on that promoted it.

Each morning workers wake up to a new crop of

these “alliances,” “coalitions,” “centers,” and “networks,” all promising “change,” “justice,” “progress,” and “democracy.” The strike organizers swooped abruptly into Amazon warehouses to proclaim that walkouts as an accomplished fact, with little (if any) input from workers themselves.

Amazon employs more than 750,000 workers worldwide. There was no mass meeting of any substantial fraction of these workers online to endorse a strike, discuss demands, or elect leaders. Amazon workers often first learned of their own supposed plans to walk out when they were confronted with postings online threatening them, “Don’t cross the picket line!” Workers who did walk out, risking hunger and homelessness, were merely used as props for the press conferences.

Groups promoting the “strike” included the Athena Coalition, which includes various Democratic Party and union-aligned groups as Action Center for Race and the Economy, Center for Popular Democracy, Daily Kos, Demand Progress, Demos, Fight for the Future, Green America, Moving Forward Network, United for Respect, and Warehouse Worker Resource Center. It is significant that the seed funding for Athena Coalition took the form of millions of dollars from billionaire Democrat bankroller George Soros’s Open Society.

Bernie Sanders also tweeted his support for the protest yesterday (now that he has completely capitulated to the right-wing, Amazon-funded Joe Biden), writing: “Today is a day to understand that we are all in this together, and when millions of workers stand up in the fight for justice, there is nothing we cannot accomplish. #MayDay2020.”

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez retweeted similar

statements promoting the stunt. Also supporting the “strike” were Democratic Party-affiliated groups like the Democratic Socialists of America and Workers’ World. In general, the various activists and groups supporting the strike have not had any substantial role in the struggles of Amazon workers over the preceding years and have seldom if ever commented on conditions at Amazon before the coronavirus pandemic.

The *World Socialist Web Site* and the *International Amazon Workers’ Voice* were alone in warning that the so-called “general strike” on May 1 was a trap. The May 1 “strike,” we warned, is a “trick aimed at blocking the growing opposition among retail, warehouse and gig workers over abysmal health and safety conditions amid the coronavirus pandemic.”

Dozens of Amazon workers told the WSWS they had no knowledge of a supposed strike and that no workers in their plants were participating, to their knowledge.

One Amazon worker in Spartanburg, South Carolina said he did not participate, adding, “I don’t know anyone organizing it.” A second worker in Virginia said, “Nobody walked out at my plant Maybe many Amazonians weren’t aware of the walkout.”

A Texas Amazon worker said, “I haven’t seen anyone participating to be honest. I think that if they wanted real change and improvements, it would have to be a world wide movement with the majority of workers participating. Also, a one day strike isn’t going to do anything.”

There is no shortage of willingness to fight among Amazon, Target, Whole Foods and Instacart workers, who confront a company and social system that is willing to sacrifice their lives to safeguard the profits of the billionaires.

But yesterday’s stunt constituted an effort by the Democratic Party, the unions, and their hangers-on to disrupt and gain control of this growing movement of workers against the efforts by the corporations to force them to continue working during the pandemic under unsafe conditions.

The key to the struggle of Amazon workers is the formation of workplace committees. Workers must establish organizations that *they* control, which they can use to democratically discuss, plan and act in their *own* interests. This includes taking steps to safeguard their own lives and to take control of health and safety precautions in the workplace.

Workplace committees are also necessary for workers to defend themselves against the efforts of the Democratic Party and the unions to hijack and disrupt their struggles. At the same time, workers must provide build the necessary *international* lines of coordination that will allow them to act with the unity required to take on this huge multinational conglomerate.

This struggle can only advance to the extent that workers agree on the need to maintain political independence from Democratic Party politicians, trade union bureaucrats and opportunists on the make. It requires a struggle against the for-profit capitalist system that values corporate profit above their lives and the lives of their loved ones.



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