

Washington Post staff wage 24-hour strike to oppose low salaries and corporate restructuring

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8 December 2023

About 750 *Washington Post* newsroom reporters, printing, marketing staff and others launched a single day strike Thursday to protest the newspaper's demands that they accept below-inflation pay raises and other attacks on their livelihood. The protest was launched by the *Washington Post* Guild-Communication Workers of America, which represents nearly 1,000 Post staffers in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area.

The staffers union declares that they have “covered two wars, an insurrection, a pandemic, gun violence in America, climate disasters, two presidential campaigns and more” since their last contract. Despite this, “management has refused to bargain in good faith and repeatedly — and illegally — shut down negotiations over key issues.” The employees have been without a contract for nearly 18 months.

The walkout is the first the newspaper has seen in nearly half a century. Among the issues most important to the employees are “pay equity, raises that keep pace with inflation and our competitors, remote work policies, mental health supports, and a buyout package that seeks to reduce our workforce by 10 percent,” the guild's letter states.

The publication has refused to budge. Last month, the newspaper announced its “last, best and final” offer to the staffers, refusing to engage any further.

The *Washington Post*, one of the key conduits of American ruling class propaganda, is among the largest and most powerful publications in the world. The corporation lives according to what it preaches, demanding its staff accept below-market pay increases and 240 buyouts of senior staff or it will make layoffs.

“I was hired seven years ago close to the minimum

salary at the *Washington Post* for reporters,” said science and health writer Fenit Nirappil at the rally Thursday. According to the staff writer, “Every time I thought I got a good raise, I found out I was actually underpaid.” Others remarked online that the paper's slogan “Democracy Dies in Darkness” was being “mocked by the lack of good faith negotiation and a contract.”

The *Post*, in an article on the coming layoffs, states: “Among the areas expected to be most affected are the Metro [local] staff, where managers aim to trim a staff of 89 by nearly a quarter, including coverage areas such as education, transportation and social issues.”

“We overshot on expense,” said the *Post*'s interim CEO Patty Stonesifer in an internal meeting the newspaper cited from October. According to Stonesifer, the *Post* is “trying to right-size that to make sure we can plant the seeds and make the investments in the things that we need.”

The *Post* has expanded its news staff by nearly double since it was taken over in 2013 by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, from just over 500 newsroom employees to more than 1,000 today. Meanwhile, the newspaper's total digital subscriber base is less than 3 million people. It has lost nearly \$70 million in ads revenue compared to its totals in 2021.

At the time, Bezos' acquisition was presented as if it were “freeing” the publication from the turbulence of the profit-driven marketplace. The *World Socialist Web Site* stated at the time that despite claims that Bezos would take a “hands off” approach to the newspaper's functioning, the purchase “underscores the dominance of a small group of billionaires over all aspects of social and political life.”

The newspaper announced last year it would be looking for redundancies, eventually offering buyouts to 20 employees. At the beginning of 2023, Fred Ryan, a former Politico executive, stepped down as publisher. His job is set to be filled by former *Wall Street Journal* executive William Lewis.

The strike emerges against a backdrop of growing crises in the news media industry and within the economy more broadly. Newsrooms from CNN to Gannett have gone through “several rounds of layoffs” writes the *Post*, while NPR announced the layoff of nearly 10 percent of its workforce this year. The strike occurred nearly a year after 1,000 *New York Times* staffers held their own one-day strike at American liberalism’s flagship publication.

Despite the growing militancy among workers in all sectors, the CWA-affiliated *Washington Post* Guild only called for a day-long walkout. Throughout the course of the 24-hour action, print, advertising and media workers were inundated with speeches from union executives and Democratic Party politicians. All of the various bureaucrats made the convenient trek from their lavish offices, headquartered throughout the District of Columbia, to give bombastic speeches and empty threats to “billionaires” knowing the strike would end in only a few hours.

The *Post*, which along with the *New York Times* is a key media mouthpiece of the Democratic Party in the United States, has promoted the trade union apparatus as a key tool for suppressing the genuine struggles of the workers they oversee.

This fact was acknowledged by a *Post* spokesperson, who told *The Hill*, “We will make sure our readers and customers are as unaffected as possible” for the duration of the walkout.



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