

Amazon delivery drivers strike in Illinois

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Last week, about 100 package delivery drivers at Amazon's DIL7 Delivery Station in Skokie, Illinois went on strike for wage increases, a 40-hour work week, and to protest union busting efforts by the company. The drivers had recently joined Teamsters Local 705 and placed demands on Amazon to improve their working conditions.

Workers at the facility are paid around \$20 per hour. The company intentionally schedules them for less than 40 hours per week to avoid having to provide the benefits of full time workers. Drivers at the facility DIL7 facility located just north of Chicago are among the poorest section of workers in the community.

On June 20, workers staged a march in the warehouse and brought their demands for wages, hours, and union recognition to the DIL7 management. In a video of the march one worker stated to management that the delivery drivers are demanding, "\$30 per hour... guaranteed 40 hours [per week]... better benefits... and we demand dignity." He added, "We are not going to step down until we win this fight."

Just days later, Amazon announced it was ending its contract with Four Star Express Delivery, the contractor serving as the official employer of the drivers. Throughout the country Amazon enlists thousands of Delivery Service Providers (DSPs) as contractors to divide its workforce and avoid labor laws while still controlling every aspect of workers' conditions.

In addition to low pay and demanding hours, Amazon delivery workers are often subject to intense surveillance. Trucks have their locations tracked at all times and drivers are monitored with cameras inside the vehicles.

The cancellation of the contract is a clear act of retaliation for workers exercising their democratic right to join the Teamsters. One other DSP in California was also organized by the Teamsters but was recognized voluntarily by the company.

In response to the cancellation of the contract, which is essentially a mass firing, the workers took strike action last Wednesday. In a statement posted to the Local 705 website one worker Ebony Echevarria, a young mother, said, "I work for one of the richest men in the world and I've had to skip meals to make sure my child eats and my bills are paid. That's just not right. My co-workers and I are fighting for respect, decent pay, and safe working conditions for us and for all Amazon workers."

The Teamsters have recently begun a nationwide campaign to bring Amazon workers into their orbit. With over 1 million employees in the US, by converting Amazon workers into mandatory dues paying members, the Teamsters the organization would stand to reap in millions of dollars in additional revenue.

In June the Amazon Labor Union (ALU), led by Chris Smalls, which represents 5,500 workers at the JFK8 facility in New York City voted to affiliate with the Teamsters and establish a new Teamsters Local organization, the ALU-International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) Local 1.

So far, JFK 8 is the only Amazon warehouse to win legal union recognition. In 2022 the ALU attempted to unionize another New York warehouse but was rejected by the workforce. Similarly in 2021 the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU) attempted to unionize a facility in Bessemer, Alabama but was rejected.

Neither the ALU at JFK8 nor the Teamsters have yet to negotiate a contract with Amazon. Nor has any major strike been organized that has seriously disrupted Amazon's profits. As in Skokie, where the Teamsters have won union recognition at a handful of DSPs, Amazon has immediately cancelled the contracts.

The Teamsters have filed complaints with the National Labor Relations Board alleging violations of

federal labor law for their practice of using the DSPs to break union drives. This is a process that could take years before the NLRB hears the suit and rules on it. By which time, rank and file workers would have long taken new jobs or been forced to accept the new organization of the DSP.

While workers joined the Teamsters because they want to fight against Amazon, the Teamsters bureaucracy are working against them at every turn. They have no interest in winning real improvements for workers wages, hours, and benefits, but in expanding their dues base.

The bureaucracy wants to establish the sort of corrupt relations with Amazon management that it enjoys at other companies. Last year, the Teamsters rammed through a sellout agreement at UPS which paved the for mass layoffs and hundreds of facility closures under the company's new "Network of the Future" automation program.

Additionally, the unions have pledged to support the US-NATO war against Russia and the genocide in Gaza by their support for Biden. The unions offer to the corporations to pacify workers, locking them into low wage contracts with no-strike agreements, so there will be no interference with war plans.

Amazon workers looking for a real way to fight must break with the Teamsters, turn to socialism, and join up with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC). The IWA-RFC is preparing for a total rebellion against the corporations, union bureaucracies, war, and the capitalist system by building an international mass movement in the working class.



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