

Teamsters bureaucrats block socialists, but welcome Democrats to Amazon picket line

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The strike by sections of Amazon workers in the United States is being betrayed by the Teamsters bureaucracy. The Teamsters are doing everything they can to limit the scope of the struggle in order to prevent Amazon workers and other logistics workers from around the world from joining the fight.

While the Teamsters claim to represent nearly 10,000 workers at 10 warehouses and delivery stations, less than 2,000 workers have participated in the strike. Amazon employs over 1.5 million people globally, roughly 1 million of whom are in the United States, with another 200,000 in Canada and Mexico.

The refusal of the Teamsters to call out and appeal to the entire membership has prevented the strike action from having a meaningful impact on production, even with workers walking out at JFK8, the Staten Island warehouse, on Saturday night.

Speaking to the *New York Times*, Kelly Nantel, a spokesperson for Amazon, said the walkout had not affected operations, and Amazon delivery trucks continued to leave the facility loaded with packages.

On December 19, a WSWs reporting team visited the DAX5 Amazon hub in the City of Industry in California. While workers took over 60 leaflets from WSWs reporters and were eager to discuss strategy, Teamsters bureaucrats interrupted and blocked workers from speaking to socialist journalists.

While the Teamsters bureaucrats were blocking WSWs reporters, according to a *Times* report on Saturday, New York Attorney General Letitia James, a prominent Democrat, was welcomed to a Teamsters-organized picket and even afforded a microphone to give a speech. James reportedly told workers that “the law is on your side.”

The “law,” as evidenced by videos and photos on the

picket line, is not on the workers’ side, but on the side of the corporations. There has been a heavy police presence to ensure that pickets do not interfere with profits.

The web-based retail and tech giant is notorious for its inhumane and slavery-like working conditions, which result in a high rate of injury and even workers’ deaths. The WSWs has reported that during the summer of 2022, three Amazon workers died while laboring in sweltering warehouses in New Jersey.

“Investigations” by OSHA into the deaths found Amazon not liable, allowing the company to continue to generate billions in profit without threat of criminal prosecution. This past third quarter the company reported a net income of \$15.3 billion—55 percent more than the \$9.9 billion reported in the same quarter in 2023.

To fight corporations like Amazon requires the collective social power of the international working class. But the Teamsters have only called out a fraction of workers they claim to represent. Despite the fact that workers around the world are eager to wage a collective struggle against Amazon, the current strike is limited to less than 10 facilities in New York City, Atlanta, Southern California, San Francisco and outside of Chicago, Illinois.

The Teamsters bureaucrats will not organize a wider struggle because they are not interested in taking the fight to Amazon on behalf of workers everywhere, but in establishing the same corrupt relations with Amazon management they enjoy elsewhere. In the face of massive job cuts at UPS coupled with ongoing automation, the Teamsters are seeking to offset losses in dues by bringing more Amazon drivers under their control.

This has given Amazon the upper hand. It has refused

to bargain with workers at JFK8 in New York City and with thousands of workers at Amazon facilities along the West Coast. Over two years ago, workers at JFK8 voted for the Amazon Labor Union (ALU), due in large part to claims by organizers that the new union would be more receptive to workers' demands than the bureaucratically-controlled unions of the AFL-CIO. However, earlier this year, the ALU merged with the Teamsters.

To counteract the isolation being imposed by the Teamsters it is paramount that Amazon workers link up with other logistics workers in the US and internationally in a joint campaign against Amazon.

C. Santana, an Amazon worker in New York City since August 2022, told WSWs reporters last week, "we want better pay, we want safer... conditions, we want better benefits because they are not really giving us any benefits. You know, I could get better health insurance from out in the street than what they are offering over here."

He noted that the "government recognizes us as a union but Amazon does not recognize us as a union." He explained that Amazon's "business model" is paying the workers who create all of the profits as little as possible, including by contracting out work.

"Them failing to meet us as workers of Amazon is ridiculous," Santana added, "because I wear Amazon branded everything, I drive an Amazon van ... but I don't work for Amazon? That makes no sense."

In an effort to intimidate striking workers, Santana said, many contract drivers had received texts that the company "has dropped a bunch of routes ... so some people might not even have routes to work with ... when they come back."

Santana estimated that "at least 60 percent" of the routes had been canceled.

At the DBK-4 facility in Queens, New York City, nearly all the drivers from all the individual van companies have united and stood together in strong picket lines since 6:00 a.m. Thursday morning. The drivers work for at least 20 different van companies at DBK-4, which provided "plausible deniability," as one worker put it, for the low pay, no holidays and Uber-style employment rating systems.

One driver told the WSWs reporters that his wages were \$600 a week when he needed them to be \$1,200

or \$1,500 to live. Another driver said they do not get paid overtime, even after they work 44 hours of work in a week; they had to come in another day to get overtime. \$600 a week for a 40-hour week means getting paid \$15 an hour. This is despicable, but the strike is not focused on wages or working conditions.

One worker from the warehouse across the street told the WSWs, "We (at the other warehouse) were never asked to join the strike. I support a strike. My sister and her fiancée work at JFK8. They do too, but they are not striking."

When she was asked why she thought no one had walked out, she answered, "I think there are a couple of reasons and one of them is fear, because there is no trust in the ALU." When the affiliation with the Teamsters was brought up, she said, "Well, that is the other thing. A lot of people don't trust them because of their support for Trump."

The WSWs spoke about Trump's fascist program and the people he is assembling around him, and she replied, "Exactly, that is why everyone I talk to don't trust the Teamsters either." After WSWs reporters raised forming independent rank-and-file committees in every workplace, she agreed with the idea, saying, "How can we make anything happen if we all don't work together, right?"

Santana added, "We are here to ... achieve a goal, New York is doing this, other states are doing this, this is happening outside of America and everything."

He concluded, "Workers should have all the power, because we are the ones that build it, we build it all."



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