

Holiday jobs massacre: Mobilize the working class to defend the right to a job!

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As the holiday season is underway, the relentless attack on jobs by US and global corporations is continuing unabated. A counter-offensive must be launched through a united struggle of all workers, independently of the pro-corporate union officials and capitalist parties.

The monthly report put out by Challenger, Gray & Christmas found that US corporations announced 71,321 job cuts last month, up 24 percent year on year. So far this year, nearly 1.2 million layoffs have been announced, the highest since the first year of the pandemic and approaching levels during the 2009 Great Recession. The report warned that job cuts have surpassed the 70,000 mark only twice in recent memory, in 2008 and 2022.

According to a study by Resume.org, 3 out of 10 business leaders say their companies are planning layoffs during the holiday season. This practice fell out of fashion in recent years due to negative publicity, but the pace of the jobs massacre is such that corporations cannot afford to stop even for a few weeks.

ADP has reported 32,000 jobs eliminated in November, driven by sharp cuts among small businesses, which are particularly vulnerable to the mounting economic crisis.

GM is permanently laying off 1,140 workers at its Factory Zero plant in the Detroit area on January 5. Tyson Foods is closing its beef processing plant in Lexington, Nebraska, in January, destroying the jobs of 3,200 workers, and CNH Industrial is closing its manufacturing plant in Burlington, Iowa.

Layoffs are sweeping through industry after industry across the globe. Blaming Trump's tariffs, Canada's second-largest steelmaker, Algoma Steel, plans to cut 1,000 jobs—one-third of its workforce—by March. Germany's Thyssenkrupp just reached a deal with IG Metall to eliminate or outsource 11,000 jobs—40 percent of its workforce—while major automakers, including Volkswagen, Mercedes, Bosch, ZF, Porsche, Ford and Audi, are announcing mass layoffs in the thousands.

This is not the result of a cyclical downturn or blind economic forces. It is a class war. It is part of a deliberate

policy to engineer the largest transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich in history.

The normal platitudes about “love and good cheer” are being overshadowed by massive inequality, which CNN called “the dirty secret” this year. The social crisis is worsened by holiday spending, with increases in “buy now pay later,” credit card debt and other mechanisms to make up the difference.

Slight rises in overall spending are accounted for by tariff-driven price increases and the domination of consumer spending by a narrow, privileged minority. While many are faced with the loss of their jobs or homes this Christmas, the ruling elite jets off to holiday getaways in Aspen, the Caribbean and the French Riviera.

One measure of the staggering levels of inequality, according to the RAND Corporation, is that the bottom 90 percent would have accumulated \$79 trillion more in income since 1975 had wages kept pace with productivity. Millions of manufacturing jobs have been destroyed over the past 50 years. One video went viral recently of an 88-year-old man, who lost his job in the 2009 restructuring of the auto industry, forced to work at Walmart to pay his bills.

Other reports underscore the dire situation. The Economic Policy Institute found that 43 percent of American households cannot afford basic needs and are compelled to dip into savings, go into debt or go without. For the first time, a poll found that college is no longer considered “worth the cost,” due to the absence of decent paying jobs.

The jobs massacre is being spearheaded through the use of artificial intelligence, which is expected to eliminate tens of millions of jobs in the next few years. A global economic forecast by JPMorgan Chase speaks of a “jobless recovery” following the next economic crisis due to AI's impact on virtually every industry and profession.

As WSWs International Editorial Board Chairman David North explained in lectures in Europe last month, the ruling class is attempting to pay for unsustainable levels of debt and financial bubbles by orchestrating huge declines in real wages through inflation, increases in exploitation, the

implementation of AI to eliminate vast sections of the workforce and wars—especially those involving Russia, Iran and China—over global supply chains and natural resources.

The emergence of Trump and other right-wing figures in countries all over the world flows from the fact that this strategy can only be implemented through dictatorship. While the Trump administration is a government of the oligarchy, he is only the most criminal expression of a political system, Democrats and Republicans, that is united in the defense of the rich and the war on the working class.

As for the union apparatus, it doing nothing, or, rather, its sole function is to suppress the class struggle. The upper middle class executives that run the unions are co-managers in the enforcement of brutal exploitation and job cuts.

In the post office, logistics in general, the auto industry and elsewhere, the union bureaucrats are helping impose tens of thousands of job cuts. Their only response to job losses is to join Trump in scapegoating immigrants. Their embrace of the would-be Führer and his right-wing nationalism is the most explicit expression of their identification with the interests of the corporate oligarchy

The Socialist Equality Party calls for the building of rank-and-file committees, organized through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) to launch a counter-offensive. A rebellion against the trade union apparatus is the necessary precondition for the emergence of a mass working class movement.

The IWA-RFC insists that workers have the right to a good paying job and is fighting to organize actions to enforce this right. This must be connected with the fight against cuts to social programs like Medicaid and food stamps, through which the ruling class is attempting to lower the life expectancy and eliminate the “surplus population.”

The IWA-RFC calls for workers’ control over safety in response to a series of deaths and disasters has resulted from the deliberate flouting of basic safety measures.

Two postal workers, Nick Acker and Russell Scruggs, Jr., were killed in separate horrific accidents. The UPS air crash last month in Louisville, Kentucky, killed 14. On Wednesday, a railroader died in an accident in Ontario, California. Industrial death and destruction are daily facts of life in America, even though the technical means are available to make this a thing of the past.

The IWA-RFC rejects the scapegoating of immigrant workers and calls for all workers to mobilize in defense of their class brothers and sisters being rounded up by Trump’s Gestapo and the vicious demonization of Somalis as “garbage.” The working class is an immensely powerful social force but only if it is united across races, nationalities and all other divisions promoted by the ruling class and its political representatives.

Above all, the situation requires the fight for workers’ power. The fight for social rights must be combined with the fight against dictatorship in defense of democratic rights, and for the enormous expansion of democracy to the workplace.

The crisis cannot be addressed through mild reforms that leave intact the unchecked power of the oligarchy, as the Democratic Socialists of America and its New York Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani claim. The fantasy character of this perspective is thrown into relief by Mamdani’s insistence that it is even compatible with collaborating with the fascist in the White House.

Instead, workers must fight the expropriation of the major corporations and the corporate oligarchy, using these vast resources to secure the right to employment, to a safe environment, secure retirement, high-quality education and healthcare, and others. Workers’ control over new 21st century technologies could be used to fund improvements in living standards and ease the burden of work, rather than throwing workers back to 19th-century levels of misery.

This requires independence from the entire political establishment, Democrats and Republicans. It also requires independence from the agents of the ruling class in the union bureaucracy, who must be overthrown and replaced with new leadership drawn from the rank and file.

There is enormous and growing opposition in the US and throughout the world. Over the past week, massive strikes have erupted in Italy, Belgium, Quebec and New Zealand. In the US, workers and young people have mobilized against ICE raids and the assault on immigrants. Among workers, a powerful mood of anger and opposition is building up.

This must be transformed into a conscious counter-offensive by the working class. This means forming rank-and-file committees in your workplace to begin discussing strategy and planning actions, in global collaboration through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC). And it means joining the Socialist Equality Party and taking up the fight for socialism and the building of a new society controlled by the working class for the benefit of all, not profit.



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