

Labor Storm

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Introduction

This is the first edition of the semiannual labor journal *Labor Storm*. It is the culmination of a lengthy organizing process which has involved fierce line struggle over the direction of the labor movement in the US, a lot of research, and the day-to-day grind of capitalist production. This publication should serve as a concrete expression of the trade-union consciousness of the New Labor Organizing Committee, provide direction for labor activists in affiliated labor organizations, and hopefully will strengthen the solidarity of workers across firms, industries, and nations.

This publication should serve as a stark contrast to the existing labor press in the US, such as Teamster magazine or Labor Notes, which function as little more than propaganda outlets for American imperialism and its hirelings in the labor movement. *Labor Storm* is intended to provide readers with scientific data on the labor movement and American political economy. The information is taken directly from the companies' financial reports and public statements, and occasionally buttressed by secondary sources, and verified by workers on the shop floor. It is our belief that systematically gathering and disseminating this information is vital to strengthening the labor movement. Reports are split into three sections: the objective factors, which are the material conditions which exist and can be scientifically verified; the subjective factor, which is one of the objective factors (and in certain conditions the decisive one) and is essentially the workers' own understanding of their struggle; and the NLOC affiliate's organizing work.

One important note is that the rate of exploitation is expressed as a ratio of surplus value generated to wages paid. This means that a rate of exploitation of one hundred percent means the workers are, on average, producing twice as much as they are compensated for. However, it is calculated here using profit, which is not synonymous with surplus value. Rather, profit is realized surplus value, as opposed to surplus value that is produced but not realized. (For instance, if finished goods are not sold, someone defaults on payment, etc.) This means that the rate of exploitation as calculated in these reports is in fact low, and could more accurately be described as realized or actual rate of exploitation—but this would also be inaccurate as the actual rate of exploitation varies from worker to worker depending on productivity, cost of living, etc. The rate of exploitation should be considered a rough estimate for comparing working conditions between firms, and not necessarily pinpoint accurate.

Readers will also note that the “International Correspondence” section is unfortunately sparse. This is due to a number of factors, including lack of translators, lack of access to contemporary primary sources in many countries, and the underdevelopment of the class-conscious proletarian trend in the labor movement internationally. (Additionally, we do not republish trade union materials without permission, which is another obstacle, particularly in countries such as China where labor organizing must be fully clandestine.) Our goal is to expand this section to provide the American workers with a clearer picture of the trade union movement outside the US, and in doing so, lay the groundwork for international labor unity.

(Cover photo is of the Nexperia strike in the Philippines, Q1 2025.)

Barista's Voice

Objective Factors

Starbucks has 211,000 employees in the US and 361,000 globally. The company opened 377 new stores in Q1, ending the period with 40,576 stores: 53% company-operated and 47% licensed. At the end of Q1, stores in the U.S. and China comprised 61% of the company's global portfolio, with 17,049 and 7,685 stores in the U.S. and China, respectively. For company stores, the equipment is owned directly by the company. It is common to have things break, and tech issues are common. Things are generally replaced quickly. Stores average multiple hundred sales (including mobile orders and deliveries) from open to peak hours. Starbucks' operating margin for the last five years is around 13.8% compared to the restaurant industry average of 15.8% and service sector average of 14.4%.

Starbucks' average wage is \$15.58 compared to the service industry average wage of \$14.29 per hour. The rate of exploitation is 45% based off of the following calculations: assuming the average Starbucks worker works 30 hours a week (due to most workers not being full time) at an average wage of \$15.58 an hour and 50 weeks out of the year (to account for sick time and vacations), this gets an average yearly wage of 23,370, then multiply this average wage by 361,000 workers to get a \$8,436,570,000 wage bill. In Q3 of 2024 the net income

was 3,760,900,000. Dividing the net income from the estimated variable capital gives us .446 or a rate of exploitation of 45%, not counting gratuities and unrealized surplus value.

All baristas are trained to work at every station, and shift supervisors assign positions to baristas and move them according to their preference. The different positions are front and food (ovens and taking cafe orders), DTO (taking drive through orders), DTR (handling transactions at drive through, although drive through is sometimes just one person especially outside of peak hours), Drive through bar (making drinks for drive through), cafe mobile bar (making drinks for cafe and mobile/delivery drinks), and customer support (restocking and helping with miscellaneous tasks).

Median wage is around \$16, wages increase with time spent there and some veteran baristas make over \$17, shift supervisors usually start at around \$21 and can go up to the high 20s. (Wages are basically market standard.) Most baristas are part time, but usually still work over 20 hours a week (the minimum required for benefits), shift supervisors and the best baristas work closer to full time hours, high 30s if not 40 hours a week. Store managers are given a total amount of hours for a week to spread around their employees, and oftentimes, shifts are understaffed. Shift supervisors are generally competent, they work on the floor with the regular baristas. Store managers are typically incompetent at working on the floor, but perform their role within the company well. However, district managers are incompetent and generally disliked.

Politically, Starbucks is a popular target for unionization. In 2024, the NLRB ruled ex-CEO Howard Schultz

violated federal labor law by telling a California barista to “go work for another company” if they were unhappy with Starbucks. The NLRB has allowed Unfair Labor Practice strikes by Starbucks Workers United and the company has been sued for unfair labor practices as well. Starbucks spent over \$1.5m on lobbying in 2024, mostly on Democrats.

Subjective Factor

Generally the workers know that the company is mistreating them. Relationships with store managers vary on a store by store basis, although the recent "back to Starbucks" initiative from the company was met with hostility by workers. Based on our experience, Starbucks' human resources is the main avenue of dealing with issues because there is not yet a state union contract. Workers do not generally follow most standard procedures, at Starbucks an "everyone has their own way of doing things" attitude reigns. Store managers and shift supervisors often enforce the rules in a subjective way, which varies store by store.

There are many issues drawing Starbucks workers into the labor movement. Window times are a constant stress—workers are expected to have at least under 50 second at-window times during peak (7-9 am), which means that on average customers should not be at the window longer than 50 seconds. But in reality, district and store managers often push shift supervisors and baristas to have window times below even 40 seconds on average. Complaints around this are widespread, as is the idea that workers should be paid more. Women and trans workers often experience unwelcome attention from male customers,

which is a common complaint. Visits from district managers are often hated and feared, because of their insistence on adhering to the smallest rules, including the dress code which is seen as unreasonable. Many workers support unionization (especially the Starbucks Workers United campaign) and Starbucks employs many LGBTQ people who are interested in defending their own rights.

SBWU is still trying to negotiate for a contract, and they have already agreed to a no-strike clause. (Note that SBWU is a part of SEIU which recently affiliated with the AFL-CIO.) SBWU assigns a union organizer to each prospective store to give guidance to the store organizing committee, which is made up of a few workers, usually mainly shift leads, and they are responsible for convincing workers to vote yes in a union vote. Starbucks used to have extensive anti-union propaganda, but the company recently shifted its tactics to be less openly repressive.

NLOC Organizing

The Chicago area lead for Barista's Voice was recently recognized as the lead organizer in their store. In Q1 2025, several stores staged a strike alongside a broader sit-in campaign. The striking stores were sabotaged by the SEIU, who alerted law enforcement ahead of time, resulting in both Barista's Voice and SBWU supporters being arrested in Chicago.

New Day at Amazon

Objective Factors

Amazon is an international logistics monopoly and online retailer. Amazon employs 1.53 million workers, and in 2023 Amazon's volume reached 5.9 billion parcels.

Amazon controls around 14% of the share of the parcel delivery market. Amazon has been investing in the upgrading of machinery nationwide. They have been mainly introducing automated sorting at Delivery Stations and continued upgrading robotics in Fulfillment Centers. Over the past couple of years, Amazon has been consolidating its shops, canceling plans to open more and closing dozens around the country.

The company usually maintains buildings relatively well. Their warehouses are usually rented. The main equipment utilized are belt machinery, trucks, jacks, forklifts, and many smaller items like tape, boxes, and paper. They completely hire their delivery trucks and employees through third party companies that compete for contracts. The company provides everything. They provide our steel toed shoes, our box cutters, vests, hard hats, markers, etc. It is quite easy for Amazon to hire new employees. It is getting harder as some industry analysts are starting to think Amazon is burning through its workforce. The wage is above the industry standard or average. We view

Amazon's current strategy of employment as stabilizing its heavily exploited workforce.

\$22/hr is the median wage nation wide. The job classifications are as follows: T1, T3, L4, L5, up to L12 (Jeff Bezos). Tiered employees are hourly and Level employees are salaried. T1s are the basic package handlers. Notice there is no T2 to put a clear difference between employees and management. T3 is a process assistant and has all the powers of a manager except discipline. L4 and up are all salaried and are managers with full power. Each promotion comes with significant raises and benefits. People are supposed to work 40 hours a week but Amazon does their best to cut down on labor cost using Voluntary Time Off. Basically, when we are above headcount and they don't need all of us, they send us home without pay (on a voluntary basis). Which is always fully taken up when available. Schedules depend on your building type. Some work 4 10s, some 3 12s, others 5 7s, some are "flex" and pick up hours whenever they are available no matter how long or short.

Realized surplus value = \$68.6 b (note that this operating income nearly doubled in just one year)

Variable capital = estimated \$72.71 b (1.53 M workers x 54 weeks x 40hrs a week x \$22hr)

Rate of exploitation = 94.35%

Politically, Amazon's current position is to sue the NLRB and challenge its existence as a whole. Amazon also regularly gets sued by the FTC for anti-trust activity. With the Trump administration the FTC has recently been much less critical of Amazon and has even removed blogs from their website that are critical of the company. Amazon

donates most of their political contributions as of recent to the Democratic Party. With this said, they do not discriminate and also donate plenty of money to the Republican Party. In 2024, they gave \$8.2M to candidates, PACs, and parties. They also lobbied almost \$20m to the federal and state governments.

Amazon has three main types of shops: Fulfillment Centers (FC), Delivery Stations (DS), and Sort Centers (SC). They also have important types of shops that are not as frequently built including Receive Centers, Air Hubs, and specialty shops like Amazon Fresh and XL warehouses. Amazon definitely tries to cross-train wherever possible. Amazon uses and abuses the employee to the extreme and then throws them out when they feel like it. The division of labor depends heavily on the type of building. For example, at a DS basically everyone can do everything. On the other hand, at a FC you are stuck doing the same thing for months on end.

The demographics tend to lean towards more male than female workers. In metropolitan areas there tends to be significant immigrant populations that make up the workforce. Mostly all immigrants at Amazon are “legal” as you need to have a visa or be a citizen to work at Amazon. Across the country the major demographics that work at Amazon are as follows: Black and white workers both make up about 30% respectively, Latino workers make up around 25%, Asian workers around 14%, around 5-6% are Native American or other.

Labor and management are in direct conflict everyday. The public rumors about how we are worked are absolutely true. We are worked as hard as possible and the management just walks around doing one of three things:

with their hands in their pockets, on their laptops, or barking orders/disciplining. Equipment isn't necessarily abused as much as quantity is 100% placed over quality at all times. Amazon has to toe the line between keeping us "safe" for insurance reasons and pushing us and the machinery to the limit. Management is well trained but remain largely incompetent since most managers are hired directly out of college. They have no experience being a warehouse worker and usually take months to years to learn the process at all and actually be able to oversee an operation without just making the numbers look good.

Subjective Factor

Most workers are able to understand that the managers are not working in our favor. Due to the surveillance, tracking of our scan-to-scan time, and the power that the managers have, they do not receive much positive approval from the workers. We would not go to the extent to say that it is an "open rebellion" but the vast majority of workers are conscious of these facts as well as the obvious power imbalance and understand to get through your day you must ignore the managers for the most part. There are two types of conflict resolution. You can either go to HR directly or file an ethics claim which is handled by a third party. There is a formal discipline system but the rules can change at any given moment. Most rules are followed on a case by case basis. Workers really decide what rules are followed, not management. The main factors drawing workers into the trade union struggle are wages (the typical demand is \$30), better shift timing, higher shift differential pay, more paid time off/vacation and a better system for it, a standard operating procedure at the workplace, better healthcare/benefits expenses, managers

being held accountable, safety standards updated and met consistently.

Most if not almost all workers at our main shop are not politically active. If they are it is usually just support for Republicans or Democrats around election cycles. The class consciousness is definitely there in germinal form. Workers do not see the contradiction as precisely as the proletariat versus the bourgeoisie but they understand for the most part there is a ruling and rich class of owners. They understand our power is very limited and some have expressed the belief there is nothing we can actually do, even going so far as to say a union is not worth it.

Within our specific shops there are no state or independent unions. There is not a big culture of ratting. With that said, there are backwards coworkers who cozy up to the bosses and do not have a problem calling out another employee to any higher up. Homophobia is not a huge issue and queer people are widely accepted in the shops we have organized. By far the largest social issue is racism and national chauvinism against migrant workers. There is not widespread anti-union propaganda but it is touched on at orientation.

There is the Amazon Labor Union (ALU) at JFK8 and another ALU at KCVG. Both have affiliated to the Teamsters with JFK8 being the only legally recognized Amazon union in the country. There is also Carolina Amazonians United for Solidarity and Empowerment (C.A.U.S.E.) who recently lost a NLRB vote. They have largely failed due to their tailing of American imperialism and the state labor bureaucracy specifically. They tie their recognition and existence to the state apparatus, thereby tying themselves to their enemy. Multiple union

organizing committees have also affiliated with the Teamsters, blatantly selling out the rank and file for an easy “victory”. Teamsters recently held a national “strike” that was really just a picket of a handful of stores. Their goal is to get Amazon to voluntarily recognize them so they can become the sole union of the hundreds of thousands of Amazonians. This has to be fought against, as all they want from us are our dues.

NLOC Organizing

We have only recently formed a National Executive Committee and started facilitating the formation of shop committees. This has allowed rapid consolidation in the recent past among our members. We have been able to write articles each month attempting to give Amazon workers an alternative to the state union trend that has seemingly taken over the entirety of the spontaneous workers’ movement.

Our obstacles are the mass surveillance within our workplaces, the vast amount of resources that the company holds comparatively to us, and the ability to tire people out after a long day of work (especially those with families), making them lethargic and apathetic. The main mistaken idea among the members and non-members of the organization is national chauvinism and racism of all stripes. Because of the density of immigrants in our shops and the fact that no real stance besides that of the management is pushed, American workers fall into reaction and blame the immigrants on many of the issues at the shop. When in reality, almost nothing is their fault and they are workers just like us.

At this point minorities/migrants and women have been the best supporters and members of the organization. No one has taken up the slogan “it is right to rebel” like these two groupings. White workers and men are the hardest to organize due to many mistaken ideas, mainly national and/or male chauvinism.

Recently, the Trump administration announced the termination of the Temporary Protective Status (TPS) of migrants from numerous nations, including Haiti. TPS is designed to protect foreign migrants that come from countries with political instability or war. Many Haitian migrants living “legally” in the United States fall under this status. There are many conflicting reports on deadlines but most Haitians in our shops were alerted by Amazon that they have until April 24th to self-deport. In certain metropolitan areas around the country Haitian migrants make up a large chunk of the work force. Within our shops alone they make up between 1/3 to 1/2 of our coworkers. This means multiple things: 1) clear collaboration between Amazon and the government, 2) Haitian migrants have to make the tough decision of going back to a country they fled or staying here illegally and continuing to find work to support their families both in the US and Haiti, 3) Amazon will squeeze its remaining workforce even more!

It seems like no matter how severe the policies of the Trump administration, Amazon will actively ensure they are carried out. Why wouldn’t they comply with new federal policy and actively help in the deportation of thousands of migrant workers after receiving billions in tax breaks? The ruling classes’ offensive against us is intensifying and we have no choice but to fight and organize ourselves. We have to support each other and

fight for the demands of the people. That is why we are launching a campaign to support our migrant workers. We want to build a list of demands, create departmental work led by migrant workers themselves, and forge unity between foreign and native born workers alike. Migrant workers cannot fight alone, especially at a place like Amazon. In the May edition of our shop paper we will be announcing our campaign to support the migrant struggle at Amazon. For now, we are carrying out heavy investigation, informing people of their “legal rights”, which are diminishing rapidly each day, and ensuring they have access to all resources possible.

New Day at UPS

Objective Factors

United Parcel Service is an international logistics firm that employs approximately a half million workers (with significant fluctuation throughout the year—approx. 4/5ths of these employees are in the US) in transporting 20 million parcels each day. At the moment, UPS is significantly revamping its operations through the construction of new automated facilities, upgrading equipment in existing facilities, and closing and consolidating outdated operations. This initiative is called the “Network of the Future”, and will have resulted in the closure of an estimated 200 facilities by the time it is accomplished. This will have the effect of increasing the average productivity per worker from 51 packages/person/hour to 59 packages/person/hour in 2026.

This has resulted in the extremely uneven development of UPS’ capital, with decades-old buildings operating way beyond their capacity (not to mention OSHA regulations) existing alongside state-of-the-art facilities that have fully automated some employee’s jobs, including sorting and scanning. UPS’ property, plant and equipment net assets were \$37.179b at the end of 2024. (Compared to \$36.945b at the end of 2023.) Carol Tomé claimed to the shareholders that UPS, as of 17 March 2025, “Completed 49 operational closures in the U.S., including 11 buildings, under our Network of the Future initiative, resulting in nearly 62% of volume being processed through our automated facilities, an increase of 430 basis points compared to 2023.” Thus, the modernization drive at UPS

has advanced greatly in the one year since the Network of the Future initiative was announced.

UPS is one of the main logistics monopolies in the US, with 19.1 million average daily (calendar days, not operating days) package volume for 2024. This is compared to 11.2m daily for FedEx, 24m for USPS, and 13.2m for Amazon (the fastest growing of the four major companies). USPS, Amazon, UPS, and FedEx together handle 98% of all domestic shipments. UPS' operating profit for 2024 was \$8.468b, compared to Amazon's North American division's operating income of \$9.3b and FedEx's \$5.559b for 2024.

Thanks to the International Brotherhood of Teamsters' collective bargaining agreement with UPS, UPS is able to keep its labor costs around the market standard, with Amazon's inside workers receiving a wage only a couple dollars below UPS' warehouse workers. CEO Carol Tomé received over \$24 million in compensation in 2024, including \$18 million in UPS stock. This is in contrast to the 2024 annual total compensation of the median compensated employee of \$55,200. However, owing to the extreme working conditions, including high package-per-hour requirements, lack of climate control in the warehouses and trucks, and high injury rate, UPS continues to suffer from the same high turnover rate that plagues the rest of the logistics industry. The average rate of exploitation of the UPS worker can be calculated thus:

Rate of exploitation: $8.468 \text{ billion operating profit} / (462,510 \text{ employees} * 55200 \text{ median wage}) = 33.2\%$

UPS continues to benefit greatly from its political connections. Former UPS executive David Keeling was nominated to head the Occupational Safety and Health

Administration (OSHA) by the new Trump administration at the same time that UPSPAC made \$330k in political donations. (From 1 January 2025 to 28 February 2025.) UPS is involved in multiple lawsuits, however, OSHA allowed a warrant to expire last year.

Inside the operation, there is sharp division between the better compensated skilled workers, mainly the feeder and package car drivers, and the inside workers, who are subject to constant abuses from management and have to work at breakneck speeds using improperly maintained/used equipment. On paper, jobs are supposed to be distributed according to seniority. However, there are so many workarounds (for instance, drivers automatically have seniority over inside workers and full timers have seniority over part timers regardless of time worked) and explicit violations of the contract by UPS management and IBT representatives that this is functionally nonexistent. Management is largely incompetent due to a lack of professional development and high turnover, and they are functionally glorified scabs who occasionally perform mental labor. The complete lack of standards in management and commonplace contract violations have created a state of tension between management and the hourlies.

Subjective Factor

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters opposes the development of trade union consciousness, often spreading misinformation concerning management and the operation, undermining solidarity, and unconditionally oppose any economic action to win the workers' demands. The Teamsters function as a wing of the Republican Party,

disseminating their worldview in the operation, exploiting any excuse to betray the workers, and accepting any opportunity to collaborate with the government no matter the cost to the UPSers' trade union rights. Equally guilty, however, is the myriad "union caucuses" at UPS, including Teamsters United, Teamsters for a Democratic Union, and Teamsters Mobilize, who posture as "militants" but in fact are opposed to any break whatsoever with IBT policy.

In spite of this, trade union consciousness is constantly developing on a spontaneous basis across the warehouses. Many hourlies instinctively distrust management, and to a lesser degree, the state union representatives. UPS' internal discipline system is correctly regarded as a method for persecuting class-conscious workers and forcing speedups, and the IBT's grievance process is largely unknown to the UPSers and disliked by those who are aware of it. Only a small minority who profit from exploitation of the grievance system (which consists in repeatedly filing for cash rewards without the union representatives doing anything to prevent violation of the contract) defend it and they defend it for purely reactionary reasons. The UPSers are largely politically inactive, with the Teamsters being split almost down the middle in support for Democrats and Republicans. (This was reflected in the local disputes over who to endorse in the 2024 election.)

The most common grievances are lack of overtime (although this varies greatly by building and job class), inconsistent/not enough hours, low wages, poor working environment/unsafe work pace, and poor management discipline. Layoffs are becoming increasingly important as a factor drawing UPSers into the trade union movement.

However, trade union unity is severely undermined by a number of subjective factors, including the low level of education of the average UPSer (which makes delegating organizing work difficult), low level of class consciousness, and a preference for class-collaborationist methods among those unfamiliar with the history of UPS and the IBT. The development of class-collaborationist caucuses has also hindered the development of the trade union movement at UPS, with many revisionist organizations seizing on the IBT's 2023 contract campaign to insert themselves into the movement for their own profiteering ends. Prejudice against minority groups, particularly LGBT people and immigrants, continues to be a barrier to solidarity among the UPS workers.

NLOC Organizing

New Day at UPS has distributed a few hundred copies of the monthly newsletter during Q1 2025. During Q4 2024, the West Charlotte New Dayers led a grievance drive to force management to honor the 3.5 hour guarantee in the collective bargaining agreement. New Dayers in the same building are expected to organize a rally against layoffs in the near future, as the day sort there will be closed in May 2025. In the WORMA building, a Management Commissioner was appointed to handle hourly-supervisor relations, particularly regarding the possibility of organizing joint action of inside workers against full-time management and UPS corporate on the issues of equipment, layoffs, and work rate/hours. New Day at UPS continues to enjoy the confidence of the inside workers, however, owing to the conditions in the operation, work among the skilled workers proceeds slowly, which in turn hinders the expansion of the organization to new hubs, as

the support of the skilled feeder drivers is needed to spread the newsletter across locals.

New Day at UPS is trying to organize a slowdown against the Network of the Future initiative, to prevent speed-ups and layoffs by establishing a work rate that would make working at UPS safer and force UPS to improve staffing. This would be buttressed by a walkout of sympathetic supervisors, who have some demands in common with the hourlies and some unique problems of their own. This is fully laid out in the Charlotte Plan which is available at newdayarchive.wordpress.com .

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Organization of Class-Conscious Service Workers

(Note that this report is split up into multiple firms.)

Compass Group

Eurest is a US-based subsidiary and the largest brand under Compass Group, a UK company which has many subsidiaries that focus on contract food service, hospitality, and catering. Eurest's specialty is large-scale food service and they serve a variety of clients that could be casinos and airports, but are most often financial institutions, corporate buildings (they boast serving over 58% of the Fortune 100 companies in the US), harsh-environment industries such as oil exploration and mining, as well as defense-contracting.

Much of the publicly available information is related to Compass Group as a whole rather than Eurest separately. The Eurest location being organized is at the Citizens Bank "Campus" in RI; like its many other contractors, Citizens Bank hires Eurest to provide food for the workers and clients that use the corporate campus. The Eurest location comprises a "coffee bar" and a "cafeteria" which are in near but separate parts of the building; the staff also sometimes do "catering", where they bring a setup of drinks and food items to certain parts of the campus that have events. For the coffee bar, Eurest franchises Starbucks through Nestle, getting license to sell specific drinks. However, outside of the seasonal products that are provided, Eurest is not held to the same standards of other Starbucks—they are able to sell food items made in-

house, as well as sell drinks with non-Starbucks ingredients.

Objective Factors

Compass Group employs approximately 580,000 people worldwide, 293,000 in the US. There are around 3100 locations under Compass Group in the US, and while there is no number given for worldwide, due to revenue reporting we could estimate another 1400-1500 more stores in the rest of the world. Eurest employs around 16,000 of those US workers at over 1200 locations, and claims to serve over “1.4 million meals” each day. Eurest does not have publicly available info about closure/opening of new locations; this year Compass Group reported to have sold their businesses in Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Kazakhstan, but also acquired CH&CO in the UK and Ireland as well as HOFMANNS in Germany.

The cafeteria at the organizing location is open 7-3 Monday-Thursday, and Friday 7-2. It offers both breakfast and lunch, plus the kitchen provides all the baked goods for the coffee bar. Breakfast has 2 stations, one that is staffed and provides hot food, the other which is not and provides pastries. Lunch has between 4-6 stations every day, most of which are staffed with multiple people. On busy days of the week the cafeteria processes over 1k orders, on Fridays it could get as low as only a few hundred. The cafeteria has around 18 non-manager staff working on a normal day. This is the following large-equipment in the kitchen: 6 ovens; 1 brick oven; 3 stovetops; 2 grills; 8 fridges; 2 walk-ins (1 fridge, 1 freezer); 1 ice machine; 1 fryer; 5 sandwich presses; 2

stand-mixers; 2 sets of coffee carribs; and 1 industrial dishwasher. The equipment in the kitchen is provided by Citizens Bank to the company that they contract, so Eurest does not own the equipment. Equipment is well-kept and not prone to failure.

The coffee bar is open from 7-4 everyday except Friday when it closes at 2. There are 5 staff members, and we serve 300-400 people most days, 100-200 on slower days. We have four 4-liter coffee brewers, 2 Verismo espresso machines, a large confectioners oven, a blender, a small dishwasher, and an ice machine. We also have one large and two smaller fridges, plus two display cases with lighting and refrigeration. Citizens Bank similarly owns the coffee bar equipment.

The coffee bar + cafeteria setup is not the same across all Eurest locations. While it seems most locations have cafeterias, they vary in size, and many locations do not have coffee bars or are made very simple.

Eurest's revenue is not publicly available; we also do not have the ability to calculate revenue of the cafeteria, which is where the majority of revenue for the location comes from. However, Compass Group's reporting is public, which can be used along with the estimated revenue of the coffee bar to try and find an approximate rate of exploitation.

In 2024, Compass Group reports \$42.002b revenue and an operating profit of \$2.584b. Using \$2.584b as the number for surplus value, and dividing that by the operating costs of \$39.418b, this shows a rate of profit just under 7%. This is slightly higher than the average of restaurants, which is usually 4-5%.

In order to get an estimate of the variable expenses of wages, we first calculated the total yearly salaries of the coffee bar's 5 employees and the average manager salary, which totaled around 231k for the year. Next we calculated the yearly revenue of the coffee bar, around 546k. Dividing 42.002b by 546k, take the result of 76,926.8 and multiply that by the yearly wages of 231k, to get just over 17.770b. Dividing Surplus (2.584b) by variable costs (17.770b) and then multiplying by 100 gets an estimated approximate rate of exploitation of just over 14%.

Compass Group estimates that the global “addressable market” in food service is worth about \$302b, and report that they control under 15% of it.

Workers at the coffee bar are paid above average for baristas nation-wide and locally, wages start at \$19 an hour vs the average 15 in RI and 14 for the rest of the US. Cooks in the cafeteria are paid slightly above the nation-wide average of 17, on par with the rest of RI with the 19-20 average.

Compared to other restaurants it is harder for new people to be hired, due to the extensive security protocols that need to be gone through in order to work at the Citizens Bank. This seems to be the case in other locations too; buildings require badges to unlock doors, employees need federal background checks, get their fingerprints done. These things make it a longer process to hire new people, putting off a new person being able to start for days to even a couple weeks.

The health department visits 3 times a year, the standard for food service. There is evidence of Unfair Labor Practice lawsuits being filed for Eurest and Compass

Group many times since the 2000s, but there are no currently open cases. There is further evidence that Compass Group has been criticized consistently for union-busting in various forms. We are not aware of any other existing union structures at any Eurest or Compass Group locations.

As previously stated, Eurest has a specialty in food service for defense contractors, like Boeing for example. Eurest had also previously been contracted to provide food for UN Peacekeepers in Africa and Asia, but they got suspended from this after in 2005 when Eurest was caught bribing UN officials for contract bids. Compass Group has a number of other smaller scandals that cost them money but otherwise no disciplinary action from any regulatory agencies.

There are 2 store managers that run the administrative tasks of catering, kitchen, and coffee bar; one regional manager that is on this location around half the week; a regional head-chef that is in occasionally; and one head-chef for the Citizens campus. There is also one shift-lead for the coffee bar, plus a couple leads for kitchen. Managers are in charge of ordering, making schedules, decisions about menus and how the location is run, administrative tasks, etc. Managers are payed salary, and Indeed listings of similar roles in similar locations under Eurest list the average salaries somewhere between 50-75k. Shift-leads are payed hourly, a few dollars more than their coworkers in similar roles, and are in charge of things like taking stock and making task lists.

There is a pretty distinct separation between the coffee bar and the cafeteria; almost never does someone who works in one area work in the other. The only exceptions are: 1)

during the “lunch rush” one person from the coffee bar will be asked to go to the cafeteria to help run the registers; 2) if there is a situation where coffee bar unexpectedly needs extra help when multiple staff members call out, someone from kitchen who has experience working at the coffee bar will be asked to cover. People who work at the coffee bar do not have a high division of labor—everyone does all the different tasks at some point or another. The shift-lead usually is the one to grab stock and make the order lists, but not always. There is one division of labor that focuses on seniority, which is the shift order—those who have been there the longest get to choose their shifts, which ends up being that they are openers and those who are newer are closers.

The kitchen has a stronger division of labor. There are 3 workers for focusing more on running registers, stocking customer-side things like napkins and condiments, and who do the catering tasks when necessary. There is one constant dishwasher, one who goes between dish and line duties. And the rest of the kitchen is split up by work station, where whichever station is assigned the worker does all the prep, service, and breakdown of the food that is being offered. The stations are assigned day-to-day, but most often the stations are consistently run by the same people.

Another significant division of labor is that Eurest staff are not responsible for janitorial work- there are janitors hired by the Citizens Bank that take care of emptying trash and cleaning floors during and at the end of each day.

All the people who work at the coffee bar are women or gender-queer; all the people who run the registers and catering are women; the majority of the rest of the kitchen

staff are men, including the head-chefs and one of the managers. The workers at Eurest are majority white and speak English as their first language, while the janitorial staff are all immigrants who speak Spanish as their first language. The demographics for Eurest or Compass Group as a whole are unavailable.

Wages are not contractual (at least for non-managers, unsure about salaried positions) and are decided during the hiring process. There is a difference in pay between coffee bar and kitchen. Indeed listings for Eurest positions in the area show between \$20-23 offered for sous chefs, while prep cooks get offered \$18-21. Wages seem to be on par with the area according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, but a coworker who has worked in 2 other kitchens claims this is a relatively poor wage at \$20/hr. Currently everyone at the coffee bar, except the lead, makes \$19/hr. This was the starting wage, and higher than comparable barista jobs in the area. However, one recent hire had revealed he had been receiving \$18/hr for the same position in the coffee bar (this coworker was moved to dishwasher last week when the previous main dishwasher moved, and was offered a \$50 raise which the manager described as "more than fair").

Management is largely incompetent; in the rare instance that they help on the line, they are not able to do many tasks at all and are generally not very helpful. Many workers also complain about the ordering problems, which is on management. While Eurest claims to have a lot of "room for growth" for their employees, managers seem to actually be rarely promoted from within, meaning all the managers are new to the location or the company in general. As a company, Eurest does not fire managers, so problem managers are either demoted or sent to new

locations. The relationship between labor and management is mostly not outwardly antagonistic; workers tend to complain about management quietly with each other, and for minor conflicts managers will speak to the offending employee “casually” and “cheerfully”.

Subjective Factor

Eurest has extremely high turnover among both staff and management. Recently, it got so bad that management hired a couple “temp” workers. Workers are generally not friendly towards management, but try to keep that to conversations with other coworkers. The staff all seem to have either the attitude of “we do not like the managers because they are managers” or “the managers are being overbearing and incompetent” or both. Management has all of their offices behind the kitchen, and in general spend a lot of time in the cafeteria, so because of this they monitor the workers in the kitchen more than the workers at the coffee bar.

There is a human resource department at Eurest, but we are not aware of any workers actually utilizing it. The biggest rules/discipline system has to do with absences—there is a 6-point system, which results in termination if a worker gets six points within one year. The points are: $\frac{1}{2}$ if you show up late or leave early, 1 if you call out of a shift. It does not matter if you call out for sickness, or get a doctors note, that point is added if you call out for any reason; however, if you call out for multiple shifts that are all for the same reason (i.e. sickness) then it is still only counted as 1 point.

This rule is a big complaint among coworkers, particularly in the fact that no one thinks it is fair to get penalized for

something like being sick. Another big complaint is that we consistently run out of things, especially at the coffee bar, because managers don't pay attention to the order sheets or set up consistent ordering schedules. Workers at the coffee bar wish that they were given tips, but besides the issue with our one coworker getting paid less most people are fine with the wages. One coworker complains particularly about the lack of a paid lunch break, and many others talk about how they want more paid time off, which gets accumulated very slowly.

Recently Eurest decided to make changes to the products being offered at the coffee bar, changing the menu and the setup a bit, causing the managers to start to spend more time at the coffee bar. The changes also include that they want to divide our labor up more and more intentionally than it has been—generally, employees try to stick to one role during rushes, but also try and switch around who takes what positions if they are in one position for too long, and the managers are trying to basically formalize and enforce this division of labor the employees naturally do without them. The coffee bar staff are annoyed by this, because “why can't they just leave us alone?”

Employees are largely politically inactive, but most have progressive political views and have neutral to positive views of unions and workplace organizing. There is no existing union structure.

NLOC Organizing

The Eurest location is new and no articles have yet been produced for *The Service Worker* on conditions there. Some obstacles to organizing at the Eurest location include: 1) the cafeteria/kitchen and coffee bar being

separate makes it hard to communicate, plus break schedules rarely line up; 2) the coffee bar itself gets very busy, so there's often no time to talk about organizing with employees there; 3) the majority of coworkers are adults with kids, and so feel a lot of pressure to keep and not lose their job.

In November of 2024, a correspondent of *The Service Worker* working at Maruichi Food and Deli, along with their barista coworkers, participated in writing a demand letter to their employer. The planning and execution of the action was successful and technically won the primary demand of a wage increase from \$6.75 to \$15 an hour. However, the backlash was that the manager essentially got rid of the barista position by cutting drinks from the menu, and fired one of the participants. The correspondent was also unsuccessful at further politicizing their coworkers. One thing to learn from this action is that it does no good to start with small actions in order to appeal to management—they do not care and will punish any form of organization. A further lesson could be that the many sectors of the job should be organized in order for one to gain their demands; in a store that had a separate cafe and market, baristas may have been more successful if coworkers in kitchen and grocery supported and actively took part in actions.

Dunkin' Donuts

Objective Factors

Dunkin' Brands Group has a total workforce of 270,000, including its corporate employees, franchisees, managers, and crew members at 9,775 US and 12,900+ total

locations worldwide. Each location hires between four to a few dozen workers depending on the volume of the store, whether it is a shopping center/convenience store location, standalone location, or if it has a drive-through. Its productive machinery consists of coffee brewers, coldbrew machines, espresso machines, freezers, fridges, at least one sandwich station cooler, toasters, and ovens. These are all owned and maintained by the franchisees; and every store is franchised. In total Dunkin' outputs 1.9 billion cups of coffee a year, which account for 60% of its total revenue.

Dunkin's rate of profit – 12% on average for a franchisee, but 8% on the low end – is relatively higher than fast food in general, which is typically 5-8%. This 12% is even after splitting off 5.9% of revenue to corporate for royalty fees and 5% of revenue to corporate for advertising fees. After corporate's operating expenses, including wages to corporate employees, shareholders see 17% of corporate revenue generated from these fees. Starbuck's 13.9% operating profit margin is comparable, reflecting the general trend that coffee shops are at the high end of fast food.

When considering Dunkin's share of the market, it is worth noting that in December 2020, Dunkin' Brands Group (which owned Dunkin' and Baskin Robbins) was acquired by Inspire Brands for \$11.3 billion. Inspire Brands owns Arby's, Buffalo Wild Wings, Sonic, and Jimmy John's. Inspire Brands is majority owned by Roark Investment Group, who also controls Focus Brands, the parent company to Moe's, Jamba, Seattle's Best Coffee, Cinnabon, Auntie Annie's, etc. The fast food industry in general is owned by about 10 corporations comparable to

Roark Investment Group, with McDonald's, Chic-Fil-A and Starbucks being the notable independent exceptions.

For example, Inspire Brand's total 2024 revenue was \$32.6 billion, whereas Starbucks' 2024 revenue was \$36.2 billion by itself. Tim Hortons' 2024 revenue was \$4 billion, and Dutch Bros. Coffee did \$1.28 billion in revenue in 2024. Dunkin' revenue was \$1.3 billion in 2019, the last year it publicly reported its revenue. But to be clear, this is the revenue of the Dunkin' Brands Group, which comes from the 10.9% in fees franchises pay to corporate. The average franchise makes \$1.079 million in revenue a year, making total revenue of all franchises about \$12.9 billion. 10.9% of this value is \$1.4 billion, showing a small growth in revenue from 2019, after rebounding from industry-wide losses in the 2020 recession.

When comparing market share by US stores, Starbucks still has 70% more stores than Dunkin' at 17,000+ to Dunkin's 9,775; globally, Starbucks has 33,000+ locations to Dunkin's 12,900+. For the US market, the next closest competitor is Dutch Bros. Coffee at 1,000 locations. Tim Hortons only has 640 locations in the US, about the same number in China, and 4,000+ locations in Canada. The last coffee chain competitors are Caribou Coffee, Biggby Coffee, Peet's Coffee & Tea, and The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, which altogether are about 1,500 locations and are all mostly regional. Starbucks thus represents 56% of the US coffee chain market and Dunkin' represents 32% of it. Of Starbucks' 17,000+ stores, 6,000 are franchised, versus 9,000 being company stores. Considering Dunkin' total franchise revenue and that over half of Starbucks' stores are company-run, the market share by revenue at the very

least approaches more closely to their market shares by stores.

On the labor market, while wages for entry-level employees at Dunkin' are at the discretion of the franchise owner, in practice they are rarely much higher than minimum wage. Becoming a shift lead, and assistant manager only raise this wage by a few cents to a dollar. This is typical of the fast food industry in general, with the only major leap in wages at the manager level. Dunkin has a very high turnover; 37% of employees stay for less than one year, and 69% stay less than two years.

Initial franchise investment for a Dunkin' location range from \$500k to \$1.8 million, and a franchise owner won't see a return on this investment for 2-3 years. 25% of the operating revenue goes to wages, and the rest of operating costs including franchise fees are about \$600k per store a year. For all franchises taken together, this is \$3.48 billion on wages and \$7.74 billion on the rest of overhead. If these total operating expenses are subtracted from the total revenue we get \$1.68 billion for surplus value. The surplus over wages, or rate of exploitation, is 48%; and the rate of profit, or surplus over all overhead, is calculated to 15%. In practice as stated above, most franchisees self-report a 12% average operating profit.

In food service the main regulatory agency of the state is the health department, which can perform surprise checks at any time. In practice, they visit anywhere from every six months to annually. Any employee working alone and all management need to be "safe serve" certified. Among the obvious food safety requirements, there must be two hand-washing sinks, new gloves must be used for every order, cross contamination must be prevented within

reason, food must be stored in coolers below 41 degrees F, checked for mold, etc. During a rush at Dunkin' things are more messy and are cleaned up in the downtime, nothing out of the usual.

As far as lobbying the government, Inspire Brands successfully lobbied against an amendment to the COVID relief bill in 2020 that would have raised the minimum wage to \$15/hr. This is interesting insofar as it gives an indication to the extent Inspire Brands relies on the federal minimum wage for all their brands. For Dunkin' itself, there were claims around 2016 that Dunkin' donated heavily to Donald Trump's first campaign, but donations from Dunkin franchise owners were about even between the Democratic and Republican parties.

The number of workers at each Dunkin' location ranges from a few in the smaller stores to a few dozen in stores with higher volume. Each worker is mainly divided in their task; they'll be hired for sandwich station, barista, cashier, or drive through, and generally stay in that position. 54% of Dunkin' workers are women, and 56% are 20-30 yrs old. 23% are 18-20 and 5% are minors. Dunkin concentrates young women workers in their 20's. 65% of Dunkin' workers are white, 14% Latino/Hispanic & 9% Black. The most common languages spoken after English are Spanish and Portuguese.

Dunkin' has no collective bargaining contracts and remains completely unorganized. In 2022, a Massachusetts Dunkin' franchise owner was found guilty of over 1,200 child labor violations and paid \$1 million to the state of Massachusetts. In 2023, a franchise owner of stores in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland was found guilty of working 14 and 15 year olds. This is what

is reported. Especially at overnight drive-through locations, equipment is abused by sheer volume and workers are overworked.

Entry level positions are usually a dollar or two over minimum wage. 20% of Dunkin' workers make less than \$31,000 a year, and store managers make \$53,000, the 40th percentile. Mid level regional or marketing managers make \$86,000 in the 70th percentile, and corporate IT & Directorship roles in the 90th percentile make over \$108,000. Franchise owners take home on average \$125,000 a year per store, and shareholders of Dunkin' Brands Group divided \$242 million between themselves.

Subjective Factor

In Providence and Blackstone Valley, the franchise owner and many employees are Portuguese. These workers see more affinity in their nation than their class, and this view must be combated. Younger non-Portuguese workers are excluded from this national clique and are thus more receptive to opposing class collaborationism.

Dunkin' has an HR department but it's not generally trusted. It must be called to approve sick days, though. In the recent past in some Providence locations, workers have walked on the franchise owner and demanded cash tips, which were granted. This is generally left up to the individual franchise owner, as well as whether to pay holiday pay or not. In Providence stores it is a popular demand to get time and a half for holidays, which are required days to work for crew members. Currently holidays are just paid normal time.

Many Dunkin' crew members, especially younger workers, are receptive to unionism in the abstract, but are intermediate and/or unaware of the trap of the state unions. Dunkin' workers can be politically divided between the advanced who are class conscious and understand the need for independent unionism; the intermediate who support unions but need to be won over against state unions; and the reactionary, sometimes on national and racist lines, who are aligned with the boss and talk bad of other workers, promoting competition and disunity among the working class.

NLOC Organizing

The Service Worker has contacts at Dunkin' locations in the Providence, Rhode Island area, but there is not yet a shop committee. The challenge has been in winning over the intermediate workers to the revolutionary position. Agitation through *The Service Worker* has on the one hand avoided repression but on the other has not overcome this obstacle. *The Service Worker* has in articles agitated against Starbucks Workers United (SBWU) to help make the case against state unions, to mixed results. It has been hard to get coworkers to read once they're off shift. Verbal agitation during regular conversation will need to be emphasized until a secure method of exchanging physical material without being seen on in-store cameras is discovered. The high turnover rate of young workers, often in school, means the industry is inherently difficult to develop long-term rapport with co-workers.

Strike the Set

(This report was significantly cut in size and is also divided by firm. The full version is available upon request, especially to other aspiring class-conscious trade unionists looking to organize live entertainment: email strikepaper@proton.me for more information.)

Objective Factors

The live entertainment industry demands a creative approach. Stagehands and technicians are essentially serial day-laborers. Almost every laborer in the live events industry has to split their time between multiple companies—though individual workers will tend to get a majority of their work with one or two employers. Labor is either hired directly by the venue or client, by a production company which organizes an event at the venue and charges the venue owner/operator for labor, or by a labor broker hired by the promoter for an event happening at a venue, which then finds local labor through the IATSE local or a company like Rhino Sports & Entertainment Services. Production companies can therefore simply quote higher amounts for labor if stagehands and event operators demand higher pay; the only thing stopping them is competition: potentially losing clients to other production companies or labor brokers.

To analyze our industry, we start from the workers' points of contact to live events and branch out from there to reveal all the interconnections and contradictions of the live entertainment industry.

In Pittsburgh, Flyspace Productions has the largest share of clients outside of IATSE jurisdiction and corporate events, including some events with key clients like the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust and the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership. It's our theory that they are able to do this because of the very low quotes they give clients (mainly because of their low wages), and because of the fleet of mobile collapsible stages that Flyspace maintains. Companies like MediaQuest and Hearcorp likely have a larger share of corporate clients. IATSE provides labor for all the bigger productions at the biggest venues and controls labor in most of the theaters in the city, including all the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust venues, and is thus closest to being heavy industry. Most, if not all, career stagehands in our city—that is, those whose primary work consists of manual labor in event production—work for multiple employers, and so a few mostly unorganized workers will occasionally work on IATSE events, but this constitutes for most a minority of their activity. There are smaller time labor brokers and promoters in Pittsburgh like Drusky Entertainment and Larry Nation who furnish labor for certain events and venues. Stage AE is staffed by Larry Nation's workers but operated by PromoWest, which is owned by Anshutz Entertainment Group, the second largest promoter nation-wide after Live Nation. Live Nation is the largest entertainment monopoly in the US and has widespread international reach.

Exact numbers and estimates are based on data from 2024 unless otherwise noted. Where Flyspace and Local 3 are concerned, these are necessarily rough estimates, since Flyspace is not publicly-traded and very little information about Local 3 is publicly available.

We find that the worst-paid and most exploited tend to be the most progressive and revolutionary in their thinking and instincts, and it's among this strata of workers that the shop paper gets the most support. At this time, we envision a strategy of "uniting from below," where the unorganized, unskilled stagehands who work mostly outside of IATSE build strength in numbers and influence through struggle and by expanding the distribution of the shop paper in order to oblige the more privileged workers and IATSE stagehands to take a side in the struggle. If unskilled workers at Flyspace for instance were to strike, we think it's likely that scabs would come from either IATSE or from stagehands hired by one of a few individuals who sell stagehand labor in the city.

This season we want to strengthen our base among the unskilled and unorganized, expand distribution of the paper to stagehands who work for other employers and freelance stagehands who work all over to get a broader idea of the conditions in our industry, and to make the potential for scabbing more difficult. When possible we try to gather information from and try to win over the more skilled workers, who are also exploited, but we exercise extreme caution when it comes to distributing the shop paper among them.

Flyspace

Objective Factors

Flyspace employs 13 full-time skilled or semi-skilled laborers, of which 2 overlap with management, but do not have direct firing ability, 17-20 part-time stagehands who work the most often, (this number varies depending on the

season), around 150-200 seasonal part-time event ops workers, mostly during the summer, (this is a rough estimate), and 6-12 max freelancers, as well as some very skilled workers (A1 - head audio tech; L1 - head lighting tech; etc.) who work as independent contractors. Flyspace staffed and managed at least 10 major festivals or festival-like events in 2024: Warhol Museum Anniversary Gala, Three Rivers Arts Fest, Pride, WYEP Festival, Children's Theater Festival, Picklesburgh, Pittsburgh Jazz Fest, Oktoberfest, Light Up Night and First Night. In 2023, Flyspace received \$2.53 million from the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust for "event production." Flyspace has done small-scale corporate events for Red Bull, Duolingo, Westinghouse, Allegheny Health Network and Highmark. Some of these are called "brand activation" and are categorized differently from concerts in the company.

Equipment on Flyspace events is either: owned outright by Flyspace (most notably their mobile stages, as well as some A/V, lighting and rigging equipment); partially owned by Flyspace and another company; or rented from another company, usually a client. Partially owning materials allows Flyspace to cut costs and to get more gigs when the co-owners of their equipment are also their clients. Flyspace's largest mobile stage is one of only three in operation in the entire United States, so this stage is occasionally rented and transported across state lines.

Flyspace has a very bad reputation among people who work the events industry in Pittsburgh. Anyone who has been working in the industry for even 1 or 2 years is aware of this and may refuse to take gigs from them if they can work somewhere else. Wage theft is rampant. There have been times when Flyspace has had to call the IATSE local business agent to get stagehands last minute, get

stagehands from Larry Nation, or from a mobile app that brokers labor like Qwick. Some more skilled workers are able to take gigs from Flyspace without being Flyspace employees, and file taxes as 1099 contractors. Flyspace has a very difficult time keeping skilled workers. For this reason they have to maintain a small group of tight-knit, early to mid 20s workers as full-time workers.

Turnover among management is also very high. We don't have much in terms of concrete figures, but we do know that Flyspace pays the worst of all production companies in Pittsburgh, across the board. The only exception is labor for stagehands at Stage AE, who make \$16 an hour. When the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust has opened up venues in the past that are non-union, wages for production staff can be as low as \$15 or \$16 an hour. However, at Stage AE stagehands also get an 8 hour minimum per show (load in and load out included), while Flyspace only guarantees a 4 hour minimum per day regardless of number of shifts worked, meaning Flyspace stagehands could conceivably make less money for the same amount of work despite a higher hourly wage.

Flyspace's 13 full-time skilled or semi-skilled laborers make \$22/hr, but often make a lot of overtime; they may have to work 60+ hours a week during the busy season (we've even heard from some that it wasn't unusual for them to work 90+ hours in 1 week). 6 people max are needed to build a stage, and there are typically 3 or 4 people in the warehouse, 1 or 2 drivers, and the leads for an event: A1, L1, V1 etc. The 17-20 part-time stagehands make \$18/hr. The 150-200 seasonal part-time event ops workers make \$15/hr.

When very skilled workers are needed (A1 - head audio tech; L1 - head lighting tech; etc.), they work as 1099 freelancers and charge day-rates that they determine (est. \$500-\$1000/day).

With no clear information on operating expenses we can't give an estimate on them. There are rumors that Flyspace events result in a loss and that the company is deeply in debt, but we can't confirm them at this time. However there are a few signs that Flyspace is not exactly struggling financially that frustrate the workers. The ownership frequently does favors and cuts costs for certain clients, then turns around and tells the workers that they "can't afford" to give them a raise. Flyspace co-owner Corey Cope, IV is also known for collecting classic cars.

Flyspace has one manager who gives OSHA trainings; the only purpose these seem to serve is to shift blame onto workers if an accident were to happen. One worker was severely injured and received absolutely no information on how to submit his paperwork for workers' compensation. He was only told he needed a paper trail after everything was already done and received no workers' comp at all. Flyspace has had problems with the Department of Transportation for going over weight limits at weigh stations and having loose equipment unsecured in the back of trucks.

Flyspace staffed and produced one rally for Dave McCormick, a Republican senator who won his election in Pennsylvania, a rally for J.D. Vance, and lent a stage for a Kamala rally. This is not an exhaustive list.

Subjective Factor

At all levels in Flyspace, from the most unskilled part-time workers to even higher up office workers, there is resentment expressed toward Jennifer Owen and Corey Cope who own Flyspace, though not all are rebellious openly or to the same extent. As for the state union, views are split: some aspire to be career stagehands in the union, knowing that working conditions are better for IATSE stagehands; some resent IATSE for its nepotism and selectiveness. Most see IATSE as something that doesn't really concern them and that they have no chance of joining. When Flyspace stagehands have worked alongside IATSE stagehands, there is a feeling of resentment toward the IATSE hands who are getting paid more than them and who are guaranteed breaks when Flyspace stagehands usually never get breaks. In the event of a strike by unskilled workers at Flyspace we think that the full-time workers, with conditions as they are right now, would take a vacillating stance toward the strike. They would be forced to pick up the slack to get the events done and would probably end up working alongside scab stagehands furnished by IATSE or Larry Nation. But with some struggle, we think it's possible to eventually win them over because of their deep resentments toward the company.

Some of the older skilled workers kept on by Flyspace look down on the women working alongside or under them and essentially view them as useless. They will treat them as if they have no idea how to do their job and are physically incapable of doing the same work as men. Flyspace has had multiple predatory men in management who harass female coworkers. Sexist and predatory

attitudes are sometimes present among the workforce itself and usually go unpunished. Black workers are sometimes paid wages lower than what their position merits. Their aspirations and personal talents are ignored while skilled positions they're qualified for are denied to them arbitrarily. Flyspace has staffed and managed events for Republican election candidates, racist comedians or bands and Zionist organizations.

We notice a tendency among unskilled and some skilled workers to be too favorable to on-site leads and management (when present). In response to unreasonable or unsafe demands on the part of these managers or full-time workers, the workers will tend to feel sympathy for them. These on-site stand-ins for management sympathize with the unskilled workers since they have their own grievances with the Flyspace office and owners. Part of the job of on-site managers is to "cushion" blowback from workers over abuses that would normally go toward ownership and upper management and this double-nature is reflected in their vacillating character. As a result, unskilled workers are more willing to do unsafe things and stretch themselves for the company out of personal loyalty or sympathy for on-site managers who they see struggle with the same enemy. A lot of workers think that if an unsafe thing needs to be done, it's better for them to sacrifice themselves than to do nothing and watch someone else do it.

Only a few part-time workers have expressed being favorable to unionizing under IATSE, though this support is flimsy and can be opposed without hard feelings. Though less of a problem at Flyspace than other companies, there is a phenomenon still present among the more skilled workers that we've taken to calling the

"Plight of the Blue-Collar Worker"—though it might be more appropriate to say blue-collar scab worker, which is what this attitude amounts to. The idea is that some workers wear it as a badge of honor that they have suffered and pushed through extreme conditions (bad planning, extremely long days, sleep deprivation, injury) and made it out the other side. Then when they hear their coworkers complain about bad conditions, they say "You only worked 60 hours this week? Last week I did 90 and slept in my car three times." This is an attitude that needs to be combatted. Very few skilled workers have expressed being favorable to unionizing under IATSE.

Sports venues, theaters, Live Nation amphitheater: IATSE Local 3

Objective Factors

Stagehand IATSE locals essentially function as labor brokers/temp agencies for the live entertainment industry and are disliked by non-union stagehands due to their many anti-worker policies, especially as concerns collaborating with employers and the seniority system, which necessarily entail cliquishness, hostility to outsiders, and reactionary politics among high-seniority workers. Stagehand locals strike a deal with certain employers to provide apolitical and docile skilled labor in exchange for acceptable contracts; if they don't think that a certain production company or venue will collaborate, or the union dues they could get from unionizing its workforce isn't worth their time, they don't bother organizing those workers.

The Local 3 hiring hall, based on our estimations, numbers around 700 workers total, of which around 400 regularly take calls and 100 or so are retirees. About 1/3 of these 400 active workers are close to full-time, getting first pick of the best and highest-paying work. The other 2/3 are part-time, with between 50-200 (depending on the time of year) being provisional workers who usually only get work at the three main stadiums and arenas in Pittsburgh which require a larger workforce. This is a significant portion of the total number of workers in live entertainment in Pittsburgh and so the stagehands who work in Local 3 cannot be ignored long-term. IATSE furnishes labor for concerts at major sports venues, one amphitheater and all the major theaters in Pittsburgh.

Local 3 tends to have more stagehands than it needs. In the summer months when the overhire list gets exhausted, the call steward will send out text blasts to everyone on the entire hiring hall list including overhires with a phone number to call if they want the shift. We have never heard of a situation when the local was not able to furnish enough stagehands for an event; the only very desperate situation we've seen was when the Harris rally needed to change venues at the last minute and IATSE sent out texts offering lots of overtime to entice people to work.

Wages and conditions are better than other companies, between \$23-27 an hour with significant stipulations for pay increases based on certain conditions, like extra pay on Sundays or after midnight. We have heard that occasionally the unwelcoming environment can deter new hires. There are very few young people as apprentices in the hiring hall. The union has tried to make changes to "open up" since the pandemic to attract more workers

after losing significant numbers, but on the whole the local is not radically different from how it was pre-2020.

We hear that Local 3 has had problems with the NLRB though from what we can tell none of this is public record. Local 3 staffed two rallies for Donald Trump's campaign in Butler, PA and one in Pittsburgh, as well as one rally for Kamala Harris in 2024.

Pittsburgh Cultural Trust

The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust is a non-profit 501c3 which has over \$200 million in assets, half in real estate, half in liquid assets and investments. They own all the major theaters in Pittsburgh. They are thus a major venue owner and operator which employs union and non-union labor. The Cultural Trust and the Downtown Partnership together manage all the main outdoor events in downtown Pittsburgh which are staffed by Flyspace. Their boards of directors consist of city government officials and representatives for major corporations with a lot of control over Pittsburgh.

The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust received \$36.6 million in contributions, gifts and grants in 2023. These are from city, state and federal government, foundations and corporate donors. Revenue minus expenses amounted to \$18.9 million in 2023, \$32.7 million in 2022 and \$20.3 million in 2021. Their wage bill in 2023 for "program services" was around \$7.9 million out of \$10.6 million total. Without donations this would amount to a loss, but a surplus of tens of millions means that the worst-off workers could be paid much better wages. We can thus point to a high rate of exploitation by and a greater

concentration of capital in the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust post-pandemic.

International Correspondence

Vietnam

This section is an authorized translation of the following articles originally published in Vietnamese:

[https://vidanphucvu.wordpress.com/2025/01/23/quang-
ngai-cong-nhan-duong-bo-dung-leu-qua-dem-de-dau-
tranh-doi-quyen-loi/](https://vidanphucvu.wordpress.com/2025/01/23/quang-ngai-cong-nhan-duong-bo-dung-leu-qua-dem-de-dau-tranh-doi-quyen-loi/)

[https://vidanphucvu.wordpress.com/2025/03/16/hang-
nghin-cong-nhan-o-thanh-hoa-dau-tranh/](https://vidanphucvu.wordpress.com/2025/03/16/hang-nghin-cong-nhan-o-thanh-hoa-dau-tranh/)

Thousands of Workers in Thanh Hóa are Struggling

Originally published March 16, 2025:

During the early days of March, thousands of workers in Thanh Hóa took to the streets to struggle for salary raises and for their rights. It is estimated that more than 25,000 workers in eight districts have taken to the streets.

In Thọ Xuân district, 2,670 workers at Rollsport Corporation, 516 workers at Zheng Ta Corporation., and 3,824 workers at Adian Corporation have taken to the streets to fight.

In Triệu Sơn district, 850 workers at Ivory Corporation took to the streets to protest. Workers from Sun Jade Corporation have also joined the struggle, but they were quickly put down.

In Cẩm Thủy district, 3,400 workers at PMT Footwear Corporation have initiated a strike.

In Ngọc Lặc district, 5,852 workers of 3 footwear-manufacturing companies took to the streets to demand a raise.

In Nhu Thanh district, 7,203 workers in Akalia Footwear Vietnam Corporation have also initiated their struggle. 12,358 workers in Venus Footwear Corporation (in Hà Trung district) have also prepared to join in but were quickly suppressed.

The conditions of the workers currently protesting in Thanh Hóa are poor. They are treated badly. They have to endure very harsh conditions, without any welfare, while still having to work tirelessly to keep the profits high. For example, at Akalia Footwear Vietnam Corporation (in Nhu Thanh District), workers had to work overtime for three hours just to get a loaf of bread—three hours, for a tiny loaf of bread!

Moreover, the struggle of Thanh Hóa's workers also raised another problem: the regional minimum wage problem. Recently, the ruling revisionists have adjusted minimum wages based on regions (according to, respectively, region types I, II, III, and IV) [TRANSLATOR NOTE: the region type of a particular place in Vietnam reflects the urbanization level of that place. Type I regions are the most urbanized, and Type IV regions are the least]. This reflects a new problem of the semi-feudal economy in Vietnam, which is the growing urban-rural polarization; the pay gap and semi-feudal modes of exploitation have pushed a great amount of the rural population into bankruptcy, forcing them to move to the city in hopes of earning a bit more to survive, to fill their stomach, and to

feed their families. However, in reality, life in the city is not any better. The city dwellers are exploited and abused in many ways by their bosses. They don't have any rights, and they are also subjected to all kinds of repressive laws enforced by Tô Lâm and his running dogs.

What did the revisionist Union do, when those workers were struggling? On one hand, they joined in with the imperialists and domestic comprador capitalists to undermine the workers' struggle by hosting "workers-corporation dialogues" filled with false promises to "protect workers' rights", while on the other hand, they mercilessly suppress that same struggle. What kind of Union is that? A "red" Union, serving the proletarians, or a "yellow" Union, serving the bureaucratic-comprador bourgeois and the labor aristocrats? The revisionist media also have been either silent on this, or smeared the workers' struggle, framing them as "an event caused by enemies' agitations" or "reactionary". If a socialist nation attacks workers who are struggling against the exploiting capitalists, then their kind of "socialism" is that of Hitlerite socialism, merely a capitalist "socialism".

Workers of Quãng Ngãi Set Up Encampments Overnight to Protest for their Rights

Originally published January 23, 2025:

Construction workers working on the Quãng Ngãi - Hoài Nhơn highway have had to set up tents, erect bonfires to keep warmth and cook, and fight for their rightful wage, which their employers have been refusing to pay.

Before that, when the sun was still up, about 30 workers erected banners and tarpaulins with messages demanding Đèo Cả Corporation and Phú Hiển Vinh Company pay them the wages that were agreed on in the contract made on 9th of January, 2025.

These workers are employees of Phú Hiển Vinh Construction – Trading – Service Joint Stock Company (Phú Hiển Vinh Company) which is headquartered in Bình Thạnh district, Hồ Chí Minh City.

Mr. Võ Minh Quang (from Bình Định province) - a machine operator, one of those that spent the night on the construction site, said: “Our home is very far, so we have nowhere to return to, or go to, if we don’t get our money, so we had to sleep right here, on the construction site. But, since yesterday, no one came here to investigate the situation or reaffirm anything to us. This morning, 22nd January, we are still here.”

According to Mr. Quang, Phú Hiển Vinh company has owed them their wages since September of 2024. After having continued to work to October without their wages paid, Mr. Quang and the other workers quit their job, stopped working, but they still have to stay there to wait for their pay.

During November and December, when there was constant rain, Mr. Quang, who has not been able to find another job, still had to maintain the machinery and equipment of the Quãng Ngãi - Hoài Nhơn highway’s contractor (Phú Hiển Vinh Company).

Those fighting to get their salary like Mr. Quang are mainly from the driver team and machine operator team. They are from many places, some are from places inside

Quảng Ngãi province, some are from outside the province. They are now in urgent need of those money to cover their expenses at the end of the year.

Mr. Nguyễn Đình Bảo Duy (from Đăk Lăk) – the team’s manager, said: “I’ve worked for Phú Hiển Vinh company for decades, I never thought that the Company would ever default on wages like this. I’m the one who brought my comrades here to work, so now I must also stay here with them. I don’t know when will the Company resolve this.”

According to the statistics given out by the workers, 74 people in various roles and positions have not received their wages. Most of them have a monthly wage of around 15 million VND [TRANSLATOR NOTE: Around 582 USD per the April 2025 exchange rate], the one who is paid the most has a monthly wage of 24 million VND [T.N: Around 931 USD per the April 2025 exchange rate]. The total amount of wages unpaid is 2 billion VND [T.N: 77,650 USD per the April 2025 exchange rate].

The owners, after knowing about this, tried to push responsibility on to each other. Đèo Cả Corporation blamed Phú Hiển Vinh Company for their “incompetence and failure to ensure work progress”, and thus ended the contract, shirking their responsibility in the problem of giving the workers their wage. Phú Hiển Vinh Company, on the other hand, only signed a document that “guarantee to pay 500 million VND of salary and bonus to the workers”. However, to this day, the workers still haven’t received a dime.

Abbreviations

AFL-CIO: American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

ALU: Amazon Labor Union

FTC: Federal Trade Commission

IATSE: International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees

IBT: International Brotherhood of Teamsters

NLRB: National Labor Relations Board

OSHA: Occupational Safety and Health Administration

SBWU: Starbucks Workers United

SEIU: Service Employees International Union

