FOR A UNITED STRUGGLE OF US, MEXICAN AND CANADIAN WORKERS!



BY WILL LEHMAN
Mack Trucks worker and rank-and-file candidate for UAW president

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As a candidate for president of the United Auto Workers (UAW) in the United States, I call on workers across every auto parts and assembly factory in Mexico to support my campaign. This is your struggle too.

As a rank-and-file worker at a Mack Trucks assembly plant in Pennsylvania and a socialist, my campaign is not aimed at reforming the UAW apparatus. Just like the corrupt, gangster-ridden charro unions in Mexico, the UAW has a long history of stealing our dues and taking bribes while enforcing one sell-out contract after the other.

My campaign does not seek to replace one wealthy union executive for another but to abolish the bureaucracy and take power back into our hands by building rank-and-file committees in every workplace.

However, the success of our struggle against the charros on either side of the border depends on mustering our combined forces through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).

The COVID-19 pandemic not only showed that an event can overturn the daily lives of workers several continents away almost immediately. It also exposed how the capitalist ruling elites conspire globally against workers to protect their profits—in this case, by sending us back into unsafe plants. But most importantly, this global pandemic has demonstrated that we can only defend our livelihoods and lives by fighting together.

As hospitals and morgues began filling up in March 2020, wildcat strikes broke out in auto plants in Europe. Then, only days after thousands of workers had read the statement “Shut down the auto industry to halt the spread of coronavirus!” by the Socialist Equality Party (US), the strikes spread to the United States and Canada.

Shortly after, workers downed their tools across auto parts plants in the entire industrial belt of northern Mexico. By forcing the shutdown of the auto industry across Europe and North America, this spontaneous movement saved tens of thousands of lives. However, it remained unorganized, and the governments and the unions were eventually able to overcome the resistance and send us back to the factories, which resulted in hundreds of thousands of dead across the region.

Weeks after the Trump administration ordered the reopening of US plants, the Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador and his allies in the so-called “independent” and traditional unions followed suit. During, this short interval, however, it became evident that American auto plants “cannot restart if parts suppliers in Mexico remain down,” as stated by the Detroit Free Press.

A corporate director told the newspaper that certain industries in North America, like the automotive, “have welded key links of the chain together over the past several decades, such that they are no longer links on a chain but a rod that cannot be broken.”

Put plainly, these giant transnational corporations cannot impose unsafe conditions, mass layoffs, wage cuts, aggressive overhauls or major speed-ups

if workers resist internationally. However, to combat management's use of the state apparatus and the treachery and corrosive nationalism of the trade unions, workers must establish independent links across borders and weld ourselves into a "rod that cannot be broken."

The trade unions and every official institution today defend private property and capitalist exploitation as the most sacred "rights." Personal benefit with no regard for others sums up their definition of "democracy" and "freedom." But today none of the essential elements of modern life can be secured based on a perspective of every man on its own or, for that matter, every factory, industry or even country on its own.

For decades, the American and Canadian unions responded to globalization by subordinating themselves entirely to the corporations and threatening workers that we needed to accept endless cuts or our jobs would go to countries with lower wages. Meanwhile, the Mexican unions have continued to cut real wages at auto plants, which remain on average around $2.50 per hour, based on the claim that they must remain "competitive."

More recently, the UAW and AFL-CIO, working with the US government, have been compelled to feign concern for the oppressive conditions faced by Mexican workers. But this was only out of fear that your brewing rebellion against the charro unions would spill over the border and turn into a rebellion against the pro-corporate unions across North America.

These fears were confirmed incipiently by the massive wildcat strikes in Matamoros in 2019, where workers organized independent strike committees, held democratic mass assemblies, marched to the border with Texas to call on the American workers "to wake up" and sent appeals through the WSWS for an international struggle.

During the US national strike at General Motors in the fall of 2019, workers at the GM Silao plant in central Mexico joined several online calls with US auto workers and organized a resistance against speedups and forced extra time in support of the strike by their brothers in the US.

By comparison, at every turn, the same executives of the AFL-CIO promoting "independent" and "democratic" unions in Mexico rail against "Mexican-made cars" and use Mexican workers as scapegoats to ram through their sell-out contracts in the United States.

We can only protect our independent interests as workers—regardless of the bottom lines of corporations and the crumbs they give to union officials—by organizing outside of these pro-capitalist and nationalist organizations.

As we have done in numerous auto plants and other workplaces in the United States, workers in Mexico must also form rank-and-file committees controlled democratically by the workers on the shop floor themselves.

There is no social force more powerful than the international working class, and we all face fundamentally the same challenges—from pandemics to war, the threat of dictatorship, inflation, remarkable social inequality, mass poverty and environmental catastrophe. By consciously and actively building the IWA-RFC, we can lay the organizational basis for eliminating the source of all these global issues: the capitalist profit system.

JOIN THE FIGHT FOR WORKERS' POWER!

Get involved with the rank-and-file campaign in the UAW elections.

willforuawpresident.org/get-involved