SUPPORT THE MEXICAN AUTO PARTS WORKERS' FIGHT AGAINST MASS LAYOFFS!



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

I salute the courageous factory occupations spreading across northern Mexico, where workers are taking collective action to stop mass layoffs and defend their livelihoods against US-based corporations.

The occupations were triggered by the shutdown of six First Brands maquiladora plants in northern Mexico and the firing of more than 4,000 workers, throwing thousands of families into crisis. On January 28, workers received notice announcing an "orderly, accelerated shutdown" of major North American operations, including the wind-down of the Brake Parts Inc., Cardone and AutoLite business units. The occupations were initiated independently of the official union apparatus, reflecting deep anger over a jobs massacre driven by corporate restructuring and financial speculation.

Workers are occupying the plants to block the removal of machinery and prevent the permanent destruction of their livelihoods. Once equipment is stripped and production relocated, entire communities are devastated. Like the Flint sit-down strikers 90 years ago, they are defending their jobs at the point of production.

These occupations demolish the lie constantly promoted by the UAW bureaucracy—that Mexican workers are passive, that they will accept anything to undercut American workers and "steal our jobs."

The Mexican and American working class are no different. We are exploited by the same giant corporations. Mexican workers are paid less and super-exploited to boost the profits of the same transnational auto companies that exploit workers in Detroit, Toledo and Chicago. They face layoffs, speedup and blackmail just as we do. They feel the same anger and the same urgent need to fight.

The corporations operate as a single cross-border system. GM, Stellantis and Ford shift production wherever labor is cheapest. Major suppliers—including Lear, Dana, American Axle and Magna—span Mexico and the United States, using wage differences to drive down standards everywhere. When workers in one country are forced to accept cuts, those concessions are used to threaten everyone else.

It is within this integrated system that Mexican workers are taking a stand. In Matamoros and Ciudad Juárez, workers have occupied plants owned by US-based auto parts corporations tied to North American supply chains. First Brands operates across the continent. BPI manufactures brake components for major automakers and has been recognized as a General Motors Supplier of the Year. Hopkins Manufacturing and Centric Parts supply the automotive aftermarket throughout the United States and Canada.

The conclusion is clear: layoffs cannot be fought within national boundaries. The struggle must be international.

Once workers know about each other's struggles, unity across borders is the most natural response. We saw this in 2019, when workers at the GM plant in Silao refused to undermine the US auto strike. Tens of thousands of maquiladora workers in Matamoros launched wildcat strikes demanding higher wages. Rank-and-file workers in the United States responded with donations and messages of support. Solidarity flowed directly from shared class interests.

While the AFL-CIO-backed "independent union" in Mexico is seeking to narrow the struggle and shut it down quickly, the worker-led occupations take the fight further. By seizing and holding the plants, workers challenge the supposed "right" of corporate executives and financial swindlers to close factories and destroy communities at will. They raise a fundamental question: who decides the fate of production—the financiers, or the workers whose labor makes everything run? In this, Mexican workers are showing the way forward.

Meanwhile, UAW President Shawn Fain is backing Trump's tariffs and trade war measures, repeating the lie that destroying jobs in Mexico, Canada and elsewhere will

benefit US workers. This is a fraud. Workers do not gain when jobs are destroyed abroad. The same corporations slashing jobs in Mexico are slashing them here.

In 2025 alone, more than 1.2 million jobs were eliminated in the United States as corporations accelerated automation and AI-driven restructuring to boost profits. Plants are closed and shifts eliminated—not to protect workers, but to increase shareholder returns. Most recently, GM eliminated 1,100 jobs at Factory Zero in Detroit without meaningful opposition from the union apparatus.

Nationalism divides workers while corporations enrich themselves. The same politics used to blame Mexican workers for layoffs now fuels repression at home.

The deployment of ICE agents to Minneapolis and other cities—including outside Amazon and GM plants in the Detroit area—is part of this strategy. Immigrant workers are targeted first, but the aim is to intimidate the entire working class and prevent unified resistance. An attack on immigrants is an attack on all workers.

Autoworkers must lead the defense of our immigrant brothers and sisters. We must use our collective economic strength—including strike action—to demand the removal of ICE from every city, the dismantling of these agencies, the release of all detainees and the prosecution of those who violate democratic rights.

The fight against layoffs and repression is one struggle. The same corporate interests closing plants promote chauvinism and expand state power to defend profits.

Workers in the United States, Mexico and Canada must build direct unity from below. That means forming rank-and-file committees in every plant, linking them across borders, sharing information in real time and preparing coordinated action so no workforce stands alone.

This is the purpose of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. Through the IWA-RFC, workers can coordinate a continent-wide fight for no layoffs, no plant closures, full employment, decent wages and democratic rights for all.

Workers must reject the class-collaborationist policies of the UAW bureaucracy and take up the class struggle. I am running for UAW president to build a movement to abolish the pro-corporate and nationalist apparatus and transfer power to workers on the shop floor through democratically controlled rank-and-file committees.

If we remain divided, we will be driven into a race to the bottom. If we unite across borders and build our own organizations of struggle, we can defend every job and fight for a future based on human need, not corporate profit.

We must, indeed, all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately.

The way forward is international unity through the expansion of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

JOIN THE FIGHT FOR WORKERS' POWER!

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

willforuawpresident.org/get-involved