

Strike breaks out at Goodyear factory in central Mexico

Alex González
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From April 24 to 25, about 600 workers went on strike at a Goodyear plant in the central Mexican state of San Luis Potosí. About 40 percent of the 1,500 workers at the factory stopped work to protest their low living standards and to demand the right to form their own union by rescinding the “protection union” contract that was negotiated behind the backs of workers by the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM), the largest union in Mexico.

Workers at the Goodyear plant earn an average of 210 pesos per day (about \$2 USD) and reportedly only last an average of three months at the plant due to poor working conditions. The striking workers stated that each employee was doing the work of three, and that far from taking steps to address the high turnover rate at the plant, the company was seeking to speed up production by imposing a six-day work schedule.

The striking workers also reported health issues due to the materials they handle for the production of tires: “There are people who faint, that have fallen while shaking. We are all looking to improve our rights, we want an improvement in our labor contract,” stated a representative of the workers. “We are demanding the exit of the CTM union ... We want to form an internal union with the support of all our coworkers.”

Goodyear opened the \$500 million tire factory in 2017. At the time, a company statement promised it would be the company’s most technologically advanced plant, a “zero-waste-to-landfill” and “zero-solvent facility, using natural gas, energy efficient LED lighting and state-of-the-art dust collection equipment.” The Goodyear plant in San Luis Potosí is also the company’s largest in Latin America and supplies 30 percent of the Mexican auto industry.

But the company’s regard for the state and safety of its equipment does not extend to the workers, who

produce all of the company’s wealth. Before the plant had even opened, the company had already negotiated a “protection union” contract with the widely hated CTM. Under such contracts, a union is imposed on the workers and has the power to negotiate on behalf of the entire workforce without being democratically elected or accountable to the workers it supposedly represents. Many times, employees are not even notified that they are working under such agreements. “Protection union” contracts have been nominally outlawed in the United States and Canada but remain legal in Mexico.

The CTM is seeking to cover its tracks by claiming that the contract was negotiated by a state union representative without the knowledge of the national leadership. “The problem at Goodyear is not against the CTM but against Senator Tereso Medina from the Federation of Coahuila Workers because, without knowing market conditions, without relating to the people of San Luis Potosí, he signed a collective contract. ... The CTM is analyzing and discussing the expulsion of Senator Tereso Medina due to his affront against the working class,” stated CTM San Luis Potosí leader Emilio de Jesús Ramírez Guerrero.

However, workers are not fooled by such lies, given the long and bitter experience of entire generations with the CTM. The CTM has been one of the pillars of rule for the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and has been an integral partner in the suppression of the class struggle. In its more than 80 years of existence, the CTM has used thugs to intimidate—and even kill—workers while supporting the right-wing policies of successive PRI administrations that have sought to reverse the gains of the Mexican Revolution.

Currently, the CTM is playing a leading role in slashing the rights of workers by introducing federal legislation that would make it easier for employers to

hire contract workers with minimal rights and protections. The proposed legislation, introduced in the Mexican Senate on December 2017, would also make it more difficult for workers to go on strike and would eliminate the right to receive a formal notice of termination of employment.

The Federal Work Law was introduced by PRI Senators Tereso Medina Ramírez—the same figure who allegedly negotiated the contract with Goodyear—and Isaías González Cuevas of the Revolutionary Confederation of Workers and Peasants (CROC). As with the Goodyear contract, the CTM national leadership is also unconvincingly seeking to present the legislative actions of Medina Ramírez as those of a “rogue” agent who was acting without the blessing of the union.

While their hatred of the CTM is well-justified, workers at Goodyear must learn the lessons of all the previous “independent” unions that have been established in Mexico. The nominally “independent” pro-capitalist trade unions—including the current unions representing Mexican workers at Volkswagen, Audi, Nissan and Bridgestone—have proven themselves to be just as subordinated to the whims of employers and unwilling to unite the working class across borders, even though the struggle against transnational corporations is global in its character.

Goodyear is one of the world’s largest tire companies, employing about 67,000 people worldwide with plants in 22 countries around the world. These workers confront common problems and share common class interests. The *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* calls for the formation of rank-and-file committees to coordinate and provide leadership to these struggles internationally. We call on autoworkers to contact us to support this fight.



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