

Mexican government prepares “legal” pretext for end of Matamoros strike

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The two alternatives facing Matamoros striking “maquiladora” workers are becoming sharper as the federal government’s threats to intervene in the strike are being facilitated by figures around the unions and the ruling leftist Movement for National Regeneration (Morena).

The Mexican ruling class is nervously discussing the threat to corporate profits posed by the 17-day strike of 70,000 auto parts and electrical workers. “The conflict in Matamoros, although it corresponds to the local legal system, is of national consequence. It has been a long time since Mexico experienced a crisis of this magnitude,” tweeted the president of the Mexican Employers Federation (Coparmex). “Dozens of companies, thousands of jobs, and the country’s reputation are at stake.”

The government, which defends the interests of the banks and corporations, has responded accordingly by conspiring to end the strike under the guise of “federal arbitration.” The new government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) is eager to reassure corporations that Mexico can secure a maximum return to finance capital.

After the head of the Mexican Senate intervened on Sunday to attempt to shut down the strike, more and more workers are beginning to distrust the federal government. Morena activist Susana Prieto has intervened to tie workers to the capitalist state and continues to support ending the strike plant by plant instead of fighting until all workers have won their demands.

Prieto told reporters on Monday: “I received a call from [Senator] Mr. Ricardo Monreal and I placed it on speaker. He said: ‘I am calling on behalf of our friend [Mexican President] Andrés Manuel ... The maquilas must open on Monday. Since workers trust you,

convince them to lift the strike.’”

Faced with this extraordinary admission, Prieto said, “That sounds good. I am going to ask for a general consensus with the workers at the 45 plants, if they have faith in the new federal government, and they do have faith, I am going to seek consensus and deliver a response.” After enormous backlash to Monreal’s intervention, Prieto reported that if she would have presented such a plan the workers would have “lynched” her.

On Monday, representatives from the state government in Tamaulipas visited plants and repeated claims that strikes at 13 plants were “illegal,” threatening workers with mass firings if the strike was not lifted immediately. Later in the day, the Secretary of Labor and Social Wellbeing in Tamaulipas claimed that 90 percent of the workers on strike would like to go to work, but are being held hostage outside of the plants by militant workers and “outside agitators.” This is a lie.

Workers must be warned: threats of a federal operation mean the government is preparing to both bully workers into protracted legal negotiations—which will inevitably end in a result beneficial to the companies—and carry out a violent police repression of the strike.

It is in this context that the actions of Prieto must be understood by all workers. While reassuring strikers of the “legality” of the strike, Prieto has continued urging workers to place their trust in the same government that is on the side of the ruthless maquiladoras. Contrary to Prieto’s claim, workers are engaged in a political struggle and must draw the necessary conclusions about their enemies—the government, the companies, and the unions—and those that continue to appeal to these forces, including Prieto and pseudo-left outfits such as

La Izquierda Socialista and *La Izquierda Diario*.

The same is true of American pseudo-left publications *Jacobin*, which is affiliated with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and *Socialist Worker*, the publication of the International Socialist Organization (ISO). These pro-imperialist organs have not written *a single article* on Matamoros. They support the trade union apparatus which has suppressed the class struggle and robbed maquiladora workers of their dues money for decades.

It is crucial that workers make the necessary conclusions and continue to draw on their own independent initiative. As of this writing, 17 companies have agreed to grant the workers the demanded 20 percent wage increase and \$1,700 bonus. However, workers know that the devil is in the details. Prieto and the union are shoveling workers back to work without having had a chance to study the new contract and guarantee that their demands will be met. Workers at some plants have reported that only employees with certain seniority will be given the bonus, or that their bonus payments will be spread out over several months rather than being paid as a lump sum.

Questions of when workers will be paid, if strike pay will be guaranteed, and whether fired workers will be rehired are significant issues. The ruthless maquiladoras are not about to grant workers charity out of kindness. With the backing of the union and the government, the companies will try to claw back any concessions given at the first available opportunity, just as they did when they scrapped their bonuses after the increase in the minimum wage in December.

The fact that workers are being sent back plant by plant, instead of standing together with all their social might, weakens the whole strike. The fewer plants that remain on strike, the easier it will be for the government and the companies to carry out a crackdown against the strikers and limit the economic impact of the strike.

Matamoros workers have already demonstrated their willingness to sustain and broaden the fight. On Monday morning, a contingent of hundreds of workers arrived at the Candados Universales plant after social media reports spread the word of the arrival of state police. The workers mobilized within minutes to defend the plants and protect their fellow workers from state repression.

Hundreds of local residents, including US workers in Brownsville, Texas, have been supporting the strikers by delivering food, water, and other supplies. The Matamoros workers have received dozens of statements of support, including by Texas Amazon worker Michelle Quinones, which have urged them to expand and link up their struggle with other workers around the world.

The terms on which the strike is ended must be dictated by the workers themselves. Workers everywhere must urgently draw conclusions from the events in Matamoros and the need for an international struggle, based on a socialist perspective and completely independent from the nationalist and pro-capitalist trade unions.

Workers who wish to form a common international strategy should contact us by email at autoworkers@wsws.org or via our Facebook page in order to take up these crucial steps. For more information on the February 9 rally in Detroit, visit wsws.org/auto.



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