

# Union thugs assault striking Matamoros workers

Andrea Lobo  
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The Mexican and US ruling class and the trade unions are ramping up their physical intimidation and reprisals against the workers in Matamoros, Mexico, whose rebellion against the trade unions and sweatshop conditions has sparked an ongoing strike wave across the country.

On Thursday morning, the same workers at the Fisher Dynamics auto-parts plant in Matamoros who sent a video supporting the February 9 demonstration in Detroit against plant closings announced by GM in the United States and Canada, told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* that union thugs had attacked their picket line.

"They went to the plant at 2 a.m. We made a wall of workers to prevent anyone of the first shift from entering, to stop production as an action to put pressure. But those from the union pushed our fellow workers" in an effort to break the picket, one of the Fisher workers said. Another worker added, "They were people sent from Jesús Mendoza, the leader of the union. They do it to scare us."

Later in the afternoon, one of the Fisher Dynamics workers cheerfully reported that the company had agreed to their demands, a 20 percent raise and a bonus of 32,000 pesos (\$1,700), which workers have called the "20-32." Nonetheless, workers are returning to work wary that the companies and the unions are intensifying the repression and reprisals across the city, with more than 1,500 layoffs since the strikes began last month.

Michael Fisher, the CEO of St. Clair Shores, Michigan-based Fisher Dynamics, was reached by the *WSWS* and questioned about the strike. He refused to comment on the strike and claimed that he was not aware of any physical attack on striking workers by thugs. "Yes, I am aware of the strike," he said, "But I am not interested in commenting on it," he told the reporter before hanging up.

The Socialist Equality Party (US) condemns these attacks against one of the most exploited sectors of the

international working class and calls on workers across the United States, Canada and internationally to mobilize in their defense. As the appeal from Matamoros workers to their international brothers and sisters signified: "An injury to one is an injury to all!"

Similar threats by management, police and the unions are increasingly frequent across the city. On Thursday afternoon, hundreds of workers from Schumex, Adient and Tridonex carried out what some of them called a "St. Valentine's Day march," visiting each "maquiladora" plant on strike in Matamoros to protest the repression and show support. Over 20 plants remain on strike.

The Tamaulipas Secretary of Labor, María Estela Chavira, stated this week that 20,000 jobs could be lost as soon as six months, while the local maquiladora association threatened 25,000 layoffs within 3 years.

A worker at Kearfott, who also sent a powerful greeting to the February 9 demonstration in Detroit reported to the *WSWS*: "The same union people that had tried to break the strike are collaborating with supervisors to spot any mistake by those who supported the strike in order to fire us. We are organizing a committee in each company to go support other fellow workers on strike and to expose what is happening at our plants."

"The problem is that now that we decided to raise our voice, we are being marked by the government and the company," she added. "We are supporting each other because the repression in Matamoros is on the order of the day. We are being subjected to slanders and hostility from everyone defending corporate interests. My company even wants to install a hidden camera in the bathroom. That is an invasion of privacy, I think, and hope it doesn't happen," she said, adding that her plant would send a delegation to support Parker workers on Friday as they rejoin the strike to protest firings and other reprisals.

On Wednesday, the *Wall Street Journal* warned that the strikes in Matamoros are the largest in the country in

nearly 30 years and “an early indication of a revival of labor demands in Mexico.” Last week, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics announced that 2018 saw the largest number of US workers engaged in strike activity since 1986, led by an ongoing wave of teachers strikes, while resistance grows against the mass layoffs and concessions in the auto industry in the US, Canada and Europe.

In response to the growth of the class struggle, the *Wall Street Journal* also reported that the Mexican ruling class is promoting a new labor legislation to promote “independent” unions, requiring them “to prove they represent a majority of workers” in order to prevent wildcat rebellions like in Matamoros. The *Journal* adds that this was specifically demanded by the Trump administration as part of the new US-Canada-Mexico trade agreement.

Support for such legislation—based on the application of the 1949 UN International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention No. 98 already ratified by the Morena-led Congress last September—has also come from the established and right-wing union executives in Mexico and internationally.

Lobbying efforts for these steps have been carried out through the self-described “independent” Electrical Workers Union (SME) and the National Union of Workers (UNT) with the financial and political backing from IndustriALL, the AFL-CIO, the ILO and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation of the ruling Social Democratic Party in Germany.

In response to a tweet last September reporting a meeting between the SME-UNT and the Morena president of the Senate, Martí Batres, a worker tweeted, “Unions here in the border, Tamaulipas, are only good for taking weekly dues, but not for the worker. We are alone; I don’t understand why you want to impose unions on us since they never do anything when we ask for their help.”

On Wednesday, the SME, which also leads the New Workers Central (NTC), partnered with Morena Senator and leader of the Miners Union, Napoleón Gómez Urrutia, to announce the establishment of the “International Labor Confederation” (CIT).

While Urrutia has long floated the idea of a new union central as window dressing for the discredited existing confederations, he made explicit that the sudden announcement was a reaction to the wave of strikes initiated in Matamoros. “As long as the conditions of exploitation continue for these workers, not just on the border but across the country, there is a risk that these conflicts will break out. We will always be ready to

advise and support them,” he stated.

However, the anti-worker character of this Morena-led conspiracy was exposed the next day by the president of the national Maquiladora Association, Luis Aguirre Lang, who requested that the new CIT and president López Obrador “intervene immediately” to suppress opposition to mass firings in Matamoros. “We call on the new CIT announced Wednesday in encouraging the construction of and giving certainty within a legal framework of trade-union liberties,” he said.

After weeks of ignoring the strike, an American delegation of the UAW and USW executives traveled to Matamoros to stage a photo op with workers, which was published under the headline: “US unions bring solidarity to striking Mexican workers.”

Facing the growing calls for international resistance by workers against decades of betrayals, these same union executives are fraudulently posing as supporters of “independent” unions in Mexico while stoking anti-Mexican chauvinism at home, all in order to prevent the development of a genuine international movement of the working class. After GM’s announcement of plant closings, the UAW and its Canadian counterpart Unifor have produced video ads and billboards urging GM not to produce in Mexico and calling consumers to boycott cars “Made in Mexico.”

Moreover, earlier this month, UAW president Gary Jones said in a statement: “The president has taken important steps to adhere to the concept that the US government and consumers should Buy American... And it’s not just government, companies like General Motors have an obligation to build where they sell and stop exporting jobs abroad.”

The ruling class is accelerating its cultivation of corporatist relations between the state and the union apparatus to chain the working class to capitalist and nationalist politics. Whether it is in Mexico, the US, Canada or internationally, the unions and its backers seek to restrain the growth of the class struggle on behalf of the corporations.



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