# US and Mexican autoworkers call for united struggle against GM and auto companies

**Tom Hall**
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US and Mexican autoworkers, together with teachers, Amazon workers and other sections of the working class discussed an international perspective to win the General Motors strike in a call-in meeting Thursday hosted by the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter*. More than 200 people attended.

The outcome of the strike will proceed along two possible roads, said *Autoworker Newsletter* editor Jerry White in his opening report. The road of the United Auto Workers and General Motors is to isolate workers, deprive them of information and starve them into submission on the picket line.

"If they think they can get away with it, the UAW will end the strike," White said. "Trump will tweet out his congratulations and the Democratic presidential candidates" such as Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren "will all hail the supposed 'victory' of the UAW. If not, they will continue to isolate the GM strikers, starve workers out on $250 strike pay and put a full-court press on to accept a contract that is rushed through before workers have sufficient time to study, discuss and organize opposition to it."

"But there is another road," White said. "The strike can be won, but only if it is taken out of the hands of the corrupt UAW bureaucracy. There is no time to lose. To prevent the strike's defeat, workers must immediately form rank-and-file factory committees to take control of their struggle."

White pointed to the courageous stand taken by Mexican GM workers in Silao, who have refused to accept increases in production during the strike, for which GM has unleashed a wave of firings.

As in previous meetings, Silao workers from "Generating Movement," a rank-and-file group formed in opposition to both GM and the pro-company union, appealed to the American workers for support. "I have a rope around my neck, as we commonly say in Mexico," one said. "Yesterday, a co-worker warned me that I would be fired today. They didn't because I didn't go to work. I'm appealing to you to come to our aid to stop these firings here in Mexico… There is no turning back now."

Israel Cervantes, who was fired at the end of August for helping organize the group, sent the following message: "Your fight in the United States is very important for us. We appeal for your support in the form of demanding the re-hiring of fired workers. We are not afraid of the continued reprisals, and we are still working to prevent speed-ups.

"We hope that US workers take control over the strike resources of the union. It would be very important for our fellow workers in the US to have the resources for their strike, to get a better pay. Here in Mexico, our economic situation is tough, and it would be very important to get your support from there to be able to continue with this union movement and to have greater strength. At the same time, you will be able to wage a longer strike.

"In Silao, Guanajuato, Mexico, the motor and transmissions plants have been shut down since Tuesday due to the strike. Keep on going brothers. From here, we will continue to support you in your struggle, which is the same as ours. We hope that all workers globally will unite for better labor conditions and incomes."

The common fate of American and Mexican autoworkers was subsequently demonstrated in a wave of further layoffs in Mexico due to the US strike. In Silao, management is cutting two shifts per week from each department. It is paying affected workers only 55 percent of their normal wages.

GM's Ramos Arizpe complex will run out of parts on

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Monday, according to local press reports, and 4,000 workers will be furloughed.

A US retiree and veteran of the last national GM strike in 1970 encouraged the younger generations to take the fight into their own hands. He told the call-in meeting: “We walked for 67 days to fight for 30 and out, pensions and COLA. I retired in 2008. I was making $30 an hour, and the guy right next to me was making $15. The UAW I remember is no more. It’s a disgrace. GM workers and Amazon workers deserve to make a decent living. After I retired, my insurance has gone up and up each year.

“I keep hearing ‘rank and file.’ You have to do it now, because General Motors is trying to take everything. Stand together, do it now, because you may not get another chance.”

A second-tier worker from Fiat Chrysler’s Toledo North Assembly Plant said: “We are currently working 10-hour days, 6 to 7 days a week. I think a huge problem right now is that we have a lot of tier two workers… the tier two workers need to come together, because we have no pensions. COLA (cost of living adjustments) is gone. Plants are closing.”

Responding to the firings of Mexican autoworkers, she said: “I think it’s crazy that people are getting fired for taking this stand. [But] there’s so many people employed by the auto industry, that if we can stand together, then what else can [the companies] do, if all of the workers united through all of the countries?”

A number of educators also spoke on the call. Lisa, an adjunct professor from Colorado, explained how professors have been “broken down over time to precarious, low-paid and part-time work." She continued, "I have a Masters degree and make $21,000 a year teaching at colleges. I have no benefits. I’m laid off like clockwork every three months.

“I’m on this call because as everyone before me has said, the importance of us linking together, not by nation or industry but as members of the working class, is something that I want to do with you. What is done to you in this world is done to me.”

Ben McGrath, a reporter on South Korea for the *World Socialist Web Site,* discussed the ongoing strikes against General Motors in that country. “Workers in South Korea are following your struggles. It’s not just now. When there is any sort of strike that occurs in the United States, it gets the attention of workers in South Korea.

“With GM in particular, this company has threatened Korean workers with mass layoffs for years. They have worked with both conservative and liberal governments to enforce their dictates. They have been joined by the Korean trade unions... They have signed off on wage cuts and layoffs. This is very much an international issue. Like in the United States, they even divide workers within Korea company by company. But autoworkers are looking for a way to fight back.”

At the end of the call, WSWS writer Marcus Day explained that the *Autoworker Newsletter* is organizing meetings to form new leadership bodies to establish networks of rank-and-file committees to take the strike out of the hands of the UAW. He appealed for autoworkers who support such a struggle to contact the *World Socialist Web Site* and become involved.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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