

Brazil's Força Sindical issues phony support for John Deere workers' strike in the US

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The wave of strikes taking place in the United States is a decisive milestone in the international uprising of the working class against the intolerable conditions imposed by the global capitalist system. The strike initiated on October 13 by more than 10,000 John Deere workers, who rejected a rotten contract presented by the United Auto Workers (UAW), is a critical battleground for the international working class.

This strike, like others in the US, Brazil and around the world, has taken the form of a rank-and-file rebellion against the corporatist unions. Over the past three decades, trade union organizations across the globe have fully integrated themselves into the management of capitalist corporations and rammed through contracts that destroyed jobs, wages and gains won by previous generations of the working class.

Trade unions, corporations and bourgeois states around the world are watching these events with horror and are mobilizing a counteroffensive in an attempt to extinguish the fire spreading throughout different sections of the working class around the world.

Within this context, the UAW just released a video of Brazilian union leaders from the Metalworkers Union of Catalão allegedly supporting the John Deere strike in the US. Catalão is where one of Deere's main plants in Brazil is located, and the Metalworkers Union of Catalão is affiliated with the *Força Sindical* union federation. The only support that American workers can expect from Brazil's *Força Sindical* to their strike is the kind that a rope gives to a hanging man.

The video of the Metalworkers Union of Catalão is essentially a reissue of the UAW's blatant lies. They claim that the strike at John Deere began in the US because the UAW "does not accept at all" the company's proposal and is demanding a substantial increase of wages. In reality, the agreement was

promoted by the UAW itself, which lauded its "significant economic gains" but was massively rejected by Deere workers.

The Brazilian union bureaucrats also stated that the workers in the US are asking for "support from the company in a moment of difficulty with the COVID [pandemic]." According to them, after "giving up staying at home, and going to work in the company risking their lives," the workers expected that "the company would recognize the work that they had done."

But it was not the workers who agreed to be sent to the infected factories risking their lives. It was the UAW that, after the wave of wildcat strikes in the North American auto industry in March 2020, negotiated the reopening of factories, facilitating the mass infection of American workers.

Força Sindical, alongside the PT-controlled CUT and other union federations, fulfilled this same nefarious role in Brazil. While they canceled all strike movements from their official agenda starting in March 2020, these union federations met with representatives of the Brazilian state to issue a bill reducing the working hours and wages of the working class to protect capitalist profits.

In April 2020, the president of *Força Sindical*, Miguel Torres—quoted by the union leaders in the video as "sending support to [workers in] the United States"—published an article titled "Pandemic, Industry and Sovereignty," which demanded an immediate "industrial resumption" in Brazil. In chauvinist fashion, the article compared the COVID-19 pandemic to a war, in which national economic interests should be put first. Based on these corporatist interests, the Brazilian unions have enforced the unsafe operation of plants while trying to convince workers that they were safe.

Opposition to the policies of mass infections and deaths under the COVID-19 pandemic and to the terrible downgrading of living conditions is emerging in Brazil as well as in the United States. A series of strikes in defense of working-class living standards is emerging in the South American country, among them a recent strike at General Motors in São Caetano do Sul, São Paulo, described by workers in the plant as the most militant in many years.

Last Thursday, October 14, an overwhelming majority of GM workers rejected a rotten agreement advocated by the Metalworkers Union of São Caetano, also controlled by the *Força Sindical*. In a mass assembly held at the plant's gates, workers booed the union President Aparecido da Silva when he called for a "return to work." But, despite the massive vote to continue the strike, the union criminally betrayed the workers and immediately started to advise workers individually to return to their jobs.

Remarkably, the assembly that buried the GM strike in São Caetano was attended by the UAW's spokesman in Brazil, Rafael Messias Guerra. He claimed that the UAW was closely watching the GM workers strike in Brazil, while spouting lies about the supposed achievements of the UAW, which betrayed the 2019 US GM workers strike.

The partnership between the UAW and the *Força Sindical* is a criminal collaboration aimed at betraying workers in their own countries and blocking any unification of their struggles across national borders. An international unification of working-class struggles, imposed by the globalized structure of capitalist production itself, is the only effective strategy to confront transnational capitalist corporations like John Deere and General Motors.

The UAW's ostentatious presence in Brazil—having also appeared alongside *Força Sindical* leaders in other recent strikes, such as last year's Renault workers strike in Paraná—is bound up with US imperialism's intervention in Brazil, continuing the infamous American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD). The AIFLD trained and funded right-wing union leaders who supported US-backed military coups in Brazil in 1964, Chile in 1973 and other countries in the region.

Workers in the US, Brazil and around the world must reject the reactionary alliance between the pro-capitalist

unions. A genuine unification of rank-and-file workers around the world is needed to confront the transnational corporations and their union agents. That organization is the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).



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