

Izquierda Diario/Left Voice defend US imperialism and union bureaucracies against autoworkers' rebellion

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The growing rebellion among US autoworkers against the efforts by the United Auto Workers bureaucracy to sell out their contract battle against the Big Three is having a radicalizing effect among workers internationally. In Mexico, workers at car assembly and auto-parts plants have joined calls with their class brothers and sisters north of the border and made numerous demands for expanding the struggle across North America against the sabotage by the UAW in the U.S. and Unifor in Canada.

While the questions of wage increases and other demands being made in relation to the auto contracts are immensely important, what is surfacing in the direct discussions among workers is the eagerness to join forces to fight for their shared class interests. Inequality, the EV transition, war and other broader social questions are increasingly coming to the fore.

The question on many workers' minds is how can truly "independent workers organizations" be established to take power from the union bureaucracy and assert their will. This is ultimately a political and revolutionary challenge that implies the question of which social class controls society's wealth: a tiny capitalist oligarchy or the working class.

Alarmed by these discussions and the growing movement of rank-and-file committees under the influence of the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the pseudo-left organizations of the middle class are working to reinforce the control of the trade union bureaucracy and the Democratic Party over the workers.

The pseudo-left steps in to herd workers behind AFL-CIO and Biden

These forces are also aggressively intervening among autoworkers in Mexico, who have shown their solidarity with US and Canadian workers repeatedly in recent years. The interventions by *La Izquierda Diario* have systematically sought to subordinate workers to the Mexican partners of the AFL-CIO union confederation, to which the UAW belongs.

During the US national General Motors strike in 2019, workers at the GM assembly plant in Silao, who had formed a militant rank-and-file group to oppose the corrupt Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) union, got in contact with American strikers and refused to

work mandatory overtime, which led to firings and blacklisting.

Left Voice/LID recently published an article by one of these workers describing how the AFL-CIO's Solidarity Center, which gets about 94 percent of its budget from the US State Department, intervened with financing and a group of lawyers to break up the rank-and-file group and impose a so-called "independent" union, SINTTIA, composed of workers "handpicked by the committee's advisors."

Left Voice/LID have acknowledged that SINTTIA "is backed by national and international trade union organizations such as: FESIAAAN, Unifor or AFL-CIO, the last two representing the interests of the imperialism of their respective countries (United States and Canada)." Moreover, they write that, in sponsoring Mexican unions, the AFL-CIO seeks to "to ensure labor peace in the branches of the transnationals in the country ... to defend imperialist capital."

Having admitted that SINTTIA is a prop of US and Canadian imperialism, the Morenoites still call it an "independent union" and tell workers to support it and its ties to the imperialist bureaucrats. For instance, during the vote at the GM Silao plant, they wrote "we accompany the workers who want to express their opposition to the CTM and we call to vote critically for SINTTIA."

Then *Left Voice/LID* reported on May Day last year that SINTTIA carried AFL-CIO and Unifor banners. Then the publication commented: "The AFL-CIO and Unifor solidarity statements need to be translated into real actions" in support for SINTTIA.

More generally, *Left Voice/LID* insist on supporting "all trade union organizations that claim to be independent" and forming new ones. Meanwhile, in a *Labor Notes* piece last year, Jeffery Hermanson, a longtime Solidarity Center and AFL-CIO functionary, listed all the new "independent" unions the Solidarity Center and Unifor have launched, including SINTTIA, its associated Casa Obrera to build similar unions, SNITIS in Matamoros and several others backed by *LID*. Hermanson then called for "an industrial and national approach focusing on key employers and sectors in regional industrial clusters along the northern border or in the automotive supply chains of Guanajuato [where Silao is located], Morelos and Puebla."

Installing new pro-capitalist unions as traps to subjugate Mexican workers and prevent the actual unification of rank-and-file workers across North America is a fundamental link in the plans for war of US and Canadian imperialism. Given the fact that these new unions are becoming discredited as tools of management, the Morenoites are playing a crucial in helping them maintain control over workers.

To put it bluntly, opposing the political apologists and direct agents of imperialism is one of the first steps toward class independence.

What does real independence mean for the working class?

The last article written by the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky, before being killed by a Stalinist agent in Coyoacán, Mexico City, in 1940 was precisely on this question (“Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay,” which remained unfinished). The main characteristic of trade unions in the current stage of capitalism, he wrote, was their integration into the capitalist state. As an example, he used the CTM in Mexico, which had already acquired a “semi-totalitarian” character as it became fully incorporated—even at an early stage—into the bourgeois nationalist regime of Lázaro Cárdenas.

After reviewing the case of Mexico, he added: “As a matter of fact, the whole task of the bourgeoisie consists in liquidating the trade unions as organs of the class struggle and substituting in their place the trade union bureaucracy as the organ of the leadership over the workers by the bourgeois state.”

Today, *Left Voice/LID* are supporting union bureaucrats completely integrated into the imperialist state, as shown by the close collaboration of the UAW with the Biden administration in selling out the strike, while also supporting the apparatuses abroad that represent US and Canadian imperialism. These new unions in Mexico are almost immediately being integrated into today’s ruling Morena party of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who has aligned his government behind the war policy of US and Canadian imperialism against China. Moreover, the whole legal structure under the new Mexican labor reform, which was ordered by Washington and Ottawa, gives veto power to the Labor Ministry to acknowledge the registration of new unions and oversee their elections.

Trotsky, who would have poured scorn on today’s pseudo-left accomplices of imperialism, presented as the main demand the “*complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions in relation to the capitalist state.*” [Emphasis in the original.] He explained:

Democratic unions in the old sense of the terms, bodies where in the framework of one and the same mass organization different tendencies struggled more or less freely, can no longer exist. Just as it is impossible to bring back the bourgeois-democratic state, so it is impossible to bring back the old workers’ democracy. The fate of the one reflects the fate of the other. As a matter of fact, the independence of trade unions in the class sense, in their relations to the bourgeois state, can, in the present conditions, be assured only by a completely revolutionary leadership, that is, the leadership of the Fourth International. This leadership, naturally, must and can be rational and assure the unions the maximum of democracy conceivable under the present concrete conditions. But without the political leadership of the Fourth International the independence of the trade unions is impossible.

The International Committee of the Fourth International is the only party that defended the political independence of workers throughout the post-war period and opposed the countless betrayals of the union

bureaucracies, whose lessons must be carefully studied by all class-conscious workers. The ICFI has since further developed the Marxist view on the trade unions for “the present concrete conditions,” while working intensely within them to free workers from the grip of the bureaucracies.

As explained in Trotsky's Last Year by David North:

The tendency toward the “growing together” of the unions, the state and capitalist corporations continued throughout the post-World War II period. Moreover, the process of global economic integration and transnational production deprived the trade unions of a national framework within which they could apply pressure for limited social reforms. No room was left for even the most moderate resort to the methods of class struggle to achieve minimal gains. The unions, rather than extracting concessions from the corporations, were transformed into adjuncts of the state and corporations that serve to extract concessions from the workers.

The process of corporatist degeneration over a period of eighty years precludes, in all but the most exceptional circumstances, the resuscitation of the old unions. The alternative strategical course, raised by Trotsky in *The Transitional Program* in 1938, is the policy that conforms to present-day conditions; that is, “to create in all possible instances independent militant organizations corresponding more closely to the tasks of mass struggle against bourgeois society, and, if necessary, not flinching even in the face of a direct break with the conservative apparatus of the trade unions.”

This course, which implies revolutionary opposition to the trade union apparatus, its pseudo-left apologists and the capitalist framework they defend, is the only one possible for the building of genuinely independent workers organizations and it is the one that guides the work of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).



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