

After suppressing strike, unions sanction job cuts at GM Brazil

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At the beginning of December, less than a month after burying a strike against 1,200 layoffs at three General Motors plants in the state of São Paulo, the union bureaucracies began imposing a new “Voluntary Dismissal Plan” (PDV). The same proposal, with minor modifications, had already been rejected by the workers in September. In response, GM imposed the summary dismissals that triggered the strike.

In an article published on November 12 denouncing the corporatist unions’ hasty termination of the strike, the WSWs warned: “After declaring a ‘victory’ for the workers, the union bureaucrats are preparing to impose the cuts demanded by the company.” This is exactly what is happening today.

To promote the “new” dismissal plan, the unions extolled the improved compensation offered by the company. An article reproduced by the ABC Metalworkers’ Union, controlled by the CUT, announced: “GM’s Voluntary Dismissal Plan, also approved in [São Caetano do Sul], offers up to an Onix [vehicle].” This is just a bribe, used by the company in combination with the open threat of summary dismissals, to divide the workers and break their resistance.

The union bureaucrats’ hostility to the workers’ movement was demonstrated in the points negotiated with GM specifically in relation to the strike. They agreed that the company would pay for just 50 percent of wages for the days spent on the picket lines, “respecting production needs,” until June 2024. Payment for the days on strike was one of the main reasons given by the union officials to shut down the strike.

However, the main component of the PDV agreement is the absurd “job stability until May 3, 2024,” which means that workers who refuse to give up their jobs and

living standards immediately risk losing them anyway in just five months without receiving any compensation.

The plan shows the true meaning of the “reversal of layoffs” celebrated by the unions to bury the strike.

On October 22, employees at the São José dos Campos, Mogi das Cruzes and São Caetano do Sul plants received letters of summary dismissal. This was answered immediately with a vote approving a strike in the three plants, with the central demand being the immediate reversal of the dismissals and the guarantee of jobs.

On the first day of strike, Valmir Mariano, leader of the São José dos Campos Metalworkers’ Union (SMSJC), controlled by the pseudo-left Unified Socialist Workers’ Party (PSTU), declared: “We won’t produce a single screw until the layoffs are canceled.” While making rhetorical statements in favor of jobs, the bureaucrats worked to keep the workers’ struggle under the safe control of the Labor Courts and divert their demands into appeals to the São Paulo state government of Bolsonaro’s former minister, Tarcísio de Freitas, and the federal government of Lula da Silva of the Workers Party (PT).

After court rulings between November 2 and 3 to “suspend” the layoffs, which still allowed GM to carry out the cuts later, the unions cynically announced a “victory” and summoned the workers to the plant grounds to vote to end the strike.

On November 4, while GM was still declaring that it would resist the court decision, Mariano said: “The resumption of jobs is a historic victory, the fruit of the strong struggle of the workers in the three cities.” After burying the strike movement, *Opinião Socialista*, the PSTU newspaper, published the headline: “With guaranteed jobs and [compensation for] strike days,

General Motors metalworkers suspend strike.”

Contrary to the rhetorical statements of the union leaderships at the beginning of the strike calling for “the reversal of the layoffs” and “the guarantee of jobs,” the reality is that the unions themselves treated the layoffs as a *fait accompli*. The general secretary of CSP-Conlutas, the trade union federation run by the Morenoite PSTU, stated on December 1: “The union is against any job cuts, but the PDV was already on our agenda as an alternative to the arbitrary layoffs that were made by GM.”

The problem facing the bureaucrats in control of the union apparatus is that their sordid maneuvers, repeated year after year, are proving themselves increasingly incapable of obfuscating the threatening prospect of unemployment and impoverishment for thousands of workers.

The Morenoites at the head of the CSP-Conlutas and the SMJSC union played a central role in deflecting the huge opposition of the GM workers who remained on strike for 17 days. Overseeing the implementation of corporatist cuts at the São José dos Campos plant for years, Conlutas seeks to falsely present itself as a “left” alternative to the discredited bureaucratic apparatuses of Força Sindical and the PT-linked CUT.

The anti-worker program of the Morenoite bureaucracy was blatantly exposed in its defense of the reactionary United Auto Workers (UAW) in the United States. Weeks before the strike at GM in Brazil broke out, CSP-Conlutas bureaucrats visited the US to support the UAW’s systematic sabotage of the contract struggle by 150,000 auto workers, the vast majority of whom were kept on the job under the bureaucracy’s phony “stand up” strike strategy. In addition to the Brazilian Morenoites, the UAW welcomed to the picket lines President Joe Biden, who saw the suppression of the autoworkers movement as critical for advancing his feverish global imperialist war policy.

Shortly after the announcements of layoffs at the São Paulo plants, CSP-Conlutas leader Mariano announced: “We have seen in the United States the strength of the workers at GM and other automakers. ... With the layoffs in Brazil, there will certainly be a mutual impact of the situation between the two countries. International solidarity will be very important at this time.”

The only form of “international solidarity” advocated

by the Morenoites is the solidarity of the corporatist union bureaucracies against the growing opposition they face from the working class worldwide. The CSP-Conlutas deliberately hid from Brazilian workers the growing opposition of autoworkers in the US, organized in rank-and-file committees independent of the UAW bureaucracy. Instead, they presented the illegitimate leadership of this corrupt and chauvinist union as “combative” and internationalist.

Allied with the UAW, the Morenoites systematically promoted the isolation of the Brazilian GM strike from the workers’ movement in the US. Promoting the decisions of the Labor Courts and pressure on the Lula government as the necessary means to secure jobs, they sought to subordinate Brazilian workers to the bankrupt national capitalist state.

Workers urgently need to take the control of their own struggles out of the hands of the union bureaucracy. If these bankrupt and reactionary organizations are allowed to remain in power, all expressions of opposition will be suppressed in favor of business interests, which will inevitably mean more wage and job cuts.

Above all, workers need to understand that in order to defeat the car companies’ plans for global cuts, their struggle needs to take on a consciously international character. The only alternative is for workers to organize independently of capitalist unions and governments and in unity with workers in other countries through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).



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