

“We don’t know the power we have”: US trucker discusses October 1 work stoppage, the Iran war and the fight for international unity

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Truckers: Tell us what you think about rising costs, the war and the October 1 action by filling out the form below. All submissions will be kept confidential.

On October 1, truck drivers in the United States took part in a loosely organized work stoppage to protest soaring operating costs, depressed freight rates and deteriorating conditions across the industry. The action, promoted largely through social media and driver networks rather than by the official unions or trucking organizations, reflected mounting anger among drivers who have seen already narrow margins squeezed further by sharply rising diesel prices.

The stoppage came in response to sharp increases in fuel costs as a consequence of the war on Iran. Meanwhile, Mexican and immigrant drivers have faced the mass revocation of B-1 visas and stepped-up attacks by Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Last month, Mexican truckers blockaded ports of entry at Mexicali, reportedly holding up an estimated \$800 million-a-day in cargo.

By acting independently, the truckers are demonstrating their enormous social and economic power. Their labor links together ports, factories, warehouses and retail distribution across the continent. They are also confronting the need to reject national and ethnic divisions promoted by the capitalist class, in favor of uniting across North America in defense of their common interests.

The task now is to organize that power in rank-and-file committees across borders, and against the war, the union bureaucracies and the capitalist system that produces the exploitation, the deportations and the war

itself.

The day after the October 1 action, a US truck driver discussed the conditions facing truckers, the significance of the Mexican drivers’ blockade and the need for drivers in the United States, Mexico and beyond to recognize the power they possess when they act together. We are calling him Miguel to protect his identity.

“The power that we don’t know we have”

A coordinated stoppage across the US and Mexico “would have a huge impact,” he said. “I mean, you are talking about the power that we don’t know we have until we realize and see that. That’s the way to get somebody to take you seriously ... to understand how valuable and necessary what we are doing out here is.”

He was struck by the fact that the Mexican drivers’ blockade was organized entirely through a WhatsApp group of roughly 1,000 drivers—and drew the obvious conclusion for truckers on this side of the border. “That to me is a good example as a driver on this side in America ... What is the difference between myself and others out here?”

“If you get us together, we can make anything happen,” he said. “Put it out there on the line to be shown to thousands, millions, that we’re out here sacrificing—this way they see us, one country with the other that borders it, we can make anything possible to

move and change our future for our kids, for ourselves.”

Miguel was also critical of the trade unions, which refused to support the October 1 action and which he described as a bought-off layer. “It just shows a lot of manipulation and that they are fake,” he said of the unions’ refusal to join and support the strike.

He said that concessionary contracts over the years have shown that the unions “keep kicking the can down the road to the dead-end street...It’s just like applying a band-aid to a big cut.”

Miguel pointed to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) as serving the companies, not the drivers. “This is what truckers have been saying for the last 10 years since I’ve gotten into this. For instance, the FMCSA is run by non-truckers. How can they understand us if they have never been on the road for one day?”

Miguel also spoke at length about the attacks on immigrant truckers by ICE and rejected the xenophobic attacks on Indian and Sikh drivers by the White House, which led to a brutal stabbing of a Sikh trucker in Wyoming.

“They [ICE] want to keep us down ... they use tactics like threatening your life or your visa, throwing you out of the country ... are we not here doing the same thing? [Don’t we understand] that what we’re going through, you’re going through it also?”

Build rank-and-file committees across North America

Miguel expressed support for the building of international rank-and-file committees, independent of the union apparatus and two parties, to link truckers across North America. “That’s a good thing. That’s a good idea. It would benefit both sides ... If we have that power, that authority, we would want to move it towards benefiting (the workers of) both countries and other countries that we work with.”

“We’re all fighting for crumbs. But do you know what exists up there? There’s more up there, far more. How can they tell us there is not enough, when there is more than enough? The thing is, they want to make it

seem like it’s not.”



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