

Mexican workers: Refuse to handle redirected freight in support of US and Canadian dock strikes!

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As the indefinite strike of 45,000 dockworkers in the East and Gulf Coasts of the United States enters its third day Thursday, logistics companies are scrambling to redirect freight to other ports in Mexico, Canada and the US West Coast.

A three-day strike by 1,150 dockworkers just ended at the major Port of Montreal in Canada, which is expected to have long-term impacts.

But as the need to mobilize workers across North America to refuse to handle redirected shipments, the union bureaucracies in each country are ordering their members to scab on the historic strike in the United States.

Mirko Woitzik, global director of Intelligence for Everstream Analytic, explained “Shipping lines could revert to a port-hopping strategy in the first week of a possible strike to allow their ships to unload cargo, calling at Caribbean transshipment hubs such as at Freeport in the Bahamas or at gateways in Mexico or Canada,” he explained.

Like several other firms, Scan Global Logistics told customers to consider “Mexican routings via Veracruz and Lázaro Cárdenas,” two major ports in the east and west coasts, respectively.

The trucking publication OpenOTR indicates: “In Mexico, Lázaro Cárdenas is another strategic alternative for shippers. It provides an inbound rail option via CPKC, offering a direct line to Houston and Kansas City. This could be particularly helpful for companies with strong ties to the southern U.S. or those looking to avoid U.S. port congestion altogether.”

Workers at ports, railways, ships and trucks across Mexico and North America need to oppose the attempts to force them to scab on their class brothers and sisters! They must see the struggle as an opportunity to fight against the

transnational corporations. Just like their everyday work, their struggle is objectively international and needs to be conceived and organized consciously as such.

A central demand made by East and Gulf Coast dockworkers is to have secure jobs against automation, which presents an urgent threat to workers in every sector and internationally.

In 2023, truckers repeatedly blocked Veracruz, Lázaro Cárdenas and other major ports in Mexico to protest labor conditions, pointing to the potential of an international struggle.

While industry publications also warn of congestion and higher costs in alternative ports, North American freight is closely integrated, and redirection of shipments greatly weakens the strike.

The unitarization and computerization of shipping helped propel the globalization of capital, but even as this was happening, the American ruling elite responded to the redoubled challenge from economic rivals in Europe and Asia by integrating even more closely the economies of North America as a launching pad for economic and military war.

Mexico’s own first major industries, mines and railways, grew out of the explosive expansion of capitalism in the United States after the destruction of the slavocracy during the American Civil War. The ownership and lines of the rail system and ports have remained fully interconnected.

In the past half century, the venal capitalist elite in Mexico, along with its own corporatist union apparatus, was only too happy to subordinate itself further to US imperialism and gain privileged access to investments and markets, providing guarantees to US and Canadian capital that it will stop at nothing to provide endless cheap labor.

At the center of this relationship is the ability to “secure supply chains,” above all against any resistance by the working class.

The supposedly “left” government of President Andrés

Manuel López Obrador and his incoming successor Claudia Sheinbaum have doubled down on this process under the framework of the new USMCA trade agreement that entered into force in 2020 and is explicitly aimed against China.

His government also built a Tehuantepec Isthmus Inter-Oceanic Corridor, a rail and highway system launched this year that connects the Pacific Ocean with the Gulf of Mexico (and Atlantic Ocean) at the narrowest point in southern Mexico and seeks to compete with the Panama Canal.

The López Obrador administration also worked hand-in-hand with the AFL-CIO and Unifor in Canada to sponsor and legitimize a new trade union apparatus falsely called “independent” to replace the traditional, discredited union bureaucracy.

One such “independent” union is the Mexican Order of Maritime and Dockworkers (La Orden), whose secretary general Captain Antonio Rodríguez Fritz has remained silent about the use of Mexican ports to weaken the strike in the United States. This is the case despite its affiliation to the International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots, which like the International Longshoremen’s Association on strike in the US, belongs to the AFL-CIO.

Last December, La Orden oversaw a 36-day strike to win the contract at Crosby Marine Services, after which the union thanked the support of both the López Obrador government, as well as the AFL-CIO and its Solidarity Center, the American bureaucracy’s international arm, financed almost entirely by the US federal government.

Capt. Rodríguez, however, bases his whole persona before workers on the promotion of Mexican nationalism, even denouncing companies for hiring foreign workers. “They are stealing the jobs that a Mexican could have,” he said during a forum last month. He also focused his attacks on all foreign operators that sail in Mexican waters as a threat to “national sovereignty.”

As another example, Los Mineros, the so-called “independent” union led by Napoleón Gómez Urrutia, a legislator for AMLO’s Morena party, is affiliated to the United Steel Workers (USW) north of the border and works closely with the Solidarity Center.

In July, Los Mineros isolated and sold out a 55-day strike at the ArcelorMittal steel plant, the most important company located in the port of Lázaro Cárdenas. The main demand of workers for fair profit sharing was simply dismissed through vague promises of an “audit.”

The union apparatus refuses to organize a genuine international fight because it serves the companies and American imperialism. For decades, the union bureaucracy has responded to globalization by looking after the competitiveness of its “own” capitalists and integrated itself

fully into the capitalist state and management.

This was most clearly demonstrated by the US International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) order to continue moving military equipment being used in the Israeli genocide in Gaza, the expanding war in the Middle East and the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

This maneuver also highlights how much impact workers in Mexico, who produce and transport many of the components for the US war industry, can have in the struggle against the expanding world war between nuclear powers, which threatens to end human civilization.

In another critical measure to secure supply lines, López Obrador has given the military oversight over all customs and ports in the country, with the ability to impose martial law against any disruptions.

His administration also created a National Guard, whose military character was emblazoned in the Constitution as his last act in office. It has been deployed against migrants as an extension of the US border patrol and has already been used to violently clear protesting teachers who had blocked the train connecting Lázaro Cárdenas with the United States.

The strike of dockworkers is an international, political and revolutionary struggle that poses the need to break from all parties of the national bourgeoisie like the Democrats, the Canadian NDP and Morena, which are innately subservient to Wall Street and imperialism.

The question that arises forcefully from this international struggle is which class controls the globalized chains of production and distribution: the capitalist class on the basis of maximizing profits and serving imperialist war at the cost of the livelihoods and lives of countless workers, or the working class on the basis of ending poverty and all human needs.



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