



Leo W. Gerard
International President

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Dear Sisters and Brothers:

I have heard the news of your recent strike actions and mass demonstrations protesting the outrageous restructuring proposals put forward by Volkswagen and General Motors. I pledge my support, as well as the support of the people and resources of the entire USW, as you fight for fairness against these soulless global corporations.

The companies are seeking to eliminate nearly 7,000 jobs in Brazil. Any workers that survive the cuts will be asked to pick up the slack, and you'll be rewarded with drastically reduced wages and increased costs for health insurance – up to twice as much as you're paying now. Neither Volkswagen nor General Motors seem to be concerned with the pain this restructuring will bring to hundreds of thousands in Brazil, including workers in related industries and members of affected communities.

You are right to be angry, and you are not alone. In the United States, General Motors and Ford Motor Company are both pushing misguided restructuring plans that call for deep concessions from workers, thousands upon thousands of job cuts, and multiple plant closings that are having a rippling effect on every worker in the United States.

But this is not a problem of just a single nation or a single Labor Union. It is a global epidemic. The auto companies claim poverty when asked to pay negotiated wages and benefits to Union workers in Brazil, the U.S. and other countries. Yet these same companies are devoting enormous resources to developing production capacity in Eastern Europe and Asia, where workers may not have the organized strength to demand fair wages and working conditions.

This same story is being told in all industries, not just the auto industry. The corporations will always run from our strength and seek out the cheapest, weakest worker. We must fight back by standing united, by working to build up the strength of the most exploited workers in developing countries, and by demanding that corporations treat all workers with the dignity and respect that we earn with our labor.

In solidarity,

Leo W. Gerard
International President

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United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union