

Crossing the Border to Cananea

High Stakes and Teachable Moments for North American Workers



Cananea: 103 Years of Struggle
Section 65



The mine from Rosa Guyante's house

Report to the United Association for Labor Education

**On Its Delegation to Study the
Copper Strike in Cananea,
Sonora, Mexico
May 15-19, 2010**



March 23, 2011

"Here in Cananea is where the miners established the 8 hour day and we feel a responsibility not to lose it. . .what's happened is that we have lost all our fear."

Sergio Tolano Lizarraga, Section 65 Secretary General

Recuerdos de Cananea¹

"I witnessed firsthand the ruthless measures that Grupo México and the Mexican government have taken to punish the workers and families of Cananea for asserting their basic labor and human rights. Closed health clinics, shut-off public utilities, toxic environmental contamination, and worker repression are just a few of the brutal ways in which the people there have been punished for asserting their rights. When I was in Cananea I realized that this was not only an attack on labor, but also an attack on the whole community. We must stand with them. "

Alex Becker, student

"The determination and dignity of the Cananea workers and families made solidarity come alive for me. How can we not stand up and fight at their side against attacks aimed at all workers in the global economy?"

Ruth Needleman, labor educator

This trip made me more committed to my work with in SEIU with immigrant workers. I gained a greater grasp on the tangible components of global solidarity. The context changes for worker struggles when it involves crossing the border, eating dinner with and sleeping in the home of a worker on strike. I am very lucky to have had the opportunity to participate in this experience.

Lindsey Walker, union staff member

We hear a steady stream of media reports about Mexico -- the violence, guns, drug-trade, the border-running, the wall against immigrants. What we don't hear about is how our neighbors to the south have stood strong, and at times alone, in their fight to defend the dignity of their work, the safety of their families and the power of their collective action. What separates us is a political border and powers-that-be who don't want us to think about what people can accomplish when they fight for their rights. The people of Cananea have not forgotten their past. We should not forget them and what they stand for.

Lin Nelson, college teacher



To be with these smart, brave and determined people, to experience their generosity and warmth, to laugh at their jokes and learn about their lives was a great gift. I understand solidarity better now, because of this shared experience. From now on the struggles of workers south of the border will have a deeply personal meaning for me.

Anne Fischel, film maker/teacher

Cananea is no Brigadoon, shrouded in the myths of the revolution where once upon a time people were heroic and made change. The miners and their families see themselves as inheritors of a continuous struggle against those who would enslave them. They are part of a common resistance across generations, not just drawing strength and inspiration from their history, but as conscious actors for the future. With it they have purpose and perspective that we often lack.

Judy Ancel, labor educator

¹ These memories are gifts that we brought back from Cananea.

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As a student, traveling with well informed and prepared individuals to a country I have visited numerous times was a unique experience. The purpose of this trip is significant as the stories and visuals are evidence of the injustice to workers. Because it was my first research-based expedition, I was not sure what to expect or how to best contribute. I learned from the process and intend to apply this knowledge in future trips. I am grateful to have been part of this group given their great talent and passion for workers worldwide. Sayra Gordillo, student

What I saw in Cananea was a tale of two cities. In one I saw the familiar laughter and warmth and generosity of workers everywhere, the food and the beer and the friends and the long evenings of talk. I witnessed the amazing resolve – no small thing - of the miners and their families and friends as they fought to preserve a life for their city that had been won by those who came before them, stretching all the way back to the Mexican revolution.

In the other I saw evidence of a different resolve, the resolve of our modern day robber barons willing to plunder the well being of the workers, to upend the health and safety and security of the people, to hold hostage a whole city in their ruthless pursuit of profit and power. It is an old story, this clash of capital and labor, warmed up anew by the desperate flailing of Neoliberalism. And, as always, so much of the outcome of this struggle, the struggle in Cananea, rests on the broad shoulders of the men and women we met, the workers, Los Mineros. But it also rests on us, each of us and our ability to see ourselves in that struggle, to join with them in the best way we can, to raise our voices, to stand in solidarity. Howard Kling, labor educator and filmmaker

Cananea is the emblem of the 1910 glorious Mexican Revolution. Cananea is still an important symbol in Mexico today. It represents a window through which one can see the damage brought on by worldwide policies of economic liberalization and financialization and the suffocating economic prescriptions of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. These institutions and policies have destroyed Mexico's economic and political sovereignty. Through the window we see glimpses of a country that is economically polarized. It has both the richest man in the world and massive poverty and migration. Alongside "modernization" is violence, drug trafficking, environmental decay, and despair. Nonetheless, Cananea also offers a different perspective. It lets us reconsider the power of solidarity, the power of a united people, determined to manage their own destiny and move forward through day-to-day struggles. From this viewpoint, Cananea is- an excellent example of what needs to be done to change the existing state of affairs. Hasta la Victoria Siempre Companeros!

Karol Gil, doctoral student in economics in U.S. from Mexico City

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Mining communities face many health threats. One grim hazard is the mine waste (called tailings or halis) that litters the landscape, sometimes overpowering the community in scale and persistence. Lead, arsenic, cadmium and other metals are the typical contaminants. At the Cananea mine, the tailings are sent from the mine down streams to the nearby valley which fills with the waste; some of the waste settles deep into the land and the watershed; other particles become airborne, creating a white haze that moves with the wind. When the blowing waste intrudes back into the community, the miners face the double jeopardy of exposure at work and home; their children pay the biggest price, with their developing lungs subject to serious damage.

Preface: UALE Delegation Studies the Cananea Strike

In May 2010, a group of ten labor educators, students, and activists spent four days in Cananea, Sonora to investigate the issues involved in a three-year strike of copper miners against the multi-national corporation, Grupo Mexico, which operates the Cananea mine. The tour was organized through the United Association of Labor Education (UALE) which had passed a solidarity resolution supporting the struggle of the miners and their families at its March 2010 Annual Meeting in San Diego. The Cananea chapter of the Women's Front in Struggle for Worker Dignity in Mexico and the World, an organization of the Mexican Miners Union, hosted our delegation. The leaders of Section 65 of the National Union of Mine and Metal Workers of the Mexican Republic (SNTMMSRM), generally known as Los Mineros, welcomed us and met with us on several occasions.

The delegation included four students, two filmmakers, a union political director, three labor studies professors, and a health, safety and environmental specialist. We wanted to find out how labor & community were faring in this 3-year attack on the copper miners and their union, Los Mineros. Were workers still standing strong? How were families managing without paychecks? How were communities and the city affected by the actions of Grupo Mexico? Was there a viable place for outside assistance and solidarity? This Report is our overall response to what we saw and learned. We wrote it for workers, unions and communities that need to understand that in a global labor market, an injury to one is an injury to all!

Our hosts, the Women's Front, led by Maria Rosa Guayante Garcia, a large coalition of miners' wives, sisters and family members, arranged for housing in their homes, most of our meals, and served as our guides, along with the leadership of District 65 of the Union. In a frenetic 3-day period, we learned the history of the struggle at Cananea; investigated first-hand the conditions in the mine; and experienced first-hand some of the heartless maneuvers of Grupo Mexico. Water in homes was shut down for most of the day. Electricity went on and off. Clouds of polluted mine tailings followed us everywhere. We talked to top union leaders as well as rank and file picketers. We met with the mayor of Cananea, the lead doctor at the Ronquillo hospital, a teacher from the public schools, an injured miner, and local historians. Secretary General of District 65, Sergio Tolano and strike leader Jesus Verdugo accompanied us on a 3-hour walk through the mine.

Members of the Delegation:

- Judy Ancel, The Institute for Labor Studies, The University of Missouri-Kansas City
- Alex Becker, undergraduate, The Evergreen State College, Olympia, WA
- Anne Fischel, Media and Community Studies, The Evergreen State College, Olympia, WA
- Karol Gil, graduate student in economics, The University of Missouri-Kansas City
- Sayra Gordillo, undergraduate student, MEChA leader, The University of Missouri-Kansas City
- Howard Kling, Labor Education Service, The University of Minnesota
- Ever Marienlarena, undergraduate student, The University of Missouri-Kansas City
- Ruth Needleman, professor emeritus, Labor Studies, Indiana University and Director, Leadership and Social Justice Program, Calumet College of St. Joseph
- Lin Nelson, Environmental Studies, The Evergreen State College, Olympia, WA
- Lindsey Walker, Immigrant Civic Engagement Deputy Director, SEIU Political Department

The members of the delegation wish to thank the United Association for Labor Education for its encouragement and support as well as our brothers and sisters in Cananea, especially our host families: Rosa and Moises, Carmen and Gabriel, Liliana and Michelle.

The History and Context of the Struggle

The Country of Grupo Mexico

The Cananea Copper Mine, Mexico's largest, is just thirty miles south of the one lane border-crossing at Naco Arizona, 104 miles southeast of Tucson. The border wall there is rustic, easily scalable and surrounded by desert. Volunteers on both sides put out water for migrants who dare to cross on foot. For generations Mexicans have been crossing here to work in the now idle copper mines at nearby Bisbee, to shop and visit family.

From Naco you can go in four directions and still be in the multi-national territory of Grupo Mexico. To the southwest is Cananea, Sonora. Northwest are the Ray, Mission and Silver Bell mines and the smelter at Hayden, Arizona. East and northeast are the now closed smelter in El Paso, and the Grupo/Asarco refinery in Amarillo, Texas. Southeast is the infamous Pasta de Conchos coal mine in San Juan de Sabinas, Coahuila. For over a century Grupo Mexico, its predecessor companies and alter ego ASARCO have shifted ownership and assets back and forth across the border, always searching for the best mix of political support and cheap labor for maximum profits. For them the border is irrelevant except when needed as a shield against higher standards and liabilities on the other side.

In 2010 our group became part of a growing number of labor activists to cross that border. This emerging international solidarity is a necessary response to capital's open borders and the common corporate/state oppression that working people face. As labor educators and working people from the United States, our first journey was to cross the borders in our own heads, to overcome the artificial lines that have been drawn to divide us from our brothers and sisters in Mexico and to unlock the spaces where the power arrayed against us finds cover.

The current conflicts began at the Pasta de Conchos Coal Mine where a tremendous methane gas explosion occurred on February 19, 2006. Sixty-five miners were buried deep in the earth. These miners had struck numerous times over safety issues. Just the day before the disaster, the company had to order them into the mine on threat of dismissal. Since many of them were nonunion contract

employees, the threat of replacing all of them - union and unrepresented - was real.



The search for the missing miners went on for an agonizing five days. Then abruptly on February 24th, it was suspended and, with government agreement, the electricity was disconnected, making further search efforts impossible. Mineros' Secretary General Napoleon Gomez Urrutia called it "industrial homicide." The mine was closed indefinitely. The bodies were never recovered, and no proper investigation into the cause of the blast was ever undertaken. Outraged widows, children and coworkers of the entombed miners occupied the mine entrance for years after the explosion, and they along with the union, Los Mineros, have continuously demanded justice and compensation for the families. For them the incident meant grief, loss, disrespect, injustice, and insult.

Instead of pursuing justice, Grupo Mexico and the government of President Felipe Calderon declared open warfare on the miners and their communities. Attacks on the national union and its locals came from many directions, forcing Napoleon Gomez Urrutia to flee the country. The government had made a number of trumped up charges against him. The struggle developed in many mines and mills where Mineros members worked, but it was the copper mine at Cananea, Grupo's crown jewel that became the center of resistance.

Cananea birthplace of the revolution

"It is supremely significant that a hundred years ago the Cananea strike was the cradle of the revolution against dictatorship and for workers' rights while today it is once again confronting authoritarianism

against workers. For this reason what is in play in the strike in Cananea is fundamental if Mexico is to have real freedom of association and respect for the rights workers have won with so many sacrifices."

Hector de la Cueva, director of CILAS, a labor research and consulting NGO in Mexico City

In 1906 the miners in Cananea rebelled against the dual tyranny of foreign owners and the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz. They struck, demanding decent wages, an eight hour day, and equal pay with the Americans who worked alongside them. Mine owner William Greene summoned Arizona Rangers who killed twenty three miners. The outrage in Mexico and the audacity and heroism of the miners gave others the courage to rebel.



MINE OWNER GREENE ADDRESSING STRIKERS
SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY

A few years later, as the revolution took hold, Cananea miners joined Pancho Villa's armies sweeping through the countryside, spreading ideas of human rights and democracy in what became the first major revolution of the 20th Century.

The U.S. intervened, coordinating repression with Mexican elites. However theirs was not the only cross-border solidarity. The exiled Flores Magon brothers and the Industrial Workers of the World had sewn the first seeds of solidarity between the two nations' workers.

Now, in the 21st century, Mexico celebrates the centennial of its revolution. Cananea is once again center-stage, but this time the movie appears to be running backwards. The gains of a century of struggle are being rolled back. Since June, 2010, a month after our visit, Federal police have occupied Cananea on behalf of a transnational corporation. Dozens of arrest warrants are outstanding for union

leaders and activists. Imported strikebreakers, working under temporary contracts with no protection, are staffing the mine. The grandchildren and great grandchildren of the miners who sparked the very revolution that is being celebrated are embattled, and Cananea has become a microcosm of the increased repression and poverty spreading throughout Mexico.

Cananea is extraordinary. The dangers and poisons in the mine, the century-long dependence of the town on the mine owners, the history of struggle in the blood of the people all converge here to create an acute consciousness in the miners and their families of what is at stake in this struggle for all of Mexico and for us too. This was clear to our delegation from the start.

Past victories under attack

In the 20th century Mexican workers fought for and won two key gains which are being reversed today. First, was the right of national economic self determination which was expressed in nationalization of mines, mills, and infrastructure and a social compact and constitution which brought economic advances to workers and peasants. Second was the constitutional right of Mexican workers to organize and strike. For the Cananea miners, these achievements made it possible to win a decent standard of living, safety on the job, and many benefits for the community. The current strike, which began July 30, 2007, aims at saving these conquests for Cananea and indeed for all of Mexico. Similarly, electrical workers in Mexico City, teachers in Oaxaca, and many others in the last five years have been in pitched battles against the loss of similar gains. What is at stake is the right to an independent union and collective bargaining.

The struggle in Cananea is protracted, bitter, and violent because the mine has some of the largest reserves of copper in the world and supplied 40% of Mexico's copper before the strike. It is also because the strike is the culmination of pent up grievances against both Grupo Mexico and the government accumulated over 30 years of economic restructuring.

Roots of the struggle: neoliberal restructuring

In the early 1980s oil prices collapsed, and Mexico faced default on its enormous external debt. At the behest of its creditors, the World Bank, and the IMF,

it abandoned nationalist development and embraced neoliberal solutions, opening the country to foreign investment and focusing on export-led production to earn dollars to pay the debt. To attract investment the government, corporations, and corporate/government dominated unions all cooperated to hold wages down to bare subsistence.

Mexico's integration into the global economy was rapid. It entered the GATT in the mid 1980s and the NAFTA in 1994. In preparation for NAFTA, the Mexican Constitution was amended to permit the sale of agricultural land to agribusiness corporations, and laws were amended to permit and protect foreign ownership.

An important component of the 1980s structural adjustment required that the government starve social services and education while selling off key industries at bargain basement prices to well-placed friends of officials. Thus in 1990 Compania Minera de Cananea was privatized; 76% was sold to Grupo Mexico, owned by Jorge Larrea Ortega, a close friend of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, then president of Mexico.* At the same time the workers were promised 5% of the shares of stock in the new private corporation.



Despite promises made to Mexican workers, the neoliberal ideology implemented by four Presidents from Salinas to Calderon since the 1980s have

not produced a free market paradise. In practice these politicians created a state with rampant corruption and cronyism, reliant on U.S. loans to prop up the peso and U.S. military aid to maintain order. Since NAFTA Mexico has been unable to generate internal economic development. Instead "free" trade has meant export of mainly three things: natural resources, goods produced by cheap labor in maquiladora assembly plants, and migrants – mostly bankrupt rural workers – pushed off their

land to work in the U.S. and remit money to sustain the economy.

Labor sinking; labor rising

"Today Mexican workers attempt to organize a labor movement, impeded by a dense thicket of oppressive laws, faced with oppressive fake unions (sindicatos fantasmas) and contracts that protect employers by locking in minimal conditions and making it legally more difficult to gain recognition for a real union (contratos de protección), and confronted by the collusion of employers, the government, and corrupt union officials who do not hesitate to use firing, threats, and violence."

Dan La Botz

Mexican Labor News and Analysis, .Nov. 2010

When American workers think of North American integration and the so-called "race to the bottom," they generally think that they (and Canadian workers) are the only ones in free fall. In fact, since the Mexican debt crisis and then NAFTA – and partly because of its failure to provide any protection for workers against the huge power shift that was occurring, the downward pressure on Mexican workers and peasants has been enormous. Not only have several million been forced from the land into the informal economy or across the border as undocumented workers with few rights, but more broadly the minimum wage over the thirty year period has lost much of its value. In fact, Mexico has been transformed into a de-industrialized country that exports its labor force to the United States; maintains 50 percent of its population living at or below the poverty line; sustains high levels of unemployment; and is corrupted at all levels by narco-trafficking.

There has, however been tremendous push back. Workers have attempted to bypass government-imposed ceilings on wage increases. They've formed independent, democratic, and combative unions in place of company and government dominated ones. They've allied with unions and NGOs in North America, Europe and Asia to wage corporate campaigns against multi-nationals. At every turn they've been met with repression.

The solution proposed by elites since 1989 has been to call for "reform"(read gutting) of the Federal Labor Law, which, along with the Constitution of 1917, has provided Mexican workers with some of

* Grupo acquired 100% of Cananea in 1997.

the strongest (in theory) labor protections in the world. A chorus of new “friends” of labor has condemned Federal Labor Law as inflexible and inappropriate for the changed circumstances of global production. Mexican labor law provided limits on mandatory overtime, generous provisions for holidays and bonuses, and prohibited temporary workers, and outlawed scabs during strikes. Workers were told that if they wanted jobs, they needed a law like U.S. labor law which allows for contingent workers and at-will employment. But resistance to labor law reform has been strong, particularly from the handful of independent and democratic unions which survive, including Los Mineros.

Just as the trend to weaken labor law has led to widespread struggle and resistance on the political level in Mexico, so too have attempts to weaken environmental and health and safety laws. And the resistance won't stop. With the massive fraud necessary to steal the 2006 presidential elections, it became clear that increasing repression would be necessary. Thus in the waning days of the Fox administration and throughout the Calderon years, we are seeing the iron fist of soldiers and police, armed with U.S. (anti-drug) weapons paid for by U.S. Plan Merida funds, come down on striking workers and workers defending their rights and standard of living. From Oaxaca to the border, to Mexico City, to Cananea the typical response under Calderon is to bring in armed force to bust strikes, to intervene in the internal operations of unions, and to make peaceful resolution of disputes impossible.



MINEROS SECCION 65 BUILDING

Los Mineros Resist

The attacks on the Mineros union (and on other independent unions) predated the Pasta de Conchos explosion and escalated as it became increasingly clear that Mineros Secretary General Napoleon Gomez Urrutia would not cooperate and play the

role of *charro* (as the Mexicans call their bought-off union leaders). The union's dissolution of the trust fund established as a result of privatization of mines became a pretext in early 2006 for the Calderon government to indict union leaders for corruption and refuse to recognize the results of the national union elections. Calderon installed an obliging *charro*, and Gomez Urrutia fled the country to avoid arrest. With the assistance of the United Steelworkers, he has been living in and leading the union from Vancouver, British Colombia. So far, seven of the eight charges against him have been dismissed by the courts.

It is in this context that 1,087 miners of Cananea walked out on July 30 2007, four months after the Pasta de Conchos explosion. The specific issues were the marked decline in safety conditions at work and the negligence of the government in enforcing even the most basic safety practices. Other local sections of the Mineros were also protesting the loss of union autonomy. There were solidarity strikes in Taxco, Guerrero, Sombrerete, Zacatecas, Agua Prieta and Nacozari, Sonora. At Arcelor Mittal's Sicsarta Steel Mill in the Pacific port city of Lazaro Cardenas, Michoacán, a solidarity strike was declared illegal by the government which sent in police. They faced off against 600 strikers with slingshots. Two workers were killed.

Cananea

“We are struggling precisely so that Cananea can survive and not die. We are fighting for our husbands’ jobs, to keep the collective bargaining agreement, and we are fighting for union autonomy against government intervention. We are fighting so that our husbands do not become slaves to corporations.”

Rosa Guayante

The strike in Cananea has been waged on a legal front, an economic front, a political front and a solidarity front. The legal issues can be found in the Report of the International Commission for Labor Rights Delegation to Mexico (see resources). Briefly, according to Sergio Tolano, Section 65's Secretary General, “They declared the strike nonexistent three times and three times we got the decision overturned. The fourth time they couldn't show there wasn't a legitimate strike but to our surprise, a few hours later, they ended the workers' employment relationship with the company and

then later declared there were no jobs. The government will do whatever they can illegally just to stop the movement. They try to find any means to defeat us. The power of GM lets them buy judges. Now we're looking for international tribunals to protect us so that our violent removal doesn't occur again." In a country where the executive can get away with ignoring court rulings, it's clear that this fight will not be won in the courts.

The strike clearly denied Grupo the lion's share of its Mexican copper production. The mine was completely shut down, and attempts in both 2008 and 2009 to open it forcibly were stopped. After Grupo went into court demanding that all workers be fired because the mine had supposedly sustained so much sabotage that it was inoperable, the union lined up the monster trucks which haul rock from blast sites to processor on the ridge above Gate One and periodically demonstrated that they and other equipment were ready to use. They invited us and many others to tour the mine to see that there was no sabotage. For three years the vast majority of miners remained on strike. We were told that only about sixty accepted their severance pay during that time, and even today about 900 of the original 1,087 remain on strike despite the violent suppression of the strike in June, 2010.* Of course, after the government retook the mine and got rid of the union and its members, Grupo Mexico found that in fact the mine was operable.

Politically, the national union and Local 65 left no stone unturned. Sergio Tolano said, *"We have knocked on the doors to all the political parties. Some of them were open. Some wouldn't open at all . . . Of the parties in Congress, the PRI (former ruling party) has 200+ members [in Congress]. All have said they are for us, the workers. We haven't seen this kind of support for workers in many years. We have also gotten support from the PRD and the PT [democratic left] and some others but not the PAN [Calderon's party]. The PRD has helped us substantially with medicine. Manuel Lopez Obrador [PRD candidate for president] was here. We've gotten some financial support but mostly medicine. . . The Governor is from Cananea and is in the PAN. He supported us when they closed the clinic and the*

hospital and he's accepting our petitions for a negotiation. We know him well; we went to school with him. So until now he's behaved well with us."

At the time we were there, the miners were optimistic that a resolution passed by the Federal House of Deputies questioning the maintenance of Grupo Mexico's concession to operate the mine, because of its failure to resolve the strike. It called on the administration to set up a round table for all the parties to discuss and find a solution, and it exhorted the government not to use force and respect the rights of striking workers in the three mining strikes at Cananea, in Guerrero and Zacatecas.

Brief Chronology of Cananea Workers' Struggles	
1906	Mexican miners' strike for equality against Cananea Consolidated Copper Company
1971-82	Gradual nationalization of mine ending in complete buy-out from Anaconda Copper
1990	Mine privatized, sold to Grupo Mexico owned by Larrea family and ASARCO
1999	Grupo acquires ASARCO and in 2002 its subsidiary Southern Peru Copper. Grupo closes Workers Clinic in Cananea.
2006	Pasta de Conchos mine explosion. Mineros union leaders indicted on false charges, Napoleon Gomez flees to Canada.
2007	Miners in Cananea and two other mines strike over health and safety
2007-10	Strike declared nonexistent three times; twice it was declared legal.
2008	Grupo Mexico closes Ronquillo hospital
2009	Federal labor board rules mine inoperable. Workers show it can work.
2010	Mexican Congress calls on President to meet with both sides to resolve strike, but in June 3,000 federal police break strike. USW and Mineros announce strategic alliance. Courts drop all but one charge against Napoleon Gomez.
See appendix for more complete chronology	

As for solidarity, it was evident all around: In the families, the community, the non-striking locals of Los Mineros that send regular donations. The unions

* The strike was broken June 6, 2010 when 3,000 federal and state police entered the mine, driving out striking miners and occupying the city of Cananea. They then invaded the union hall using tear gas against miners and their families. Five miners were arrested and beaten. With that Grupo Mexico hired temporary contract workers and brought them in under police escort.

and community organizations in the State of Sonora, some of whom we met while we were there, provide support along with national and international assistance. The support of the United Steelworkers Union (USW) materially, strategically, and in giving shelter to Napoleon Gomez marks a significant step forward in cross-border solidarity for unions north of the border. The union's promotion of the Women's Front was extensive nationally and internationally. We heard of plans to send them to Africa and Asia to win support and share their consciousness and spirit of struggle.

The costs of the struggle were also evident. Every family had to find means of support beyond what the union could provide. Rosa Guayante and her husband Moises Miranda Varga set up a stand in front of their house to sell candy, cigarettes and a special creation called *abatados*, iced fresh fruit, which they prepared late every night after all the strike support work and picketing was done. There was the constant work of the women's front to market handicrafts made by members wherever they traveled. And just underneath the surface of solidarity and determination, we caught glimpses of the tensions among the strikers and their families: the depression and stress in families whose resources were used up by three years out of work with no end in sight and the frequently expressed resentment against those who took their severance pay and left the struggle. Miners' families have been disrupted, leaving children with missing parents who crossed the border for jobs, and with high levels of anxiety as money for education dwindled. A local teacher described how children of miners experienced months and months of fear and insecurity, and could not focus on their work.

Of course, Cananea is a company town. The collective bargaining agreement stipulated what Grupo Mexico was to provide. From day one in 1990, however, it reneged on its obligations. The mayor complained of failing city services because the company controlled the water and electricity and failed to supply them adequately. Health care for the

miners and their families was deeply compromised first because Grupo Mexico had illegally shut down the Workers Clinic in 1999 and then, after the strike began, stopped supporting the Hospital Ronquillo which was forced to seek dwindling resources from the State government. The mayor, who was a strong supporter of the union, presided over a city facing bankruptcy, disastrous levels of unemployment, and contamination caused by years of mismanagement of waste from the mine.

Indeed, the entire landscape around Cananea looks like a bomb struck, lopping off the tops of mountains and hollowing out the land into huge valleys, some covered with the toxic dust of the tailings, polluting ground water and land as far away as Arizona. It



SATELLITE VIEW OF CANANEA

became immediately clear to us that the assault on the union was targeting not only workers, but their families and the community, as well as their city. In Cananea, as in all mining communities, the deadly pollutants touch everyone's life and health. The town was a graphic demonstration that so much wealth and power in the hands of a transnational corporation such as Grupo Mexico threatens the public welfare, the common inheritance, and even the national good. It wasn't difficult for us to see that it would take a global alliance of workers, communities, and public officials to stop Grupo Mexico's juggernaut. Finally, we also saw how solidarity from workers in Mexico and other countries, had boosted people's morale, helped to support their families' needs and struck multiple blows at the corporation



"This is what we see: Seccion 65 of the Miners is the diamond in the crown. And the federal government wants to knock off the crown as a way of creating a domino effect to crush all of the movements in Mexico. But perhaps they have chosen wrong because no matter what it costs, it doesn't matter. They are in fact creating and growing the very movement that will take them down. We understand that it's not just national but international and we all have to have, in fact, the same goals in mind which is respect for all people and all workers the world over"

Jesús Verdugo Quijada, Director of Seccion 65 Strike Committee

"The thing that Grupo Mexico cares about the least is the safety of the workers. They basically give it no attention at all. . .Frankly, they treat the workers like machines and if the machine breaks down they just replace them with another machine."

Dr. Luis Calderon, Chief Physician/Director,
Ronquillo Hospital



Mining's Persistent Risk to Community Health

Diseases seen as scourges of the past still persist in mining towns. Silica penetrates the lungs of workers and their families – as rock is pulverized in the search for valuable ores. Dangerous conditions in mining, refining, and smelting haunt workers and their families. In Cananea miners face hazards on par with industrial disasters of the past and silicosis is a daily threat.

Dr. Luis Calderon, director at Cananea's Ronquillo Hospital, grew up in a Cananea mining family. Thanks to a strong union-defended collective bargaining agreement, he was able to pursue an education and become a physician. He chose to return to Cananea and serve the community where he grew up. *"We have had some good times in Cananea. The son of a miner could become a doctor."*

But times are not good in Cananea now, with Grupo Mexico slashing its contracted commitments to community-supported health care. To optimize its earnings, Grupo closed the Workers' Clinic, a union-



run, company funded state of the art hospital that served miners and their families, providing a range of specialty, emergency and preventative services including maternity and infant care. Grupo argued that Ronquillo Hospital, a tiny aging facility which the company owned, provided adequate health care,

Silicosis is a serious breathing disorder caused by inhaling silica dust. The condition can be chronic or dangerously acute, if the exposure is massive. The fine silica particles scar the lungs; normal lung function is impaired, causing severe shortness of breath and low blood oxygen levels. Although intense exposure can cause disease within a year, it usually takes 10-15 years for symptoms to appear. Workers with silica exposure are also at risk for tuberculosis. There is no specific effective treatment, except a mix of cough medicine, bronchodilators and oxygen. (National Library of Medicine, US National Institutes of Health)

and that the Workers' Clinic simply duplicated existing services. Then, in 2008, during the strike, Grupo Mexico abruptly closed Ronquillo Hospital. Faced with a medical emergency provoked by the closure of the hospital, the state government of Sonora stepped in and has been operating Ronquillo at a basic level of service.

Today the Ronquillo Hospital is a bare-bones operation in an antiquated building, with narrow corridors and stairways, one functioning elevator and few in-patient rooms. Like the rest of the community, the hospital endures intermittent power outages. The medical personnel who remain earn very modest salaries and have limited access to medications, eking out what they can from state medical supply warehouses. For more specialized care, Cananea residents must go to Hermosillo, the state capitol, four hours away by car. The closure of the Workers Clinic and cutbacks in hospital services have put the health of miners and their families at risk. Dr. Calderon states, *"Under the collective bargaining agreement the workers and their families are all entitled to medical care, and that includes the retirees. But the company did not respect that at all."*

Dr. Calderon is concerned about the hazards threatening workers as well as the environmental dangers, especially the toxic dust, created by a century of mining. *"Environment is the last thing that GM cares about. We see the destroyed mountains; we see the contamination; the acids in the atmosphere, the dust which is toxic. But all Grupo Mexico wants is the metal. To destroy, take the profits and leave the city in ruins. That is what they want..... we need international public health support."*

Daily Hazard

Threats to the health and safety of workers and the community have been key drivers of the strike. Workers and their families stressed the dangerous working conditions and the unrelenting threats to community health

from contaminated air and water. The union's many appeals to the Secretary of Labor about degraded working conditions have been ignored.

Here are some of the conditions we learned about from the miners, the women's organization and health practitioners.

1) After Grupo Mexico took over the mine, workers and the union reported an increasing numbers of hazards. A growing list of violations was ignored by the company. A worker trained in electro-mechanics whose job focused on maintenance and prevention, told us: "When things were more normal, we kept things in good working order. But when copper prices go up, then came more pressure. Copper up; company demands up. There was less time on preventive maintenance... They wanted more production out of the equipment, but that meant more health and safety problems."

2) Accidents are a grim daily reality. Workers report lack of signage around hazards. One new worker lost an eye because of the absence of warnings about high-pressure, scalding water. Another worker fell through metal flooring that had not been maintained, and died when he landed on equipment a full flight below. Another man fell into a processing tube which carried his body to another building on the site. "Lock out" procedures were not followed;

under time pressures, faulty machinery was left on during repairs. Much needed guard-rails were not installed until the union took possession of the mine during the strike.

3) Silicosis and other lung impairments are common, due to constant exposure to dust and the lack of appropriate personal protective equipment and careful monitoring. During an investigation of the mine in November 2007, the Maquila Health and Safety Support Network (MHSSN.org) documented silica dust piling up in corners and covering stairways. Miners report that the dust was often so thick they couldn't see more than a few feet in front of them.

4) Hearing loss is a persistent condition facing many workers, who were only furnished with earplugs. There is a constant barrage of noise from the giant machinery.

5) Miners have always faced hazards and today's miners feel that their fathers endured too much. But they are quick to note new and more insidious hazards – complex chemicals and radioactive materials that augment today's mining process, elevating the risks, especially for certain cancers.

6) Miners face persistent threats to lung and cardiac health. But the cardio-pulmonary tests called for in the collective bargaining agreement, were not done regularly. Some miners have never had a test for lung function. Not trusting the company doctors, the union turned to independent diagnosticians; but the company has rejected their findings.



Jose Carbajal Romero worked with explosives in the mine. He was hurt in 2001. He told us the accident was caused by negligence by company supervisors. Afterward the company lost the documentation of his accident and refused to pay for a needed operation and any further medical care.

7) If a worker was found to have serious respiratory distress impairing his work, he was likely to be reassigned to another work post and then quietly let go -- a violation of the contract.

8) From all accounts, there is a serious lack of effective record-keeping.

The most thorough report and public documentation of the occupational hazards facing workers in Cananea was done in 2007 by an international group of occupational health specialists from Mexico, the U.S. and Colombia, coordinated by the Maquiladora Health and Safety Support Network (MHSSN). Donating their time, this team of occupational health physicians, industrial hygienists, a registered nurse and a pulmonary technician did an on-site assessment of working conditions, examining the particulate exposure, accident risks and physical structures inside the mine. They conducted lung function tests, medical assessments and exposure histories with a sample of 70 miners. They issued a major report, held press conferences, and conferred with the Mexican occupational health authorities. MHSSN team coordinator from Garrett Brown wrote,

"The multi-national OHS survey team was shocked at the level of disrepair and non-existent housekeeping...the Cananea mine and processing plants were being 'deliberately run into the ground.' . . . Over the last 2 years, the mine's concentrator buildings have been filled with dense clouds of rock dust, forming snowdrift-sized piles of settled dust two to three feet high through the plants. A bulk sample of the accumulated dust taken in October 2007 and sent to an AIHA-accredited laboratory in the US found the dust was 23% crystalline silica, with 50% percent of particles in the respirable range of less than 10 microns in diameter." (Brown, OHS Today, January 1, 2008)

The workers in the concentrator area of the operation were being exposed to silica dust at levels 10 times greater than permitted under Mexican law (the Maximum Permissible Exposure Limit of 0.1 mg/m³). Not surprisingly, the occupational health team found an array of respiratory symptoms in the workers they evaluated. The team also warned that the symptoms they found were likely to underestimate the true burden of disease among the Mineros.

In their extensive report (see Barr, MHSSN report), the MHSSN team expressed a high level of concern about: insufficient monitoring and reporting by the company; substandard ventilation and pollution control; lack of medical surveillance and reporting;

inadequate worker training about prevention and hazard response; and serious equipment malfunction, elevating the risk of accidents and electrocution. The report noted that the Mexican Department of Labor (DOL) had inspected the mine in early 2007, identifying some of the hazards. In November 2007, the MHSSN team held a press conference in Mexico City with workers from Section 65, representatives from the national office of Los Mineros and representatives of the United Steelworkers (USW), including workers and union leaders from Arizona who deal extensively with Grupo Mexico's U.S. holdings at its subsidiary, ASARCO. After releasing their report, the occupational health team met with Mexican DOL staff and requested a tripartite (government-management-labor) commission to thoroughly examine conditions in Cananea. One day later the Mexican DOL dismissed the MHSSN project as not "legally valid".



Continuing Health and Safety Concerns in the Mine

With the company's effort to break the strike, contract workers have been sent in to ready the mine for operation. The ICEM (International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers Union) has reported a continuing pattern of workers being put in harm's way, with less protected contract workers facing high risk and poor preparation.

"In the rush to get copper production from the Cananea mine back in world markets, is Grupo Mexico disregarding the safety and health of contract workers? So it seems by an apparent undocumented rash of on-the-job accidents and injuries in the short six weeks since federal police opened the mine in Sonora State for the company." (ICEM, July 26, 2010)

The violation of workers' safety and health in the Cananea mine has serious implications for the health rights of workers across Mexico and north across the border. From the AFL-CIOs' Solidarity Center in Mexico City to the Steelworkers in the US and Canada, worker health advocates have raised the alarm. Manny Armenta, USW representative from District 12, grew up and worked in Hayden AZ (the last operating smelter in the US); he sees the danger for all of labor:

"The miners in Cananea want the company to clean up conditions we'd never stand for here. If we don't help them, eventually we'll face the same problems." (Bacon, October 1, 2007)

Endangered Land, Endangered Future

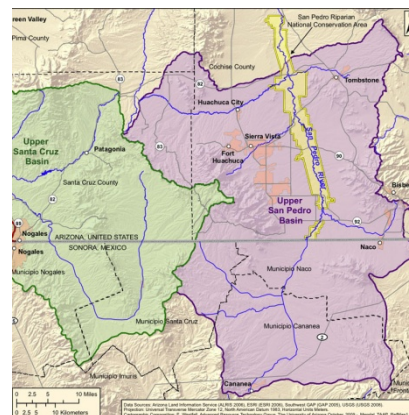
Mining families are used to altered and dangerous conditions but that doesn't mean they accept them without concern or question. The miners are deeply concerned for the future of their community, especially their children.

Aerial maps show a transformed landscape in Cananea. The town is bordered on the northwest by the ever-expanding mine and on the east by a valley filling up with mine-waste. The valley has become a lake of mine tailings, with the heaviest materials sinking to the bottom and the lighter materials collecting at the surface, in a white, frothy liquid-to-dust material that is easily airborne. When the wind blows, as happens frequently in Cananea, these lighter substances move across the valley and through the town, coating people's homes. Increasingly the town is being swallowed up, as both the mine and the leachate lake continue to expand.

Grupo Mexico puts a positive spin on the amassing waste. In 1999, Victor Del Castillo, Grupo's superintendent for environmental affairs, described the ponds this way: *"The dams are still 8 meters above the water level. They are completely safe.... But anyhow, the company will, in possibly one-and-a-half or two years at most, continue raising (the dams) to avoid water overflowing into the Rio Sonora... Water in the tailings ponds is of very good quality, with most of the toxics being recovered in the copper concentrator plant."* (Vanderpool, Sept 20, 1999)

In the past, when mining operations weren't scrutinized so closely, mining engineers wrote bluntly about the challenges of dealing with the growing flow of leachate. A 1956 article on Cananea in Mining Engineering profiles the development of leaching activities: a honeycomb of underground and surface areas, a network of pumps, pipelines, ditches and sprays with acid solution which separates copper and other valued minerals from their impurities. By the 1970s, environmental analysts (Alley & Licke) were reporting tailing pond spillage. Today, after decades of leachate processing, the community and the landscape are saturated with mine wastes. On the eastern horizon you can see the chalky hyper-white "lake," connected to the community and the mine by a few weary watersheds that serve as industrial waste canals. On windy days the sky is grey and thick, with waste materials blowing north towards Arizona. Local historian and keeper of community knowledge Arturo Rodriguez Aguero says, "on a bad day, you can't see the mountains at all."

There has been growing concern about the movement of mine wastes throughout the entire San Pedro River watershed.



The river flows north from Cananea 140 miles to its confluence at Hayden, Arizona, site of an Asarco copper smelter. The San Pedro is considered especially important to environmentalists. It hosts one of the most diverse bird populations in the US, including species of migrating birds. A Smithsonian project reports "Acid mining drainage derived from mine tailings is currently reaching a tributary of the San Pedro River with heavy metals and sulfates in water and sediments." (Gomez-Alvarez) Cadmium, copper, iron, manganese, lead and zinc have become a fluid part of the regional ecosystem.

The US-Mexico Binational Center for Environmental Sciences and Toxicology (University of Arizona) , the HELP program (Hydrology, Environment, Land and

Policy (a UNESCO project)), the EPA's San Pedro River cross-border project and the Border Ecology Project (Bisbee, AZ) are all bringing some attention to the regional environmental and public health impacts. The Binational Center flagged these public health concerns in a region ranging from Cananea in the south to Arizona's copper country in the north: (1) Long-Term Effects of Heavy Metals on Children's Health; (2) Arsenic and Health: Diabetes; (3) Arsenic and Health: Breast Cancer; (4) Mine Tailings: Phytostabilization and Phytoremediation (the stabilization of metal contaminants); and (5) Landfill Leachates (hazardous waste plumes impacting water supplies). The documentation work has only begun, but many people in the region are anxiously waiting to learn about the dangerous the environmental impacts threatening their health and that of their families and neighbors.

This growing binational interest in developing a regional water reserve to protect the environment and public health, has been blocked by Grupo Mexico and other mining interests who resist limits on mineral extraction. The company has plans add a new ore to add to its menu of minerals—molybdenum, used primarily in steel production. The industry is paying close attention. Industry analyst Catherine Virga at US-based CPM Group, notes, *"They have to make sure . . . labor disruption won't occur again before pouring money into [the plant],"* she said. ("Grupo Mexico plans molybdenum output at Cananea," 9-7-2010)

Amidst the growing environmental threats, attacks on labor and a militarized federal lockdown, families in Cananea express concern for the health of their children. According to Dr. Calderon, while medical personnel don't have all the data they need, it's clear that children are at great risk from airborne and waterborne metal pollution. With the Workers

Clinic now closed, there is little preventive care to support children's health.

In Cananea, people showed us a map of wells from which the city traditionally drew its water. When Grupo Mexico took control of the mine, it demanded that the majority of wells be designated for corporate use with only a small number on the northern periphery available for the public. Because of the lack of adequate well water supplies, much of the city's water is drawn from the contaminated Sonora River. Bottled water, with all its problems, seems to be the only water source that people can rely on in Cananea, but after three years on strike few people have access to bottled or purified water. And in peoples' homes, the taps flow only sporadically, since the utilities are dependent on infrastructure that the company almost uniformly controls.

The Mayor of Cananea offers this profile of Cananea's water predicament: *"The water here is bad. People who drink from the tap.. that's a problem. The Department of Health came in and investigated our water. Our wells are deep, but not clean. We need decontamination of the aquifer."*

The people of Cananea face a daily assault on their health and life supports--their air, water, soil and food supply. They are fighting to ensure that their Collective Bargaining Agreement will once again become a strong and honored framework for their work and community. More deeply, they are fighting for their lives, fighting so that their families will not be used up as they see the land, air and water around them being defiled and exhausted. The people of Cananea are seeking solidarity with others who care about protecting health, work, family and home.

"When US corporations owned the mine, things were a little different because they actually provided free water to the people of Cananea. They paid a percentage for their employees of the cost of electricity and gas. And they also produced all kinds of little goodies with their name on it, little notebooks and pieces of wood carvings and other things. They were paternalistic.

When the North Americans left, the government took over and administered. And they too supplied various kinds of facilities and support for the workers, especially through the collective bargaining agreement, that benefited the workers and the town.

But once the government decided to privatize and sell the company to individual capitalists, then everything changed."

Reginaldo Morena, Mayor of Cananea





"It's treason; Grupo Mexico has betrayed us. Grupo Mexico is waging a union-busting effort . . . They want to get rid of our collective bargaining agreement. If they get what they want, this town will end."

Julian Arredondo, mine guard, Seccion 65 (with Ysedro Rios)



Grupo Mexico:

Corporate shape shifting

Grupo Mexico owes much of its wealth and power to Mexico's neoliberal restructuring and privatizing of national resources. The company has three major divisions: mining, transportation, and infrastructure. The mining division owns 8 mines and 4 processing plants in Mexico, two mines and two processing facilities in Peru, three mines and a smelter in Arizona and a refinery in Amarillo, Texas. It is also prospecting in Chile. Grupo gained its most profitable mines during the government sell-off of publicly held copper mines in the late 1980's. It is the third largest copper producer in the world, and boasts the largest global copper reserves of any mining corporation. It is the world's fourth largest in silver production. Other products include molybdenum, zinc, gold, and lead.

Its transportation division owns three large railroad networks with multimodal freight service, making it Mexico's largest railroad operator. It owns Ferromex which is the nation's largest rail company with a total of 8,111 kilometers of railroad track covering 71% of the country's distribution networks in 2010. Ferromex and Ferrosur were purchased in 2005 from Carlos Slim. They were merging to create a transportation powerhouse as GM moves to ship and export more and more product by rail instead of truck. In 2010 Ferromex outstripped Kansas City Southern in the number of cross-border interchanges by rail. It also entered railroad operations in the United States, buying into Texas Pacific Railroad.

GM's infrastructure division is also expanding. The company recently built a Mexican power plant, and is bidding aggressively on airport construction. GM provides building services to the oil industry, much of which is controlled by the public entity Petroleos Mexicanos or PEMEX. Mexico's constitution forbids private corporate ownership of the oil sector, but Mexico's ruling party, the PAN, supports privatization—and GM has a close association with the PAN. In 2009, GM bought an oil drilling company at a bargain and entered the oil extraction business. It also has a construction and engineering division which builds infrastructure.

Grupo began as a subsidiary of US-based ASARCO (American Smelting and Refining Company), and the two companies share a common and complex history. ASARCO, a consortium organized in 1901, included mines and smelters in Mexico and the US and a railroad division that opened the interior of the country to mining exploitation and also allowed Mexican ores to be shipped over the border to US processing plants.

In 1950 ASARCO created a Peruvian subsidiary, Southern Peru Copper Corporation. After 1965 ASARCO's Mexican mines and plants were reorganized to comply regulations requiring a majority of Mexican investors. By 1974 Asarco's equity was reduced to 34%, and in 1978 the Mexican company was renamed Grupo Industrial Minera Mexico (GIMMEX). From 1988 to 1990 the Mexican government sold off public resources, and GIMMEX acquired the concession to operate Mexican copper mines, including the Cananea mine. Meanwhile ASARCO, faced with widespread legal and financial

problems, sold its remaining shares in GIMMEX for \$323 million. ASARCO



GRUPOMEXICO
ASARCO

closed many of its aging US plants, and entered into agreements with state and federal agencies to clean up highly polluted sites. Then, in 1999 ASARCO was sold to GIMMEX, now called Grupo, for \$2.2 billion.

In 2002, ASARCO sold its most lucrative remaining asset, Southern Peru Copper Corporation, for \$2.5 billion to Grupo. In 2005 ASARCO declared Chapter 11 bankruptcy in what became the largest, most complex and prolonged environmental bankruptcy in US history. The US government filed \$1.3 billion in claims for cleanups at 20 Superfund sites. The bankruptcy court removed ASARCO from Grupo's control and placed it under the jurisdiction of a Board of Creditors, which included the United Steelworkers, ASARCO's largest union. In Arizona ASARCO's remaining mines and smelter continued to operate. When the bankruptcy concluded in December 2009 Grupo regained control of the company, despite offers from other suitors and vehement objections from the union.

Grupo Mexico today, is one of Mexico's largest mining companies. It produces a significant share of the world production of important metals. Controlling the company is German Larrea Mota Velasco, Jorge's son. The Larrea family has benefited enormously from its \$545 million investment in Cananea in 1990. In 2010 Forbes listed Larrea as 72nd richest in the world, worth \$9.7 billion. German Larrea was a large donor to the election campaign of President Felipe Calderón. In addition to being CEO of all the companies held by GMexico, he is also a director of Banamex (subsidiary of Citibank) and Televisa. The GM Board of Directors have numerous ties to other corporations like Kimberly Clark, Grupo Modelo, Grupo Kuo – an autoparts, food, and chemicals manufacturer, and SanLuis Corporation, also in auto parts. GM directors are tied to business organizations like COMCE (Council of Mexican Businessmen on Trade, Investment & Technology), and many have served in high positions in government going back to the administration of Salinas de Gortari.

Thus Grupo is certainly a global behemoth and is far more potent than any of the previous adversaries that the Cananea miners have confronted.

Grupo Mexico's Struggles with Labor and Community in Arizona

In 2002 Grupo Mexico bought US-based ASARCO and took over operations at ASARCO's Arizona mines and smelter. Although concern about worker safety and community health is not new at ASARCO's plants, conditions got much worse when Grupo Mexico assumed control. Robert Laventure, Director of USW District 12, said, *"Our members were complaining about the plants being stripped of everything, from toilet paper to hand towels to soap. There's been a long-standing issue where our members have suffered over corporate greed."*

In July 2006 members of USW Local 886 who work at Grupo Mexico's Hayden, Arizona smelter told of dangerous conditions in the plant, caused by deteriorating facilities and equipment, inadequate training for new workers and hazardous safety and lockout procedures. The roof of one smelter building had just collapsed. Workers described *"bad structural steel conditions, where the steel might have started out as 3/8 of an inch thick or 5/8 of an inch thick. Now it's down to 1/16th of an inch. In some places, it's like paper. This is structural steel that supports the main building frame."*

The smelter workers described a near-fatal accident when two employees were hit by cranes and seriously injured. *"These guys had barely made a 90-day probation period. They're going up there green. If you put your hand in the wrong place, step in the wrong place, it could be your life, a hand, you know? These poor guys are lucky they're alive."* Two other workers were badly burned in an explosion; a third was electrocuted; still another was decapitated by a conveyor belt. Summing up, one union member said, *"In the morning when I leave for work I'm not sure whether I'm going to come back at the end of the day because I don't know what's in store for me. We leave every day hoping to come back the same way we left. You know, intact."*

Solidarity: from the Family to the World

The women and men we met in Cananea inspire us with their strength and consciousness. The video that accompanies this report is a means to share their heroism. We hope it's contagious. Here's a taste of how the struggle has changed them:



"We, the women went out in the struggle after the eleventh of January 2008 when we saw how our husbands were displaced, beaten and discriminated off the mine gates. It is then when we decided to form the frente femenino cananiense (Cananean Feminine Front) . . . We have always struggled. Usually we have been behind them, but now we are next to them demanding for a collective bargaining agreement, for an autonomous union which are important things for the full Mexican Republic."

Maria Rosa Guayarte Garcia"

I never imagined that I'd be involved in a struggle like this one. But when the strike started and the federal government and also the company began attacking the strikers, then a few of us women, wives of miners, got together in order to form a front to support them. And once that started, the desire to get more and more involved, to put forward the struggle, became stronger."

Carmen



LILIANA, CARMEN, ROSA AND MICHELLE OF THE FRONT OF WOMEN IN STRUGGLE FOR DIGNITY OF THE WORKER OF MEXICO AND THE WORLD



Carmen's husband Jose Gabriel Cosa Lopez:

"As workers we feel so incredibly supported by our wives. In the past there was the support because they managed the home and did all that work. But now I feel so much more pride because now we are together in this and we stand together in the struggle. The unity just keeps growing. We are more than just husband and wife. And what we see happen-ing in this process of unification, is really the formation of a global family."

"One thing our leader of our union, Napoleó Gómez Urrutía has said, if the companies are globalizing, why aren't the unions globalizing?." Gabriel

"But the truth is we are learning from struggles everywhere and we grab whatever knowledge, whatever stories, whatever jokes, whatever information we can from every struggle, anywhere in the country or anywhere else. . ."

Jesus Verdugo

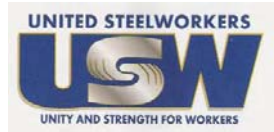


NO TO INFAMY! WE REJECT THE ATTACK ON LOS MINEROS OF CANANEA, WE DEFEND LABOR RIGHTS, THE RIGHT TO STRIKE AND COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS. UNION OF TELEPHONE WORKERS



I believe that the working class is uniting. We are seeking to form a global family in the sense that each one of us will protect the others, whether they are Mexican, Chilean, Peruvian, American or Canadian. We are creating a class of workers that cares for one another, and we continue to strengthen this and unite ourselves more every day. For us it is not just the material aid, nor the economic aid we receive from our friends around the world, but many times it is the moral support that we need. And this gives us much more strength to continue fighting. Today the problem is the conflict of the miners, tomorrow or the next day it might be something else. And we'll be fighting together with every one of our compañeros from around the world; in whatever conflict comes, we will say, "Presente."

Jose Gabriel Cota Lopez, Commission for Public Relations and Diffusion of Information, Section 65, Los Mineros.



Why should we support Los Mineros at Cananea?

What does global solidarity look like?

If the strike at Cananea and Section 65 of Los Mineros is crushed, labor will feel the blow globally. Why is that? Because the battle at Cananea is over the right to unionize and bargain collectively, over decent standards for health and safety, and the future of our communities. The Mexican government, like many others these days, has mounted a campaign to eliminate independent unionism and collective bargaining throughout the country; the growing response to such attacks, from Egypt to Wisconsin, demonstrates also the growing power of popular resistance! Calderon has used his power in government to get the courts to declare legal strikes illegal, arrest union leaders, privatize government sectors of the economy, and used federal police and armies to occupy towns, make way for scabs, and defeat unionized workers. All this with significant financial support from the U.S. treasury!

To accomplish its goal, the Calderon government has had to violate Mexico's own labor laws, ILO conventions, and basic human rights. This neo-liberal "free market" approach, backs the right of corporations alone to determine wages, hours and working conditions and thus provides ever cheaper labor in the global marketplace at the expense of workers, the environment and, again, our communities.

If workers in the US decide that we are too preoccupied with attacks right here at home to worry about struggles in some other corner of the world, then we will stand alone as we try to stop work from moving abroad or stop wages from dropping even further. NAFTA already eliminated trade barriers in North America, making us one labor market; additional free trade agreements are erasing

one national border after another, so that we now find ourselves competing with the poorest nations in the world. If the current assault on unions worldwide succeeds, and we lose even more union rights here, we may get our jobs back, but they will come at subminimum wages!



ON JUNE 7, 2010, 3,000 FEDERAL & STATE POLICE BREAK THE STRIKE IN CANANEA

Los Mineros probably cannot prevail in Cananea without significant global solidarity, so the challenge stands before all of us. Grupo Mexico, owner of the mine, epitomizes the modern-day transnational corporation, ruthless and repressive in its drive for greater profits, just as the miners of Cananea symbolize what unity, solidarity, courage and persistence really mean. What the struggle in Cananea has shown to date is that workers' struggles and global labor solidarity efforts work. These initiatives work in a number of critical ways:

1. They demonstrate the unflinching determination of workers to protect their unions;

2. They provide moral and financial support to keep miners fighting on;
3. They have brought greater visibility to the Cananea story, revealing gross violations of laws and international conventions;
4. They have unmasked the greed and cruelty of transnational corporations;
5. They have exposed the daily violations of health & safety standards;
6. They have alerted us to the poisoning of the air we breathe and the water we drink;
7. They have promoted lasting alliances among workers, such as the alliance of Los Mineros with the USW;
8. They have helped to revive international labor organizations to coordinate struggles;
9. They have exposed the control corporations exercise over government policy and institutions;
10. They have brought rank-and-file workers together across borders;
11. They have helped build a network for communication and support among workers in different nations;
12. The Cananea miners have reminded workers everywhere that you can't win unless you fight back and fight hard!



MEXICO DAYS OF ACTION RALLY FEB 14 TORONTO USW.CA

The International Metalworkers Federation (IMF), the International Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Union (ICEM), the United Steelworkers (USW), and the Union of Electrical Workers (UE) have been doing pioneering work on the solidarity front with Los Mineros. They have sent delegations of workers, union leaders and

international observers to Cananea, and at the same time, facilitated the visits of miners to locations around the world to bring news of their struggle. In February 2011 they sponsored International Days of Action in Solidarity with Mexico in which more than fifty thousand participated in 40 countries. The USW had originally built their relationship with Los Mineros around their common corporate opponent, Arcelor Mittal, but now the two unions have negotiated an affiliation agreement.

USW District 7 director and International Executive Board member, Jim Robinson, has played a critical role in promoting and coordinating some of the solidarity actions, along with Ben Davis, responsible for international work for the USW, and District 12 of the USW that sits along the border with Mexico. This district has many cross-border ties and makes regular visits to Cananea. This past January 2011, District 12 International Representative Manny Armenta was fined and arrested on his way to Cananea by Mexican police, a sign of growing desperation on the part of Grupo. District 12 Director Bob Laventure observed, *"Those miners in Cananea--for 3 years they valiantly stayed on strike until the government forced them out. They're still solid. At any time they could have said 'Enough is enough' and walked away. There's the men that work in the mines, and there's women who hold that solidarity together."* He also stressed the following:

"We'll fight Grupo Mexico wherever we need to go to support our brothers and sisters. Our members have been very receptive to that. We've had a lot of members go down to Cananea from Hayden and Tucson. We've done a lot to support Napoleon Gomez... That's the solidarity we have over here."

In December, 2010 as well the Mexican courts knocked down the seventh out of eight charges against Los Mineros President Napoleon for allegedly laundering money, exposing the frame-up of the union's president. The more international visibility, the harder it is to continue the local repression!

Building Cross-border Communities for Solidarity

USW District 7 has sent delegations from NW Indiana to Cananea multiple times over the past three years, such that now in Northwest Indiana there are steelworkers who have developed on-going

relationships with their Mexican counterparts. Through these delegation exchanges, workers feel the connections on a very personal level and can see themselves in the faces of Mexico's miners. *"I am so proud of my union,"* emphasized USW Local 1010 president Tom Hargrove, *"because we have built global relationships based on our stand for social justice and equality."* He added: *"We may understand that having global corporations make global unions necessary, but it is the face-to-face contact that brings passion and commitment to making solidarity real."*

On June 20, 2010 the USW and Los Mineros signed a Declaration announcing "we will form, with our Executive Boards' involvement, a joint commission to define the process of creating a unified North American organization as well as explore global unification representing one million workers in Mexico, Canada, the United States and the Caribbean." In a press release, the USW noted:

The United Steelworkers (USW) and the National Union of Mine, Metal, Steel and Related Workers of the Mexican Republic (SNTMMSSRM) - known as Los Mineros - announced a joint declaration to create a cross-border commission to explore unification of a potential union representing one-million industrial workers in Mexico, Canada, U.S. and the Caribbean.

In signing the declaration over the weekend, USW President Leo W. Gerard and Napoleon Gomez, general secretary for Los Mineros, jointly renewed the two unions "common commitment to democracy, equality, and solidarity for working men and women throughout North America and throughout the world."

Solidarity has involved many exchanges, a lot of educational programs, financial support not only through the International but also at local levels, by selling t-shirts, holding fundraisers and collecting one-on-one. Blanca Morales, a clerical worker at District 7, first with the International's help and then drawing on her own resources, has made solidarity t-shirts, and traveled in all directions to sell them, raising tens of thousands of dollars in the process. *"They are my family,"* she explained. *"Every day I am on the computer looking for news of their struggle. If I go one day without an e-mail, I get worried."*

A recent roundtable conversation of USW Local 1010 members who have visited Cananea focused on the importance as well as the challenges in building solidarity. Participating in the discussion were Matt Beckman, Secretary of the Grievance Committee, Ivan Agosto, Safety Chairman, Luis Aguilar, Contract Coordinator, Maria Rosa Rodriguez, Financial Secretary, and Max Carrasquillo, chair of the Contracting Out committee. Their perspective rested on one basic observation: if we do not help them fight union-busting and raise their wage and safety standards, we will be working under similar conditions with ever declining wages. *"We have to protect ourselves,"* commented Luis. *"If we allow Grupo Mexico to crush them, it is only a matter of time until we will work under the same conditions."* *"They are no different than us,"* added Matt. *"We are all working-class families struggling for a living."*



2007 - USW-MINERO EXCHANGE IN LAZARO CARDENAS

Beckman went on to outline how every worker in this country is affected by the events in Cananea. In addition to lowering wage standards, he argued that no matter how you look at it *"our tax money is being used to attack the workers."* Pointing to the huge financial support President Obama offered Mexican President Calderon to combat narco-trafficking on the border, Matt said that *"either the money is paying for the federal police occupying Cananea or our tax money helped the Calderon government to free up federal police to bust the strike."* He went on to stress that there are 1,200 strikers being denied jobs in an area that has no other employment opportunities. *"What will they do? They will cross the border to find work."* Matt Beckman was in Cananea recently as an international observer along with the International Metalworkers Federation.

Each union member echoed the same observations. In labor markets based on globalization, wages are determined by those who work for the lowest

wages. President Hargrove saw it as both self-interest and a moral obligation to raise standards internationally. Ivan brought in another critical factor: the impressive unity and commitment of Los Mineros. *"I haven't seen solidarity like that. The families, the community, they have all stood up to Grupo Mexico. As bad as the repression has been, they all have hope. Why don't we have that kind of hope and unity?"*



MINEROS SECRETARY GENERAL NAPOLEON GOMEZ URRUTIA

"What is happening to them will happen to us," added Rosa. *"If the Mexican government can bust unions, so can other governments, including our own. We have to win our members' support, little by little, chipping away their disinterest."* "Yes," Luis agreed. *"We failed to educate people. We stopped telling our own children why they have what they have, the role the union played. Once workers are no longer poor, they forget. They live with the assumption that the Company gave them what they have."* "I'm fortunate to have read some history," added Max. *"I can see that what happened here in the 1930s is happening in Mexico, the struggle for independent unions. Most people are busy living their lives. They don't make the big decisions, so they don't think about it. We're lucky to get 80 out of 4000 members to a local union meeting!"* Matt pointed to the reality that many union members do not *"vote their job. They don't side with workers' rights. They vote abortion or guns instead of economics."*

Together they listed some of the many solidarity actions they have been engaged in: raising funds, speaking to co-workers, families and friends, selling t-shirts, riding the bus to DC to confront Mexican President Calderon in May 2010, and putting

information in their local newspaper. Yet they all seemed to agree that until you see and experience the situation in Mexico, it is hard to make solidarity feel real. Luis commented that he could not imagine how bad things were, *"how they survived on the income they received. Then I saw the big divide."* *"When I saw how they stood up to Grupo, how they went on the offensive, then I felt it,"* added Matt. Rosa was particularly impressed by how united and strong the women were in standing up to the company. *"Women there really understand the cause,"* she remarked.

Close to 120 workers crowded in front of the Mexican Consulate in Chicago during the Days of Action in Solidarity with Los Mineros, February 14-10, 2011. Local 1010 players Tom, Matt, Rosa, Max and others were all there. The USW organized the protest, but speakers included SEIU, Jobs with Justice, Arise! and other area groups. Workers on the bus from Gary explained why they came out so early on a Saturday morning: *"I have a long union history in my family,"* noted retired steelworker SOAR member Dominic Garcia. *"Now I have to do my part!"* Kurt Mullins, USW 6787, had visited the Arcelor Mittal plant in Mexico, Lazaro Cardenas, a few years back, and while he was there, the government assassinated a worker. *"Their strength (referring to Los mineros) made us look pale. We have to bring their fabulous solidarity here."* Looking over the seat at me he insisted, *"I'll be there! Everytime."*

Hundreds of actions took place around the world during this week of Solidarity, involving tens of thousands of workers. How has solidarity actually supported the workers in Cananea? On February 24, one week after the Solidarity week, Juan Linares, the President of the Minero's Oversight and Justice Council, was freed from prison after over two years. The presence of international observers and delegations helped to break down the isolation that Grupo and the government tried to impose, to cloak their repressive attacks. Outside financial help has made a significant difference in supporting workers with medical, educational and health care supplies. The main financial support, of



course, comes mainly from the union's members, who donate weekly to the cause. The participation of miners from Cananea in various conferences and union events has definitely helped to win converts to the cause. A group from Cananea spoke at the United Association of Labor Educators (UALE) National Conference in San Diego spring 2010; at the Labor Notes' Conference in Detroit in April, at the World Social Forum also in Detroit in June 2010, and at a number of events in Canada as well. Miners have participated in many USW events, reaching an expanding audience of workers

Are the Rights & Interests of US Workers Connected to those of Mexican Workers?

The argument based on workers' own self interest rests on multiple considerations. The "race to the bottom" in global labor markets makes the downward pressure on wages a global reality. With over two hundred million dislocated workers in the world and the recent financial implosion, worldwide unemployment and underemployment have reached new highs. In addition, the horrendous safety violations at Cananea threaten other facilities as well. Grupo Mexico is not just a Mexican firm; it has facilities in the U.S. and Peru at present. It is also expanding its holdings into different energy sectors inside Mexico. The toxic dust from the tailings blows throughout Sonora and sixty miles north across the US-Mexican border.

Busting one of the strongest independent unions in Mexico, Los Mineros, and hiring replacements at Cananea push workers to cross the border to join the growing flow of desperate labor into the U.S., further depressing wages and conditions.



"WE ARE ALL CANANEA" 20 STEELWORKERS FROM DISTRICTS 7 AND 12 AT FEBRUARY 2010 FORUM AND RALLY AT THE MINE

Deterioration of wages, health and safety, job insecurity, environmental pollution, lowered standard of living and increased immigration are all direct effects of Mexico's anti-union repressive actions in support of bad global corporations such as Grupo Mexico. On the immigration issue, Local 1010 worker Max asked, *"Why build walls and fences for security? When companies in Mexico pay a decent wage, we won't be crossing the border."* He then underlined the fact that the wealthy not only run the Mexican government, but ours as well. *"That's why we have to understand that we are all the same, that we are connected."*

Face-to-Face Works but It Costs!

It is clear that face-to-face encounters between workers from different countries play a strategic role in building global solidarity. But unions cannot afford to sponsor endless international visits. Therefore I asked the USW Local 1010 group what more can you do to get your members active in the fight for global solidarity? After a lengthy silence, ceiling gazes, and shrugging shoulders, Rosa suggested that *"first we have to build solidarity within our union."* Ivan thought that 2 people from every local should have the opportunity to see work in third world countries. Luis thought that the union leadership had to be 100% behind global solidarity actions.

The silence more than anything spoke to how difficult it is to gain support from workers preoccupied with their own lives and families. *"When we came back from Cananea,"* observed Luis, *"we got hammered with complaints from people not being able to get 76 hours of overtime. Without overtime, they can't pay their bills. How do I answer them?"* The challenge of humanizing solidarity connections and tapping into "family" feelings, as Blanca described her own feelings, is hard to create second-hand. Concern becomes real when it becomes immediate and personal. It is not enough to *know* that workers in the US and Mexico are connected and affected by each other's situations, workers have to internalize that connection and feel that concern as central to their own well-being.

That, however, is the challenge of organizing human networks globally, nationally and even locally. *"An injury to one is an injury to all,"* captures labor's goal of establishing worker-to-worker links, worker identification and a sense of class solidarity. It places

a major responsibility on those who have the opportunity to travel and see first-hand how workers live and fight in other countries. Just as unions have members with dedicated areas of work, locals may need to designate members responsible for building international solidarity. To some degree, the USW has done just that. There is an Arcelor Mittal Global Health & Safety Team that inspects two plants every year, tagging safety violations. Union workers at Gerdau Ameristeel meet face-to-face and also through satellite connections to maintain a coordinated campaign.

The people who participate on these exchanges usually have more than a full load of responsibilities. Perhaps locals should establish special committees solely dedicated to solidarity actions and support. Could not local committees prepare materials for presentations, short booklets for distribution? Could workers with that face-to-face experience be released to work with more locals on these issues? Just as workers adopt families during strikes within the US, perhaps we should be adopting families internationally and using the internet to correspond, share photos and feelings. Sister-City, sister-local



initiatives could be used to tighten the relationships between distant but similar workplaces, using all the tools provided through the internet. From Skype to twitter, we can bring workers into the same room. Google now translates messages; although far from perfect, communications barriers have been disappearing.

As we watch workers rise up in anger against the new global paradigm, from France to Egypt, from Tunisia to Libya and Madison, Wisconsin, educators have a critical role to play in helping workers see themselves in the global picture. One of our toughest challenges is to drive global solidarity down to the grassroots of the organization. Some leaders fear that their members are not ready to look toward the horizon. Some think re-electability is more important than union solidarity. If we wait, however, until all our labor unions grasp the critical importance of global solidarity, our opportunities may have passed. Los Mineros at Cananea represent the firing line in the global struggle to protect unions and standards of living globally. Standing with them today is in the interests of workers and communities everywhere!

What Can You Do?

1. Get informed.
2. Check out websites, including those of the IMF , the ICEM, the National Union of Mine, Metal, Steel and Related Workers of the Mexican Republic (SNTMMSSRM) or Los Mineros—world news, USW & UE.
3. Plan a short workshop with your membership. (See curriculum in appendix 1)
4. Write articles for your union and local newspapers.
5. Oppose the use of U.S. funding for federal police in Mexico.
6. Contact the Mexican consulates and the President.
7. Get your local to do a fund-raiser.
8. Organize your own observer delegation.
9. Develop petitions supporting freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining for all workers.
10. Talk, talk , talk to your co-workers.
11. Set up your own skype sister relationship with workers in another country.
12. Buy and offer to sell t-shirts.
13. Coordinate a letter-writing campaign to your own congressional representatives.
14. Provide information for your religious, student and community groups.

Appendix

- Resources for further investigation
- Chronology of Events Related to the Cananea Copper Mine Workers 1906-2011
- A Discussion Curriculum: [Saving Jobs: A Global Challenge](#)
- Agreement between United Steelworkers and Los Mineros
- The Mexican Government View



Resources for further investigation

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On-line resources

Border Ecology Project www.borderecoweb.sdsu.edu/bew/drct_pgs/b/bep.html

Grupo Mexico's on-line versions:

www.asarco.com (US smelter and mines)

www.gmexico.com (Gmexico and its subsidiaries)

www.southernperu.com (Southern Copper, an "indirect" subsidiary)

International Chemical, Energy & Mining Federation news: <http://www.icem.org/en/26-Latin-America-Caribbean>

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<http://binational.pharmacy.arizona.edu/SonoraRemedialProject.php>

United Electrical Workers, Mexican Labor News and Analysis (monthly) www.ueinternational.org/MLNA/index.php

United Steelworkers (www.usw.org) has frequent updates on the situation.

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CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS RELATED TO THE CANANEA COPPER MINE WORKERS 1906-2011

1906 June 1	Mexican miners strike for equality against Cananea Consolidated Copper Company, owned and developed by American William C. Greene who brings in Arizona Rangers. 23 miners killed, 22 wounded and 50 arrested. Outrage contributes to Mexican Revolution of 1910.
1917	Cananea Consolidated Copper is purchased by Anaconda Copper Mining Company
1932 1935	Union of Martyrs of 1906 organizes all workers and signs its first contract. It later becomes Local 65 of the National Union of Mine and Metal & Related Workers of the Republic of Mexico. National Union of Mine and Metal & Related Workers formed.
1971-82	Mexican government and private investors buy 51% of Anaconda Copper stock in the mine. Mine renamed Compania Minera de Cananea.
1982-83	Mexican government buys out Anaconda, and National Financial (Nafinsa) buys rest of stock thus nationalizing mine. Government invests almost a billion dollars modernizing mine, and by 1988 mine becomes competitive on world market.
1989	Pres. Carlos Salinas turns management of mine over to Nafinsa to restructure and prepare for privatization. Mine declared bankrupt. Operations suspended for three months. Failed strike with hundreds of workers fired.
1990	Grupo Mexico, whose principal owner is German Feliciano Larrea Mota Velasco acquires Cananea mine and receives the concession to operate it. Name changed to Mexicana de Cananea, S.A. 5% of the shares were to be placed in a trust for the benefit of the Miners' Union.
1991	The company refuses to recognize Section 65's collective bargaining agreement arguing that they bought a mine, not a contract, and they refused to revise it as well.
1992-98	Many struggles between company and union first to win recognition of the contract, then to try to preserve it against pay and benefit cuts and work rule changes.
1998-1999	Strike against company plans to lay off 700 of the 2100 workers. Government declares strike illegal, and company threatens to use scabs. Cananea miners travel to Tucson to win support from the AFL-CIO. A mine occupation by the local leads to threats of armed intervention by state and federal police and a decision to return to work. However 120 union activists and leaders were fired and many others received temporary 28-day contracts.
1999	The company closes the Workers Clinic which served workers families and withdraws support for drinking water to the community.
2000-2002	The company engages shock troops to undermine the Mineros in favor of white unions. and they refuse to renegotiate the contract.
2002	ASARCO sells Southern Peru Copper to Grupo Mexico
2002-04	A series of strikes protesting Grupo Mexico's refusal to pay negotiated bonuses.
2004-07	Grupo Mexico interferes in the internal affairs of the Mineros, which is increasingly opposed to the corporate/government initiative to "reform" labor law and undermine workers' rights.
2004 October 2	Agreement between the Mineros and Grupo Mexico to pay the agreed 5% of shares now worth about \$55 million into the trust established for the union.
2005 February April 13	Union decides to terminate the trust and transfer the money to a bank account of the union. ASARCO files for Chapter 11 bankruptcy United Steelworkers and Los Mineros form global strategic alliance
2006	Federal Attorney General files criminal charges against Napoleon Gómez Urrutia, Juan Linares and other union officials in federal and state courts. Mexican government refuses to recognize election of Gomez as Secretary General and the Executive Committee of the Mineros and appoints Elías Morales Hernández to head the union based on falsified

	documents and bogus accusations of corruption. Accounts of both Gomez and union are frozen.
February 19	Pasta de Conchos mine explosion in Coahuila – 65 miners buried. Gomez Urrutia indicted after he protests. He flees Mexico and settles in Canada with help from USW
April 20	Solidarity strikes in Agua Prieta and Nacozari. Sicartsa Steel Mill in Lazaro Cardenas, Michoacán strike declared illegal, police sent, face 600 strikers with slingshots. Two workers killed.
April 11 2007	Mexican federal court orders the Labor Secretary to recognize Napoleón Gómez Urrutia as General Secretary of the union
July 30	Miners in Cananea Sonora, Taxco Guerrero and Sombrerete Zacatecas strike over safety and other issues ignored by Grupo Mexico. In Cananea 1300 walk out.
August 7	Federal Labor Board declares the Cananea strike to be illegal and therefore nonexistent, but on August 8, 15, Oct 8, and Dec. 13 the courts issued first temporary then permanent restraining orders on the labor board restoring the right to strike.
Early November	The Cananea mine management threatens miners that if they don't return to work they will be fired. The Federal Department of Labor and Social Welfare summoned Grupo Mexico and the union for discussions, but Grupo ignores the call. Discussion begins in early December, but Grupo suspends them after three hours. Miners march on Nov. 7 th in Hermosillo demanding the state government intervene
Jan. 11, 2008	Labor Board again declares strike illegal, but fails to give notice to the union. Workers ousted from mine by 1500 federal and state police. 40 strikers hurt, five hospitalized, five arrested. Jan 21 a district court reverses and in April strike against declared lawful.
April	Labor Department begins a safety inspection of the mine and finds 220 violations.
May 10	Grupo Mexico closes Ronquillo Hospital leaving 10,000 miners and their family members without medical care; eventually the State of Sonora reopens it with much reduced budget.
June 6	Caravan for Justice leaves Cananea bound for Mexico City.
June 24	Gomez Urrutia reelected, but again government refuses to accept election results. ILO Committee on Freedom of Association finds that denial of election of Mineros leaders violates Article 3 of Convention No. 87 which establishes "the right of workers to elect their leaders in full freedom."
July 18	Mexican National Congress calls for negotiations to settle the three ongoing miners' strikes but nothing achieved.
End of Nov. early Dec.	Union official Juan Linares Montufar arrested. Grupo Mexico takes over ASARCO leaving behind environmental liabilities
Dec 5	Federal labor board declares strike illegal for 3 rd time. Dec 10 court issues temporary restraining order then on Dec. 16, injunction.
March 19 2009	Federal collegiate court affirms district court ruling again that strike is legal.
March 20	After one day hearing and without accepting any evidence from the union, the federal labor board rules that the mine is in <i>force majeure</i> inoperable because of sabotage by miners and rules therefore that the employment relationship between Grupo and the workers no longer exists, also declares the strike illegal again.
	Workers temporarily show mine is workable.
	Cananea mine begins work with 40 miners who break ranks and enter to work.
Dec. 2	Mexican Supreme Court decides to assert jurisdiction over the case and rule on it directly. As of January 2011, this ruling is pending.
Feb. 11, 2010	Federal Collegiate Court affirms labor board decision affirming <i>force majeure</i> thus terminating the union contract and miners' employment.
April 28	Federal House of Deputies agrees to a document questioning the maintenance of the mining concession held by Grupo Mexico because of its failure to resolve the strike, calls on the

	Executive to set up a round table for all the parties to discuss and solution, and exhorts the government not to use force and respect the rights of striking miners in all three strikes.
June 6	5000 federal and state police enter mine and drive out striking miners, occupy the city of Cananea, and invade the union hall using tear gas against miners and their families. Five miners are arrested and beaten .
July 9	Government dismisses first of charges against Napoleon Gomez Urrutia. USW and Mineros union appoint commission to explore creating unified North American union.
Aug 11	Sonora 9 th District Court rules the strike is legal. Decision not enforced.
Fall	Most workers refuse severance pay and maintain strike. Company hires contract workers to replace them.
Dec 10	United Steelworkers and Los Mineros meet to advance their strategic coordination and talks toward unified organization.
December	Court dismisses seventh of eight outstanding charges against Napoleon Gomez.
Feb. 2011	Mexico Days of Action for labor rights sponsored around the world by the IMF, ICEM, UNI Juan Linares - the President of the Minero's Oversight and Justice Council - in freed from prison after over two years.



Top left The mine from the top
Right The processing plant
Bottom left Grupo built a basketball court to win public support after the strike began but fully exposed to the mine tailings.

"Saving Jobs: A Global Challenge"

Discussion Curriculum (2 $\frac{1}{2}$ - 3 hours)

Ruth Needleman

Class Purpose: Explain why should U.S. workers support labor globally.

1. Introductions & Overview:

Short instructor commentary: "Even before NAFTA, jobs were disappearing throughout this country. Since NAFTA, we have been bleeding jobs. From outsourcing to technologically-driven downsizing, employers have been cutting, combining, and intensifying work, all at the expense of jobs and wages."

a. **Activity 1**

Instructions: Ask each individual to jot down three major changes that have taken place in their area of work or in their workplaces over the past decade.

Then, place them in small groups; ask participants to introduce themselves, including name, union, employer, work, job and describe briefly the changes each has experienced at work. Then, together ask them to come up with three changes that reflect how work has changed over the past 10 years.

Each group should write their 3 changes with a magic marker on an 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 11" paper in big letters. One change on each piece of paper.

As each group introduces its members, have them post their three changes horizontally. Be sure they explain the change and provide an example. Also ask if anyone in the room has a question.

If identical changes surface, ask them to attach the papers in a vertical row—with permission from the group that posted it first.

b. **Activity 2: Now discuss the postings.**

Instructor instructions:

When all the papers are posted, ask if anything is missing. You can ask questions to solicit more responses. Then ask: Is there a pattern or story here? Can we categorize in any way and make sense out of this list?

[changes will likely include job combination, speed-up, downsizing, outsourcing, privatization, shutdowns, technological change and job elimination, greater subdivision of tasks as in taylorization, wage and benefit cuts, fewer job classes, cross-training, union-busting...]

Re-organize the papers based on the discussion. Ask if participants see any way of grouping or categorizing the changes. Find categories or ways of grouping and identifying changes.

[Possible categories: technology, corporate policy, global competition, union responses]

Ask them to tell the story they see written.

You then sum up: ***Instructor comment:*** "so here's the story: Free trade made markets global and labor competition global, driving down wages, benefits and working conditions. Productivity rose as wages fell and benefits got cut. New technology allowed fewer workers to produce more and also took control of the job away from workers. Fewer workers did more work for less. And jobs went in search of cheaper labor, leaving high unemployment and higher underemployment in their wake. Attacks against unions in the third world have now come home to the U.S."

2. What strategies/approaches has labor tried over the past 2 decades to stop these trends? ***Instructor question:*** From what you know and your own experience, how did unions respond to these attacks in the 1980s and 1990s?

a. Activity 3

Brainstorm a list:

- Wage concessions
- Benefit concessions
- Pension concessions
- Two-tier agreements
- Gain-sharing and productivity agreements

- QWL, LMPT, EI and other such schemes
- 10 or 12 hour work days
- Unlimited overtime to make up for lost wages
- Concessions such as eliminating work rules, collapsing job classifications, intensifying work, working short,
- limiting seniority;
- introducing all kinds of flexibility
- boycotts and strikes
- inside campaigns
- contract campaigns
- work-to-rule
- introduction of behavior based safety
- weaker health & safety enforcement

They will probably describe all the negative take-aways, a few courageous strikes, but even more contract concessions.

Activity 4: brainstorm

Did these strategies work? *What outcomes did these strategies give us?*

- ❖ Savings from concessions used to move facilities abroad;
- ❖ All concessions came from workers who gained nothing;
- ❖ Workers had to compete with cheaper labor: restructuring, lean production, downsizing;
- ❖ Too little, too late.
- ❖ Increased rate of accidents and injuries and discipline for this
- ❖ Declining union membership
- ❖ Divisions among unions
- ❖ And now an all-out assault on public employees, the most unionized sector of the workforce.

3. Activity 5: Small groups

What impact did these changes have on rank and file union members in US?

- ❖ Many workers lost confidence in unions for not fighting harder

- ❖ Workers began to see individual competition as the road to individual survival, forgetting collective solutions
- ❖ Overtime became the individual answer, causing even greater divisions
- ❖ The “in order to compete” argument created greater hostilities toward workers in other countries for “stealing” our jobs;
- ❖ Unions became fearful of losing more jobs and made bigger concessions on work rules, job classifications, management rights, flexibility
- ❖ Fewer grievances and less shop floor presence
- ❖ Increased accidents and injuries
- ❖ Further environmental destruction

Ask them: As you look over this list, what do you see, how does it make you feel?

Your main responses will be: hopeless, helpless, resigned....

Instructor comment: Summarizing: Unions thought they had a social compact with employers, but that was gone. Unions tried to make concessions, save jobs, but few fought back. That led to enormous demoralization and a sense of hopelessness, which led to a poor public perception and a loss of confidence among members.

Discuss the problem of hopelessness and victimization:

- ❖ Hopeless workers rely on individualist solutions (work more overtime)
- ❖ Hopeless workers do not try to stand up and fight; why bother.
- ❖ Victims seek to blame instead of analyze, and fight back
- ❖ Opens door to corporate scapegoating (immigrants, welfare recipients...)
- ❖ Wisconsin is the answer to reviving hope: collective action demonstrating that we can make a difference.
- ❖ Labor needs to provide a vision of how things could be to inspire people to fight to get there and then provide leadership.

Short Instructor Comments: Global & Local responses

In recent years, however, we have seen workers' resistance begin to grow. In some cases, governments have been overthrown. What is happening?

Greed has no limits until it produces resistance and struggle—we are at that point!

4. Understanding Market Changes

Instructor comment: on changes in the organization of work. "We need to assess how markets have changed and undermined our power; how governments have worked to undermine unions; how workers have lost faith in collective action. It took labor a while to understand the degree to which change had occurred. Historically unions have lagged behind changes in the organization of production—but not forever!"

Activity 6

An interactive presentation on changes in work organization over time. Ask them how unions changed at each step of the production process change:

- ✓ From craft shops to factories; from home sewing to factories—
- ✓ Introduction of mass production, accompanied by mass migration and immigration
- ✓ Industrial Unions create internal markets
- ✓ Global competition breaks down internal markets, as cheaper labor competition increases
- ✓ Now global markets: no local or national identification, investment, concern.
- ✓ Look at how NAFTA worked and all free trade agreements

Cover how market changes required unions to change: look at trajectory from craft to mass to industrial to public sector to hybrid

Ironworkers/Carpenters/Electricians to miners, RR, garment to CIO to public sector: each under different attacks:

Some jobs are easily moved: get examples

Some jobs cannot be moved: get examples

With the growth of free trade, transnational corporations, and global financial institutions, unions **MUST** have a global perspective, connection, and action.

5. Let's look at a case in point: Cananea

a. Activity 7--Short presentation & film

Provide a short history of Los Mineros struggle from Pasta de Conchas, focus on union-busting, dehumanization & miserable safety & environmental conditions, globalization, and current stand off

Show video

Ask for responses. Then provide this list:

Here are a few steps the USW has taken in this situation:

- Send observer delegations
- Work through International Trade Union federations
- Bring workers here to speak
- Give financial and other support
- Merge into one union
- Hold protests here
- Send leaders to leadership functions and vice versa
- Days of Action internationally
- Push global safety enforcement

Here are some of the effects of international solidarity:

- Charges dropped against Napoleon
- Visibility
- Drop in arrests and harassment
- Attack on USW leader
- Discredit Supreme Court

4. Based on Cananea scenario

Activity 8: In groups of four: use your own locals and provide at least 2 answers to each question:

- how does this struggle affect us here?
- Why should we support it?
- How can we best get workers to support Los Mineros?
- What can we do concretely to support Los Mineros?

Instructions: As you debrief the questions above, stress the global market, shared environmental and safety hazards, importance of education and the importance of standing up to and fighting transnational corporations.

Instructor comment: "There are endless struggles that ask for our support. We know we cannot support every struggle equally. Once in a while, though, a struggle

takes on a symbolic and actual importance: focus clearly on safety, union recognition and bargaining rights, labor law violations. Unity, courage and perseverance of Mineros: equally model."

5. Next Steps

Instructor comment: Globalization in today's world is all about the elimination of national borders for purposes of trade and economics. Corporations are not national in scope nor accountable to any national government; they are trans-national. They avoid national regulation for any purposes and bow only to the WTO and its institutional support through loan organizations such as the World Bank, the IMF.

Activity 9: In groups of four, what does this change mean for our local unions concretely? What has to change and why?

- + Open union committees up
- + Increase delegation
- + Understand how the dots are connected
- + New Forms of organization
- + Increased focus on safety
- + Link workplace and environmental changes
- + Global links
- + How we organize
- + Coalitions
- + Workplace initiatives
- + Education, education, education

Instructor comment: There are huge protests of workers growing all over the world. We need to know about them and also support them as we would our own struggle, because it has become one under a global regimen of control.

On a 3x5 card: write down one thing you will do in support of Cananea when you go back to work. Go around the room and have each person state what is on their card, and then collect cards for follow up.

Discussion Curriculum (1 hour)

"Saving Jobs: A Global Challenge"

Ruth Needleman

Class Objective: Explain why U.S. workers should support labor globally.

Opening: How our own workplaces have changed.

Instructor comment: Open up with a short intro on how workplace changes have made workplaces lean and mean, according to the needs of global corporations. Then do a brainstorm to list all the ways their workplaces have changed. Develop a long list.

Activity 1: Brainstorm Changes

Then ask for some of the responses unions provided to these changes. Be sure they hit on concessions, two-tiered agreements, as well as strikes and campaigns.

Activity 2: Why did so many changes take place in the past 20 years?
Working in pairs, ask them to identify and explain at least 3 changes. Then collect a list. This list will focus on greed, power, money, globalization, decline in union power.

Short lecture: on globalization and what it has meant for workers everywhere: race to the bottom. NAFTA erased the borders between Mexico and the US and between Canada and the US. New trade agreements are making the market one continuous labor market from Sri Lanka to the US. Clearly unions have to re-organize as well to deal with these global institutions. Today we will deal with one close-to-home example:

Introduce the video on Cananea with some background.

Explain the impact of global solidarity on their struggle.

Then show the film.

Ask what struck them.

Then outline the many forms global solidarity has taken and what it has accomplished so far.

Activity 3: How does it affect you directly?

Have them provide examples but also make sure you cover the following:

- Downward pressure on wages
- Destruction of environment
- Competition leading to increased accidents and injuries
- Behavior based or blame-the-worker safety programs
- Contract changes to help employers
- More immigration
- Our tax money for federal police
- Environmental damage crossing the border
- Union busting mania
- Narco-trafficking goes unstoppable; deaths

Activity 4: One thing you will do to support Cananea.

Ask each person to write down one thing they could do back at their local to help build international solidarity. Ask groups of 2-3, to come up with more. Post them all, discuss and add.

The hand out a 3x5 card and ask each person to list 1 thing they will do and collect for follow up.



JOINT DECLARATION

THE UNITED STEELWORKERS (USW) AND THE NATIONAL UNION OF MINE, METAL, STEEL AND RELATED WORKERS OF THE MEXICAN REPUBLIC (SNTMMSSRM) JUNE 20, 2010

The United Steelworkers (USW) and the National Union of Mine, Metal, Steel and Related Workers of the Mexican Republic (SNTMMSSRM), known as Los Mineros, strongly condemn the cowardly and brutal attack by Mexican federal police on the striking mineworkers and their families at Cananea and on the family members of mineworkers at Pasta de Conchos on the night of June 6, 2010.

For five years, we have watched the Mexican Federal Government engage in a systematic campaign of political persecution against the National Union of Mine, Metal, Steel and Related Workers of the Mexican Republic and its elected leader, Napoleon Gomez Urrutia. This campaign has included beatings, assaults and the deaths of union members; false and unfounded criminal charges, a systematic campaign of defamation in the mass media, violations of trade union autonomy, strikebreaking, imposition of company-controlled protection unions, and industrial homicide due to health and safety violations.

The motive for this persecution is simple: Los Mineros have fought for and won real increases in wages and benefits that increase workers' purchasing power and offer them the hope of a better living standard for their children. It has won these improvements in both Mexican and multinational companies, through fair and honest bargaining and when necessary through the exercise of the right to strike.

Los Mineros' success in raising Mexican workers' wages threatens a fundamental policy of the Calderón government - a policy of keeping wages low and workers suppressed in order to attract foreign investment. This policy has generated great wealth for corporations, and great poverty for Mexican workers. To defend this policy, the Calderón government has violated basic worker rights to organize, to bargain collectively, and to strike - rights established in the Conventions of the ILO and other international human rights instruments that Mexico is legally bound to observe. Mexico is now a pariah in the international trade union movement.

Side Two – Joint Declaration by USW and SNTMMSSRM on June 20, 2010

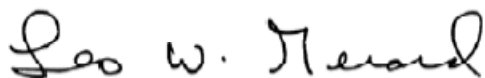
The USW and Los Mineros share common ideals and a common vision. We believe that respect for the democratic exercise of trade union rights is a prerequisite for genuine political democracy. We believe that the organized power of working men and women is necessary to check the avarice of corporations and political elites. We believe that only through the solidarity of organized workers around the world can we build a better future for all of our children.

Together, Los Mineros and the USW have put these shared values of democracy, equality, and solidarity into practice. On April 13, 2005, our organizations signed a Strategic Alliance in which we committed to building power by increasing communication, collaborative and coordination across our national borders. Today we take this alliance a step further. The USW and Los Mineros announce that we will form, with our Executive Boards' involvement, a joint commission to define the process of creating a unified North American organization as well as explore possible global unification representing one million workers in Mexico, Canada, the United States and the Caribbean.

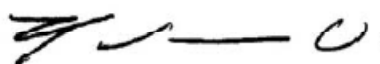
The commission comprises five members of the International Executive Board of the United Steelworkers and five members of the National Executive Committee of the National Union of Mine, Metal, Steel and Related Workers of the Mexican Republic. Its charge includes proposing immediate measures to increase strategic cooperation between our organizations as well as the steps required to form a unified organization.

Today Los Mineros and the USW renew our common commitment to democracy, equality, and solidarity for working men and women throughout North America and throughout the world. Together we will stand. Together we will fight. Together we will win.

Approved and executed in Toronto, June 20, 2010



Leo W. Gerard,
International President, USW



Napoleon Gomez Urrutia,
General Secretary, SNTMMSSRM



Mexican Government View

The following letter is a translation of the response to one delivered to the Mexican Consulate in Kansas City during the Mexico Days of Action Protests in February 2011 by a delegation of unions, NGOs and students. It is from Rafael Adrian Avante Juarez, B.S., General Director of Federal Labor Inspection, Secretary of Labor and Social Welfare (STPS). It provides a good summary of the Mexican Government's legal arguments on the Cananea strike and the prosecution of leaders of the national union, Los Mineros. It was translated by Karol Gil who says, "In Spanish formal written documents: paragraphs' first sentences go around the bushes all these to reach the important point in the last sentence of the paragraph which involves constant word repetition and unnecessary politeness that might not be good to effectively convey the message in an English document. For the English version, I tried my best to keep the verbatim translation. However, in some instances, I changed the order of the sentences and/or deleted word repetition so the letter's content flows nicely."

March 8, 2011

Regarding the letter received a couple of weeks ago that makes relative considerations on diverse facts about the situation on the mine of Cananea, Sonora, I comment the following:

At all moments, the Government of Mexico values the rule of law and enforces its respect. The Government of Mexico acts strictly adhered to the legal framework; at the same time, it promotes the respect of workers' rights by highlighting the importance of their unions' freedom and autonomy. The Government of Mexico does not prosecute, attack or infringe on anybody's rights, much less those of workers. On the contrary, it promotes programs that benefit Mexican workers and the development of their communities. In the following, we provide important and truthful information with the intention of clarifying a misinformed perception and, in this way, achieve a balanced understanding that assists interested parties in constructing an objective and just opinion.

It is false that the actions of the Mexican Government violate the human and labor rights of the miners and their families. Regarding the labor associations in the mine of Cananea, individual and collective labor relations have been legally terminated. This resolution was established in a binding decision on April 14, 2009 by the Federal Board of Conciliation and Arbitration (JFCA), a decision confirmed by the Electoral Tribunal of the Federal Judiciary on February 11, 2010. This institutional legal decision has been further supported by the National Supreme Court of Justice (SCJN) on April 21, 2010. The National Union of Miners, Metallurgic, Iron, and Similar Workers of the Mexican Republic (Miners' Union-SNTMMSRM) has utilized all the available legal resources to impugn the termination of the workers' relation in the mine of Cananea. The workers have not achieved any favorable decision due to their lack of reason. As a result, the resolution issued by the SCJN is definitive and irreversible.

Whereas the existence of the strike in the mine of Cananea is undeniable; in this sense, it is also true that such strike no longer existed once the individual and collective relations were legally terminated due to 'circumstances beyond control'. Such circumstances have not been ascribable to the employer, as established by the Federal Labor Law in Part I, Article 434. The employer has been placed on the referred situation based on a resolution established by the Mines' General Direction, a governmental agency dependent of the Secretary of Economy, which has determined the level of deterioration, vandalism, destruction, and pillage entailed on the mine's facilities.

Given the legal termination of the labor relations in the mine of Cananea through the accords reached on June 4, 2010, the JFCA ordered the removal of the collective contract. Consequently, the JFCA determined not to continue with the four pending procedures in regard to the strike. The JFCA resolved that the strike began by the SNTMMSRM on July 30, 2007 was no longer in effect.

In the arbitration award, the JFCA ordered Mexicana de Cananea, S.A. de C.V. to pay all former workers their corresponding compensation as stipulated in Federal Labor Law, Article 436. This compensation encompassed

three months of salaries plus a seniority premium that corresponds to a salary equal to twelve days of work for every year of service rendered by the worker. This salary remained independent of any offers made by the employer to the worker at the time of hiring. An increased amount under the concept of compensation is, in some instances, six times greater than established by the law, that is, according to the workers' collective contract.

Thus, because there was no legal justification to block the free transit of people and vehicles into the Cananea mining unit, the strikers were removed by the Federal Government—in a peaceful manner—to ensure access to the mine's facilities in June 2010. The police operation was carried out strictly according to the law, which fully respected the fundamental rights of the former workers found at the facility, resulting in neither casualties nor major incidents. It is worth noting that this action was performed with the support of the public police force. The operation derived from a petition put forward by the federal public prosecutor's office and the prosecutor's office of Sonora as well as the state government which made inquiry into possible illicit activity inside the mine.

After thirty months of strike, the federal and state governments, together with Mexicana de Cananea, S.A. de C.V., have reactivated the economy and generated employment in the affected localities. Within the framework of a community development program named "All for Cananea," these three parties initiated a series of measures that included the reconstruction of roads, the installation of water supplies, the hospital infrastructure strengthening, as well as the provision of labor training, assistance to find employment, and financing at preferential rates to support existent and new enterprises of medium and small size.

Multiple attempts at conciliation were made through the Secretary of Labor and Social Welfare; nonetheless, it is important to highlight that the Cananea strike did not present any form of viable solution. On the one side, the workers' demands regarding health and safety at the mine for which the strike began were never precise. The labor authority's application and the employer's offer to repair and satisfy the miners' demands were not sufficient. Conciliatory efforts resulted ineffective given that the miners' union always demanded before any viable resolution the payment of \$100 million for a supposed "moral damage," the withdrawal of various orders of apprehension, and the waiver of all the trials on charges against SNTMMSRM former general secretary, Napoleon Gomez Urrutia, based on the alleged misuse of \$55 million. A total of 6,464 miners have made claims for the return of this money that was improperly taken from the trust which was for the benefit of the workers, as has been pointed out to the miners.

At all moments, the Federal Government recognizes, respects, and insists on the legitimate right of workers to strike. The right to strike is seen as a mechanism to achieve equilibrium among the factors of production. Nonetheless, the Federal Government would never accept the utilization of these constitutional rights that the workers have to benefit the particular interests of a few and thus prejudicing legitimate collective rights and interests. Regarding these matters, the measures taken by the Secretary of Labor and Social Welfare have been responsible, transparent, and strictly adhere to the Mexican legal framework. In other words, the law has been applied and the resolution has been complied with by the federal judicial authorities.

Sincerely,

Rafael Adrian Avante Juarez, B.S.
ffernandez@stps.gob.mx
General Director of Federal Labor
Inspection
Secretary of Labor and Social
Provisioning (STPS)



NOTE: OUR GROUP SPENT 5 HOURS IN AN EXTENSIVE MINE TOUR AND SAW NO DAMAGE. TRUCK AT LEFT WITH KANSAS CITY CREW POSING TO SHOW SCALE WAS ON A ROCK HAULER LIKE THE ONE ABOVE.