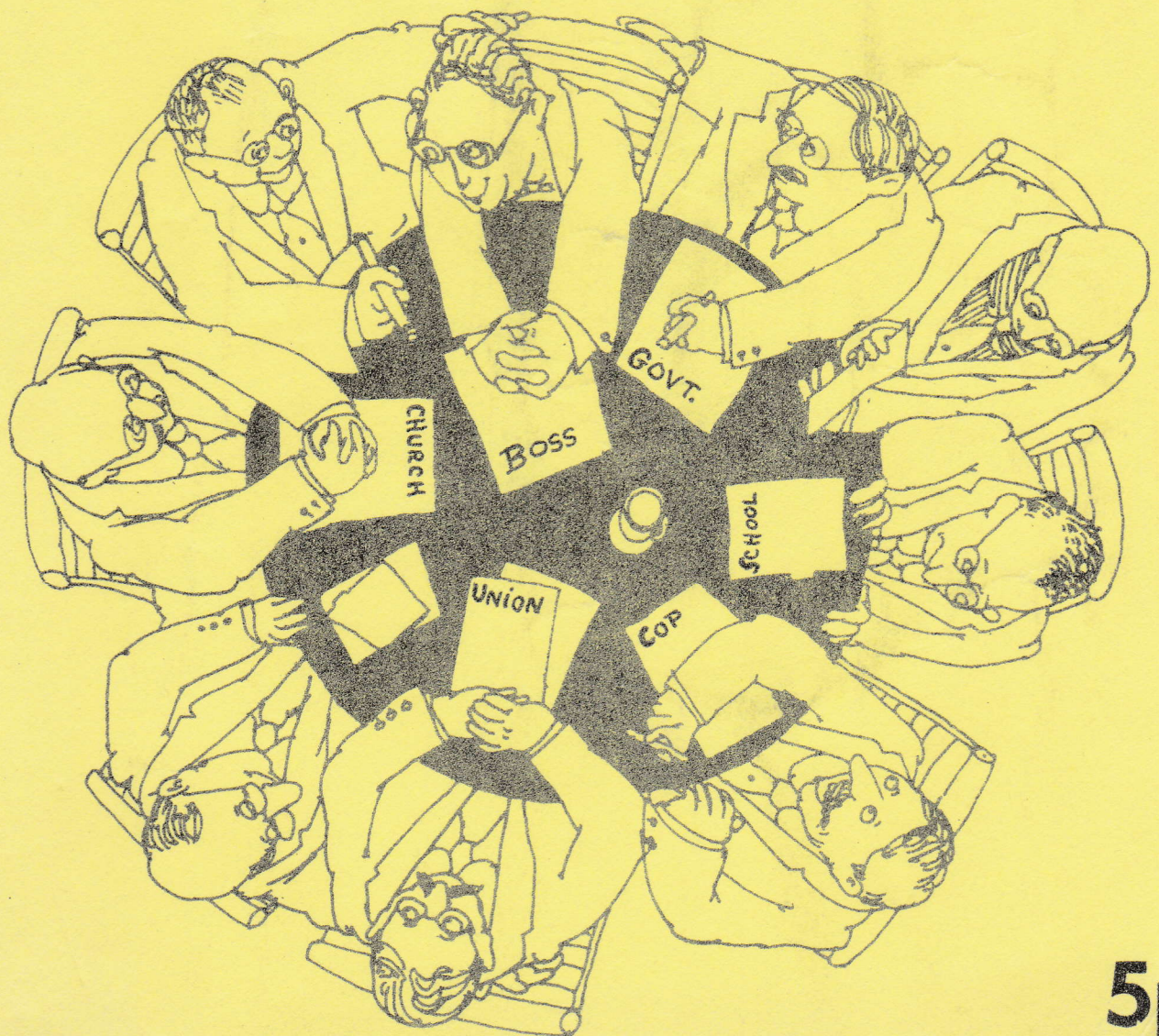


# SOLIDARITY MOTOR BULLETIN 2 U.A.W. SCAB UNION



# INTRODUCTION

This second issue of our Motor Bulletin deals with the U.A.W. This is not an academic exercise. We are not just out for as complete a coverage as possible of what is going on in the motor industry. Over and over again, here in Britain, we have seen militants taken in by the illusion that what they need is a single industrial union for the motor industry 'just like the U.A.W.'. The aim of this Bulletin is to show that rank-and-file car workers in Britain need something on the pattern of the U.A.W. about as much as they need a hole in the head.

What is wrong with the unions is that they act as middlemen in the labour market, collaborate with the boss, and are ruthlessly opposed to autonomous job organisation. This won't be improved by having only one large and even more powerful monolithic bureaucracy.

No trade union leadership, however 'left' it claims to be, can lead the working class into the promised land. Most don't even want to get there. Only the working class, self-organised at the place of work, deciding its own demands, and dominating its own struggles, will create the basis for the socialist society.

Yet year after year groups of militants in the motor industry 'rediscover' industrial unionism as the 'solution' to their problems. In the early 1960s it was to be the N.U.V.B. Subsequently there have been a couple of abortive attempts to create breakaway unions. The TGWU has recently been fishing in these murky waters.

Encouraged by TGWU officials some stewards have seen the Automotive Group of that union as an embryo U.A.W. Whether one was a member of the TGWU or not has, in some plants, become more important than whether one was a militant or not, or than one's political views. As far as job organisation goes the result has been completely divisive. And there is nothing surprising in this. It is in fact quite consistent: the role of bureaucracy everywhere is to divide man from man and worker from worker.

The record of the U.A.W. should be an object lesson. The fact that everyone is in a single bureaucratic set-up solves nothing. In fact it increases the power of the trade union bosses to smash or divide job organisation. It is no coincidence that all those who accept the fundamental division in society between rulers and ruled (although they may have differences as to who should do the ruling), and consequently the present system of organising production, all call for industrial unions. The Communist Party and the National Front, the Trots and the C.B.I., Tory, Labour and Liberal politicians all support industrial unions.

We are not for industrial unions. We are for strong, autonomous, politically conscious job organisation, linked industrially, nationally and internationally. The union bosses are barriers to such a development. If this Bulletin contributes to an understanding of this, it will have been well worth while.

## OTHER SOLIDARITY PAMPHLETS

THE GREAT FLINT SIT-DOWN STRIKE AGAINST GENERAL MOTORS 1936-37  
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MOTOR BULLETIN No.1. Ford struggle 1973: Amsterdam, Antwerp, Bordeaux, Cologne, Genk, Melbourne. The rank and file speaks to the rank and file.

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# LETTER TO BULLETIN READERS...

There was a good response to the first Motor Bulletin. Many new contacts have been made and it looks as if the project is going to get off the ground. To make sure this happens we need help from all our readers.

1. We need correspondents in more car plants, both in Britain and abroad. We want more contacts not just to improve our coverage but so that we can put militants who share common employers (or other problems) directly in touch with one another.

We are especially anxious to get in touch with more white collar workers in the motor industry. For far too long the bosses have been able to rely on the loyalty of this section. This situation has seldom been challenged by militants. We need to establish more substantial contact with these workers, not only because they are important in their own right, but for an ulterior motive. Our white collar workers could provide us, at times, with an essential early warning system of the plans of management. Documents welcome.

2. We need substantially to increase the circulation of the Bulletin. The first issue had a print of 1500 - we still have a few left. The Bulletin went into 50 separate car plants, throughout the world. It is being translated into several languages. But for the Bulletin to expand and reach new layers of militants we need far more people to take bundles for distribution inside the plants. Could readers who really want to help us please get in touch straight away.

3. The financing of the Bulletin is predominantly covered by voluntary contributions. The first issue more or less broke even. We received a number of donations, some of them from the most surprising sources. But to put the Bulletin on a firm and regular basis we badly need every penny we can get. So dig deep.

We plan for the first 3 issues to deal with important international developments. In this area there is little substantial information available to militants in Britain, although what happens abroad often points the way to future developments here. Hopefully the next Bulletin will deal with the motor industry in Sweden (we would welcome articles and information from our Swedish readers). 'Job enrichment' (the Swedish way) is all the rage in certain circles. The next Bulletin will show that the aim of 'job enrichment' is boss enrichment.

The only way this Bulletin is going to develop a life of its own is by the participation in our work of all our readers. We need information, documents, letters, criticisms, cartoons, and money. Please do what you can.

# TWO STRUGGLES AT CHRYSLER DETROIT

The Chrysler corporation was founded in 1925 and a few years later it amalgamated with Dodge. Since the 1950's it has been losing out in its competition with big brothers Ford and General Motors. In 1958 it lost its top direction when charges of corruption were brought against a number of senior Chrysler executives and its share of the US market slumped.

In the rapidly expanding international market it fared no better, managing only to pick up the fag ends left over by the big boys - the ailing Rootes group in Britain, and Simca which was doing no better in France. These acquisitions had the effect of draining financial reserves of the corporation, and making it more vulnerable.

Because of these problems Chryslers rate of capital investment has been low, and physical conditions within the plants has deteriorated. At the same time, pressures to increase productivity have been intense.\* John J Ricardo the new President of the Chrysler corporation was brought in specifically to cut costs and reduce the workforce. He was so brutal in his methods that in the corridors of power his nickname is 'the flamethrower'.

Ricardo visited Britain in the latter part of February 1974 and inspected the Chrysler plants in Coventry. We understand that the main purpose of the visit was to discuss methods of 'dealing with the labour relations situation'. On past form this bodes ill for Chrysler workers. (Perhaps it's time for foremen at Stoke and Linwood to start equipping themselves with bullet-proof vests).

It follows then, from the above, that it is no coincidence that many of the sharpest struggles in the auto industry have taken place at the Chrysler plants, in this country and in the US. What follows is an account of two recent struggles in the US.

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\* As always the poor foremen have taken the brunt of this increased tension. For example, two foremen at Jefferson were shot and killed in separate incidents within a couple of months of each other at the end of 1973.

# JEFFERSON AVENUE

A very interesting series of events took place recently at Chrysler plants in Detroit. These struggles have a number of lessons, both positive and negative, for socialist industrial militants in Britain; for example, in relation to methods of struggle, the role of the union, and the politics of substitutionism.

At 6 a.m., July 24th, 1973, two young black workers, Isaac Shorter and Larry Carter from the body frame section of the Jefferson Avenue assembly plant, climbed over the top of a locked wire crib and shut off the electrical controls of a feeder line, and then secured the door with a length of cable while they remained in occupation. 5,000 workers were made idle. The two workers were protesting over a white foreman who 'harrassed and used racially demeaning language' but the real issues were much deeper.

Shorter and Carter were not in any political group, although they were associated with the United Justice Caucus inside the Jefferson Avenue plant. There had been quite extensive preparation for the sit-in in the framing shop. Discussions, and small walkouts, even petitions, the action itself was just the culmination of the process. This was in marked contrast to what happened at Mack Avenue later, which was simply a one-off coup.

By his own account (see Detroit Free Press 27.7.73) Woolsey, the supervisor involved, was a real teararse. As his first act he had removed the benches on which the workers sat near the track. When he started in the body frame section he had found that his particular line 'was loosing 90 minutes a day - line stoppages, maintenance problems, people stopping the line for repair, stopping the line for the hell of it, absenteeism.'

'We improved absenteeism; frankly, we got rid of some people. There's a great deal of pressure on, maintaining product quality, productivity. And we were up to the production amount for the first time in a long time - we'd just brought the framing department up to schedule.'

'The men considered the down time as part of their time off - to sit on their ass'. The much beloved Woolsey's solution to this was to find workers other jobs to keep them busy whenever the track was stopped. It was against this background that the struggle should be seen. It should be no surprise that 214 of 300 workers in Woolsey's department had previously signed a petition asking for him to be removed.

Meanwhile back at the crib management made several increasingly frantic attempts to get Shorter and Carter out. They nervously tried to cut the cable with a welding torch, but Shorter put his hands on the cable and they had to give up as by this time more and more workers were gathering around, and one slight singe and lynching would have been back in fashion. Meanwhile other workers pushed heavy duty chains and locks through to the besieged men.

The UAW committee men at the plant then tried to persuade the men to come out. Shorter later commented: 'I thought they were plant managers of Chrysler corporation.... we know the role the union plays - they sell out.... they go behind closed doors and sell us out, they represent the interests of the corporation, not us.' (Detroit Free Press 30.7.73.) Meanwhile more and more workers, peaking at about 1,000 and never less than 250, gathered around and were obviously prepared to protect the two men, by force if necessary.

After a 13 hour long sit-in the management cracked and gave in completely. Woolsey was instantly sacked for 'violating company personnel policies' and Shorter and Carter were granted total amnesty. They were carried from the plant shoulder high.

Reaction to the victory were interesting. The liberal Detroit Free Press put the situation clearly in an editorial on the Jefferson Avenue conflict. It wrote on July 30, 1973:

'Thus, the union, being one of the major institutional partners in the present system, finds that Chrysler's submission to the demands for the firing of a supervisor, obviously under duress and as a result of the irregular action of two individuals, is a threat to the union as much as to the company.'

The subsequent actions of the UAW and the Chrysler corporation made it clear that they had absorbed the lessons of the Jefferson struggle.

Among workers too, the results of the Jefferson sit-in had a big impact. The news travelled fast. One month later the next round came.

## MACK AVENUE

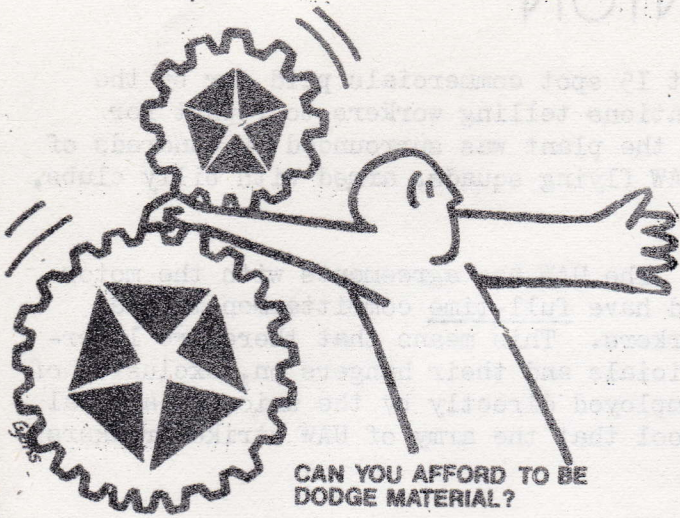
The Chrysler Mack Avenue plant is situated in the middle of the black ghetto and 80% of its workers are black. It employs about 4,500 workers and working conditions are very bad. The plant and the equipment are run down. This year the plant was flooded several times because of leaking roofs. The accident rate is appalling. Some examples of the accidents in the few months leading up to the struggle:

'A diesetter was killed, his head cut in half, when he was fixing a die. The bolster plate broke because of too much pressure from the slugs (scrap) cut in the die. If the foreman had made sure that his floorman had cleaned out the dies, it wouldn't have happened. Diesetters had argued for such maintenance for months before the "accident".'

A woman lost two fingers due to a defective press on which there were no buttons, no guards and no warning markings of any kind.

A machine repairman got both legs crushed by a load of steel which fell on him. The foreman hadn't bothered to place the steel

UAW SCAB UNION



properly - although he knew perfectly well what could happen with a load of unbalanced steel, and even though workers had pointed out that the load was unbalanced.

Another worker had his hand cut off when a press "repeated" on it. This time, they couldn't even get the press off his hand! The machine had to repeat again in order to release the mangled remains of the brother's hand.'

- Workers Power I.9.73.

And these accidents were combined with a brutal speed-up.

Early in August a number of workers were sacked, mostly for not achieving production standards; on Tuesday, August 14, Bill Gillbreth, a member of the Workers Action Movement (WAM), a front of the Stalinist Progressive Labour Party (PL), who had been sacked went into work, to his work station in the welding section of department 9780, sat on the track and said no one else was going to do his job. Production stopped.

The supervisor called the plant guards out to evict Gillbreth. The captain of the guards, a black named Prince, grabbed Gilbreth by the collar and started to drag him away. Another worker hit Prince with an iron pipe and he went down in a pool of blood (he needed 16 stitches). He was promptly joined on the floor by another laid out factory guard.

News travelled fast and workers rushed to the scene to give support. At the same time the UAW shop chairman and committeemen, who are all full-time, were asked to help and they refused.

The police were called, but by this time several hundred workers had gathered and were ready for a fight and with the awful example of the black Prince before them they retired gracefully.

The sit-in continued with gradually dwindling numbers until only about 14 workers were left. The company was reluctant to call in the police again but the UAW leadership was demanding that they should be used.

At 10.30 a.m. on August 15 after the sit-in had lasted 30 hours hundreds of police arrived. There was no struggle and they arrested a couple of the "leaders", and evicted the rest. Immediately following the police action there was a meeting at the local union hall at which about 250 workers were present. A local official, Joe Zappa, put the bureaucrats position clearly: '... don't forget in this UAW the membership is nothing without the leadership. You can't do anything without us.' He was shouted down from the platform. And there was a unanimous vote for strike action to start next day.



# U.A.W.: SCAB UNION

Next morning on Thursday August 15 spot commercials paid for by the UAW appeared on local TV and radio stations telling workers to report for work "as normal". Starting at 5 a.m. the plant was surrounded by hundreds of cops and about 1,000 members of the UAW flying squads, armed with billy clubs, baseball bats and even guns.\*

Where did these men come from? The UAW has agreements with the motor manufacturers in the US that it should have full-time committeemen in the plants in the ration of one to 250 workers. This means that there are literally thousands of these full time officials and their hangers on, exclusive of the liberal number of the officials employed directly by the union at a local or national level. It is from this pool that the army of UAW strike-breakers came.

Those strike pickets that turned up were attacked and in some cases brutally beaten-up. As one eye-witness worker at Mack Avenue reported: 'It was really sickening to see 5 or 6 big men beating up a smaller worker. A woman went to try to stop them and she kicked them. They tore most of the top of her blouse off. Some of the local leaders just stood there and watched the beating.' (News and Letters Aug-Sept., 1973)\*\*

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\* We understand there is no foundation in the rumour that certain convenors and senior stewards at Ford Halewood are to be presented with inscribed baseball bats.

\*\* What happened at Mack Avenue was an extreme case, but it was very far from being unique. The use of the UAW goons has been an increasingly common occurrence. To give just two cases: At the General Motors plant at St. Louis in late 1972 members of the local rank and file caucus were set upon on three separate occasions by a gang of 20 labour statesmen, and a socialist selling papers was badly beaten with a lead pipe.

In August 1973, officials of Local 3 of the UAW assaulted socialist leafletters at Chryslers Hamtrank assembly plant. Eventually several dozen workers from within the plant turned out to protect the leafletters, and the bureaucrats quietly disappeared.

The significance of these attacks of paper sellers and leafletters is that leafletting is one of the very few ways that either political or in-plant groups can make their views known to the mass of the workers. There are many parallels to the actions of the UAW - for example, the Stalinist CGT in France is notorious for its physical assault on leafletters outside factories.

The strike was broken. The price of defeat was heavy. The company sacked everyone they could identify involved in the sit-in, attempted picketing or who just happened to be watching. About 70 workers got the bullet. A week later Isaac Shorter, leader of the Jefferson Avenue sit-in was also fired, which illustrates the way struggles in the motor industry are inter-related. The gains at Jefferson Avenue were thus nullified by the disastrous defeat at Mack Avenue.

'I am glad we're on the same side'. (Inspector Joseph Areeda, Commander of 5th Police Precinct, talking to UAW officials at Mack Avenue, August 16.) Fifth Estate,  
1.9.73.

'Those aren't union goons, those are labour statesmen'. (Chrysler official, talking about the UAW Mack Avenue strike-breakers.)

Newsweek, 3.9.73.

## W.A.M.

A significant aspect of what happened was the elitist and manipulative role of W.A.M. The decision to have the sit-in was taken at a private P.L./W.A.M. meeting two days before it started. The workers were not consulted. Once the sit-in began, P.L./W.A.M. played it for all it was worth to them. While workers inside the plant were advised not to speak to the media, P.L. members who didn't even work at Mack were telling the press about how the struggle was led and organised by P.L. This contributed to the isolation of the struggle.

The workers who had rightly defended their workmates had laid their jobs on the line and lost. W.A.M. was racking up the situation. With only 14 workers left in the sit-in they were still calling for barricades to be set up.

The result at Mack was deep damage to job organisation. As one worker put it:

'Many of us are also mad as hell with this young peoples' organisation called W.A.M. or P.L. We do have many serious grievances, and we have always had wildcat strikes at Mack, but for this W.A.M. to say that it was all their doing - their plan - and then rush in there to be the leaders of the workers and to run up to TV cameras and reporters, this was the death-blow to the strike. It took the union and the company off the spot.'

What happened at Mack has much wider relevance. In recent years there has been a welcome turn towards working class struggle by the 'new socialist' movement. But the widespread confusion about ideas, for example about the

meaning of socialism and the means of achieving it, apply in the industrial field too. Nature abhors a vacuum in the field of ideas, as well as elsewhere, and in the absence of a thought out alternative the ideas of the traditional left tend to fill the void.

These ideas are that the working class can only achieve a trade union consciousness - its objective interests must therefore be represented by the revolutionary party, therefore the needs of the revolutionary organisation take precedence over those of the class. This is the ideological basis for much of the sort of substitutism of which the case of WAM is just an extreme example.

The idea that the working class cannot understand, and that what is necessary is for it to be mobilised, provoked or manipulated into taking action by the revolutionary elite is far more widespread than it first sight appears. Even "spontaneists" and some libertarians often implicitly share this sort of perspective. It is for this reason that we of Solidarity have always emphasised the need for clarity of political ideas - for example, about the content of socialism and how it can be achieved, because unless there is clarity on these questions, socialists can, and have, found themselves - albeit unconsciously - actually reinforcing the values of the system.

Fifth Estate (I.9.73) made a valid point in relation to Chrysler which has a much wider relevance:

'The real "radicals", the real threats to the UAW leadership and the companies, are not the wet-behind-the-ears SDS leftovers from Ann Arbor. They are autoworkers, both black and white, the 20-30 year-old Vietnam veterans who learned class oppression in the military and who realise that they are stuck in the plants until they retire. These workers are serious about changing the conditions in the plants. They view the UAW local and International officials as being part of the same machine as management.'

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Major sources of information for the article were:

News and Letters August - September 1973  
1900 E. Jefferson  
Detroit Mich. 48207

Workers Power September 1st, 1973  
14131 Woodward Ave.  
Highland Park, Mich. 48203

Fifth Estate September 1st, 1973  
4403 Second,  
Detroit Mich. 48201

Detroit Free Press various dates.

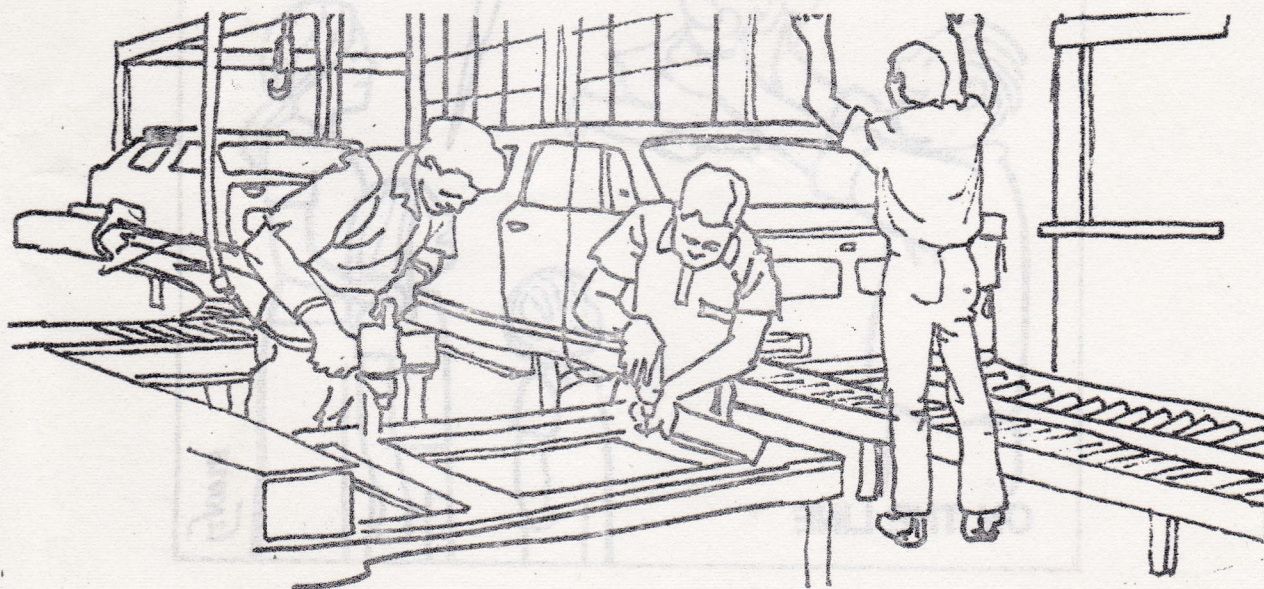
# THE NEW U.A.W. CONTRACTS

Towards the end of last year the three-year contracts between the U.A.W. and the big three motor manufacturers (G.M., Chrysler and Ford) came up for renegotiation. The year had been a boom time for the industry. Production had increased by about 15% over the previous year.

The main demand of rank and file workers was for an end to compulsory overtime. In the U.S. motor industry virtually unlimited compulsory overtime had been enshrined in previous contracts. Eleven hours a day were at times being worked on six or even seven days a week. Fairly large numbers of skilled workers were doing 84 hours a week. Such a system provides enormous savings for the boss in terms of fringe benefits and maximum use of facilities.

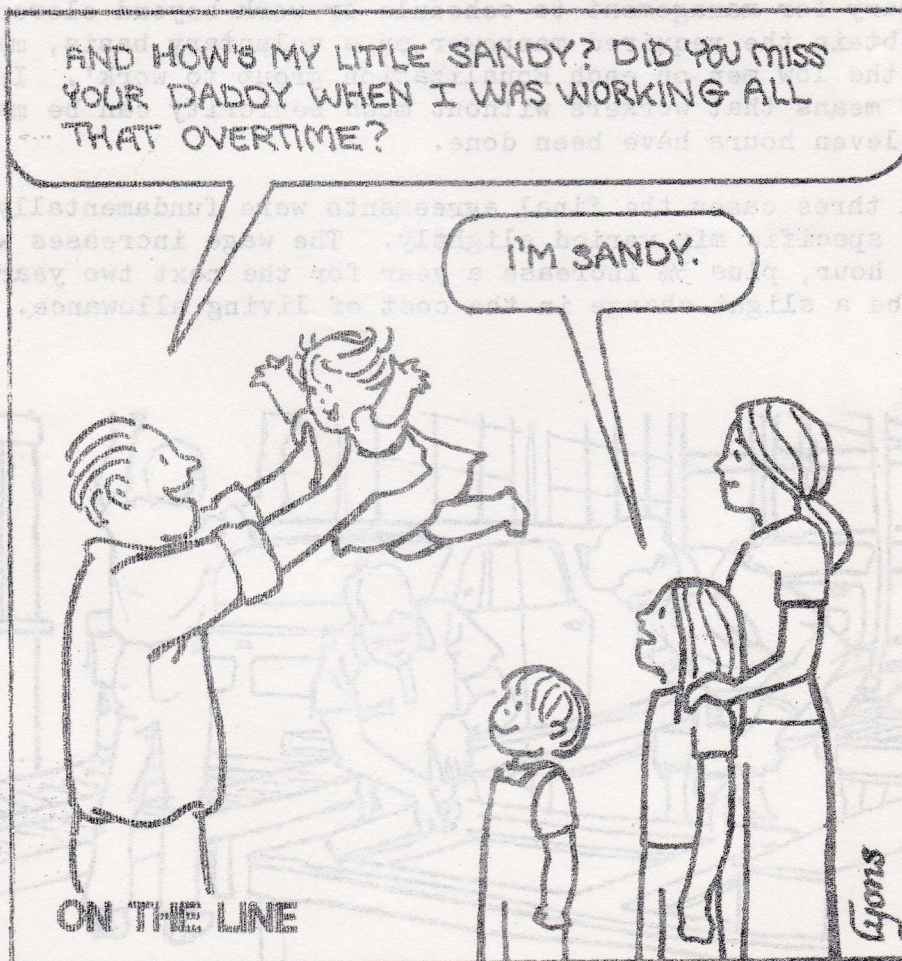
A typical local agreement (that at Lordstown, Ohio) stated that '... any hours beyond eleven will be on a voluntary basis. In the event that it is necessary for management to schedule or work beyond eleven hours and cannot obtain the required manpower on a voluntary basis, management can require the low men on each Equalization group to work'. In plain English this means that workers without much seniority can be made to work even after eleven hours have been done.

In all three cases the final agreements were fundamentally similar, although the specific mix varied slightly. The wage increases were about 25 cents per hour, plus 3% increase a year for the next two years. There was also to be a slight change in the cost of living allowance.



# THE CHRYSLER AGREEMENT

The first deal was the Chrysler agreement. 'Voluntary' overtime was to start after 9 hours, worked six days a week. There was a proviso that if a worker got permission he could have every third saturday off. In other words the men worked a potential (and often an actual) working week of 54 hours. On top of this, Chrysler could unilaterally designate a plant as 'critical' and exempt from the voluntary overtime provisions. This option was renewable. Moreover voluntary overtime did not apply for five weeks after a model change, or for one year after a plant had been opened or even rebuilt. To qualify for voluntary overtime a worker had to have a perfect attendance during the preceding week. If he had lost time, even from sickness, the could be required to work saturdays and sundays.

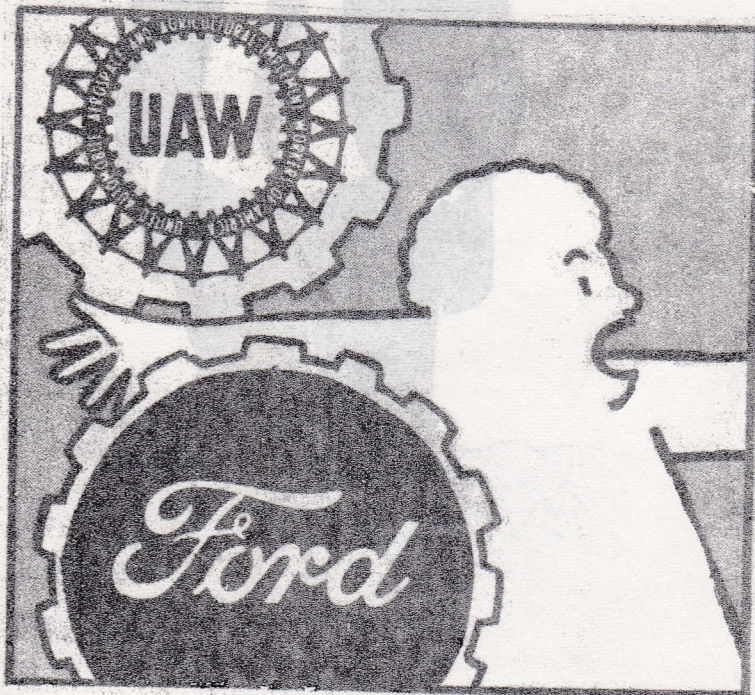


# THE FORD CONTRACT

On October 26 the U.A.W. signed an agreement with the Ford Motor Company covering assembly plants in the U.S. and Canada. The deal included two hours compulsory overtime for weekdays and 6 whole Saturdays a year. There was to be no restriction at all during model changeovers. This gave the Company 6 extra days of compulsory overtime. The Company could also declare an emergency at any time. Under these circumstances they would again be exempt from the compulsory overtime restrictions.

This agreement includes the following clause (the G.M. and Chrysler settlements are similar):

'Concerted Activity. Any right to decline daily overtime or Saturday or Sunday work that this Memorandum confers on any employee may be exercised only by each employee acting separately or individually, without collusion, conspiracy or agreement with, or the influence of, any other employee or the Union or pursuant to any other concerted action or decision. No employee shall seek by any means to cause or influence any other employee to decline to work overtime. Violation by any employee of the terms, purpose or intent of this paragraph shall, in addition to subjecting him to discipline, nullify for one month his right to decline overtime'.



This clause gave the Company another weapon to use against workers who wanted to change their working hours by acting together. It also aimed to prevent workers from using their individual right to refuse overtime in a collective way, as a weapon to fight for improvements on the job.

Canada's leading business paper, the Financial Post (10/11/1973) commented as follows on the overtime provisions:

'The limitation to 10 hours a day is meaningless... None of the Big Three is scheduling more than 10 hours a day for any one shift... The U.A.W. theoretically recovered this concession to Ford by allowing the company only six Saturdays a year of mandatory overtime. But this poses little hardship for management. Saturday overtime is much easier to schedule, and with workers striving to pick up crucial extra dollars which overtime has consistently given them, the likelihood is small that the company's requests for Saturday overtime will be turned down. Furthermore, the company can hold its six mandatory Saturdays as trump cards to play on critical weekends if the workers should ever prove (resistant) ... The real grief in compulsory overtime is the short notice given to workers for weekday overtime... The U.A.W. has made no dent on this problem at Ford'.

This shows once again the complete futility of expecting union leaderships to solve workers' problems for them. The right way to deal with compulsory overtime was shown by some Canadian Ford workers:

In the spring of 1969, rank and file workers at Ford Talbotville decided they wanted voluntary Saturday overtime, with no strings attached. On three consecutive Saturdays, a majority of them simply refused to show up for Saturday work. The first Saturday the company tried to keep up production with everyone from office staff to general foremen. But by the second Saturday, with 90% off work, they gave up. Every worker who didn't show up was called in for an interview. But the workers stood together solid - the company didn't dare discipline a single worker, and ever since Saturday overtime has been strictly voluntary.

As a Canadian Ford worker said: 'Whatever's on paper, if you get a majority of the workers who really want something, there's nothing the company can really do'.



# BULLET IN THE BALLOT

An interesting example of the upheavals caused by the agreements - and by the attempts by the U.A.W. to get them accepted - was seen at Dearborn in mid-November 1973. The skilled workers had voted overwhelmingly (4 to 1) against acceptance. The result was another ballot to get the 'right' result! Woodcock justified this by saying 'if they knew what was in the contract, they wouldn't vote it down'! At the second ballot the Black unit president David Mundy got into an argument with a Black skilled worker called William Harrell who had come to vote against the contract a second time. To settle the argument Mundy drew a gun and opened fire, shooting 4 times and wounding Harrell.

The background to the shoot-out is interesting. Mundy was a 'left' before the 1972 U.A.W. convention. He worked at the Ford Michigan Casting Center at Flat Rock. He was one of the first Blacks elected President of a Bargaining Unit. Just before the Convention he was a founder and leader of the League of Caucuses for Democracy in the U.A.W. This was a united front of various caucuses, including the U.N.C., and was supported by virtually the entire traditional left, i.e. by the C.P. and most of the various Trotskyists groups and Maoists.

The U.A.W. leadership was quick to find Mundy's price. He was appointed Sargeant-at-Arms, responsible for good order and discipline at the Convention, where his main role was supplying Woodcock and his cronies with glasses of water, etc. The League of Caucuses collapsed.\*

Reactions to the U.A.W. Ford contract by the British Ford National Shop Stewards Convenors' Committee (which is now hell-bent on achieving trade union respectability) were significant. In the February 1974 issue of their paper 'Ford Workers Bulletin' they had a completely uncritical report of the settlement at Ford in the U.S. This is in fact not at all unexpected, as the majority of the Convenors' Committee are apostles of industrial organisation on the pattern of the U.A.W. This is not surprising either, as these convenors would be the main beneficiaries of such a set-up. It is absolutely consistent that they should seek to hide the truly appalling character of the recent record of the U.A.W.

M. F.

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\* Presumably the basis of the later critique, by the various Bolshevik sects, of their protégé Mundy was chronological in character: Mundy hadn't waited for the Victory of the Party before shooting down dissident workers. In any case it seems that 'betrayals' by 'left wing' officials is not entirely a British phenomenon.



