GM SITDOWNERS WIN VITAL VICTOR
(IT HAPPENED JUST 20 YEARS AGO

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SPECIAL GM WORKERS ANNIVERSARY EDITION

The United Automobile Worker

INTERNATIONAL UNION, UNITED AUTOMOBILE, AIRCRAFT AND AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENT WORKERS OF AMERICA — UAW

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FLINT, Michigan—The news br here. It was relayed instantly to such tant points as Atlanta, Georgia, and Kan City, Missouri.

It sent thousands of General Mot workers sitting down in 17 GM plants nine towns to smuggled-in radio sets. Newscasters confirmed it. Then the news sent them into the street, cheering and rejoicing.

Wives, sons and daughters, parents heard the news and rushed out to join the celebration. Over their shoulders, they called out the good word:

"The Union's Won.

"GM's agreed to recognize the UAW."

On the face of it, that was all they had won. The contract, signed February 11, 1937, in Flint consisted of just one page.

Its chief provision was that GM agreed to recognize that the UAW had the right to bargain for such workers as were members of the Union.

FOR THIS, THOUSANDS FOUGHT

For this, more than a hundred thousand workers had either sat down in, or left, General Motors plants. For this, 14 strikers had been hospitalized with gunshot wounds. For this, hundreds of family men had risked being blacklisted, had even risked death.

The contract was nothing and everything. It didn't put a dime in your pocket, but it got the Union's foot in the door. It was hope. It was a chance. It was recognition of the fact that men had a right to form a union, and that union had the right to bargain for the men.

GM thought it was so important that just in the half-year before the strike started, it spent $994,855 on the espionage system it maintained in the plant, a network of Pinkertons and spies paid to infiltrate the Union and finger the leaders.

GM thought it was so important that it had Harry Anderson (he told the LaFollette Committee later) spend a fourth of his time administering this type of labor relations.

The GM sitdowns of 1936 and early 1937 were a part of a wave of sitdowns sweeping across America. But they were the biggest wave. When GM workers showed that their Union could make America's biggest corporation sit down and talk over wages and working conditions, the floodgates were opened.

This was the springboard, the key win—the vital victory that catapulted the UAW from nowhere to the forefront of the labor movement. Within seven months, the UAW, alone, cut another 400 companies down to human size.

To the workers who had endured the man-killing pace, the puny wages, the nagging uncertainty about being recalled to the job after the long layoffs, the contract was a miracle.

And it was.

It was a multi-billion-dollar miracle. Everything GM workers have nailed down in their contracts today stems directly from that one-page truce signed 20 years ago.

This special edition of *The United Automobile Worker* commemorates the anniversary of the first UAW-GM contract. It is devoted to looking back over a turbulent, almost incredible past—and to looking ahead.

It Happened Yesterday... Just Twenty Years Ago

YOU might say that it happened yesterday, 20 years ago. . . .

On February 11, 1937, Governor Frank Murphy of Michigan announced that an agreement had been reached between the United Automobile Workers of the CIO and the General Motors Corporation. The great sitdown strike that had brought the GM empire low had ended. So had an era in American labor history—and another era of growth and new beginnings opened.

The Auto Workers' victory of February 11, 1937, is greener now than the day the single sheet of paper was signed between the corporation heads and the leaders of UAW and CIO.

February 11, 1937, is celebrated every pay day in thousands of factories all over the United States and Canada.

Every pay and pension check, every sickness or accident benefit, every paid holiday or vacation, every shift premium is a reminder of the first agreement signed that happy February day of 1937 between GM and the UAW—and a tribute to the men and women who sat down or stood up in the long, cold winter of 1936-37 to bring democratic principles into the everyday life of the shops.

LABOR'S OWN FOURTH OF JULY

The men who were 30 years old on February 11, 1937, when General Motors staggered out of the dark ages to recognize the UAW-CIO, are now 50; the men who were 40 then are 60. Yet February 11, 1937, is as young as ever. For these men it is a date that belongs in the history books on the same page as the first Fourth of July.

February 11, 1937, slapped a rider on the declaration of July 4, 1776—bringing life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness up to date by awarding these privileges to wage earners as well as stockholders and boards of directors.

The historic agreement of February 11, 1937, had been long in preparation. Edward Levinson, in his book, "Labor on the March," wrote, "The strike of General Motors workers in January and February of 1937 was the most significant industrial battle since labor's defeat at Homestead."

STARTED BACK IN 1892

From 1892 until the auto workers cut General Motors down to bargaining size in 1937, the mass-production industries of America had been open-shop preserves of a high-handed and autocratic management.

The rules of the industrial road were set by management. The edicts went out from the top office and were applied by supervisors and foremen—and if the worker didn't like what he was told, he could drop dead.

After years of high-handed free-wheeling by employers, America skidded into a depression. Hunger, despair, and bitterness walked the land in 1930, 1931, 1932.

Some of the fellows who had been in the driver's seat threw themselves out of high windows. The working people of America had a more creative solution up their sleeves. They changed ideas and men in Washington. They opened a lot of doors and let in a lot of fresh air in the national and in state capitals.

Out of this political revolution of the early New Deal came legislation setting forth the workers' right to organize themselves into unions of their own choosing and to bargain with employers for higher wages and better working conditions.

The old idea was that the individual wage earner struck an individual bargain with the boss. It was an idea that had always worked well—for the boss, who could always find another worker.

YOU HAD TO UNITE

The new idea was that one worker didn't stand an economic chance against corporate giants like General Motors or U. S. Steel; that workers had to unite and confront the giants with their combined economic power.

The two ideas met head-on in the rubber and steel and auto towns beginning in 1935, when the Rubber Workers began organizing in Akron, Ohio.

The auto workers broke the back of the old idea with their victory over General Motors.

UAW had been a small union under the tutelage of the old AFL until April 26, 1936, when auto workers opened a convention in South Bend, Indiana, and took their fate into their own hands on the basis of a spanking new International Union Charter.

The old idea had no intention of dying easy. The Black Legion was active again in the auto towns, and respectable management men were not above undercover encouragement of these terrorists. Union halls were bombed. Some union pioneers were murdered by these native crackpot Fascists.

SLEEPING GIANT STIRS

Still, in 1936, the UAW began to take form. Independent unions, notably Chrysler and Hudson workers, joined. Separate auto locals in Flint and Pontiac united on a citywide basis. In June, the UAW Bendix local won a strike in South Bend. In October, UAW Dodge locals got seniority concessions by threatening a strike.

The time was ripe for a major test.

In November, 1936, Flint auto workers won a quick strike in Fisher Body Plant No. 1 and put out the first number of their own paper, "The Flint Auto Worker." Fisher Body workers in Atlanta, Georgia, went to work with union buttons on their shirts, were fired, and went on strike.

The UAW men in Atlanta called for a nationwide strike against General Motors, but top CIO leaders asked them to wait. They wouldn't have to wait long.

SITDOWN IN KANSAS CITY

Some 600 workers sat down in the Fisher Body plant in Kansas City after GM fired a unionist for leaping over the assembly line, something that had never bothered GM before CIO was born. GM betrayed its jumpiness by depriving the 600 workers of their Christmas bonus—$47 a man from the "GM Appreciation Fund."

GM, it was clear, didn't appreciate the new idea. A congressional investigating committee had just exposed a GM payment of almost a million dollars for private detective services in the first half of 1936. Expenditure of this sum was under the direct supervision of the GM executive in charge of "labor relations."

In December, 1936, GM's Vice President Knudsen, in a speech at the opening of a new GM plant in Cleveland, seemed to come out for collective bargaining.

On December 21, 1936, Knudsen got his chance to honor or eat his words, in the form of a telegram from UAW leaders asking for a collective bargaining conference. Detroit was in ferment. The strike victory at Midland Steel had drawn the auto workers closer together. The successful strike at Kelsey-Hayes was bringing new thousands of workers into the UAW.

Mr. Knudsen was in no hurry to make history. He ducked the challenge of the UAW telegram, told the auto workers to make their peace with local plant management. The GM appreciation fund was running low, and it wasn't even the night before Christmas.

DOWN IN CLEVELAND

Christmas, 1936, came and left without any noticeable rise in good will on the part of General Motors management, whereupon 7,000 workers of GM's Fisher Body plant in Cleveland hit the bricks. The Cleveland local of UAW sent Mr. Knudsen another message: no settlement in Cleveland until the blood of GM ran warm and human throughout all its scattered members.

Mr. Knudsen wasn't listening. His plant managers weren't listening. GM was a slumbering giant, strong in its sense of righteousness, deep in the dream of the old idea, deaf to the cries of the new idea in the plants and streets of the auto towns.

The night-shift men of Fisher Body No. 1 in Flint were responsible for the rude awakening. On the evening of December 30, 1936, they stopped a loading of dies that the Company had planned to ship to Grand Rapids and Pontiac for possible use in weaker union centers in the event of a strike in Flint.

The showdown that GM had been asking for was at hand. The boys at Fisher No. 1 locked the gates, posted guards in the clock houses, and proceeded to make history.

Progress by the Pound

Maybe you can weigh progress by the pound.

Twenty years ago today, one sheet, approximately a fourth of a pound, contained all the agreement that existed between GM and the Union.

Today, all the contracts currently in effect between the Corporation and the Union weigh 73 pounds. They include some 44,000 pages.

Placed one atop the other, these contracts would make a pile eight feet tall.

The one page has grown to 3 master agreements, 28 local wage and seniority supplements and a complete set of Pension-Insurance and Supplemental Unemployment Benefit supplemental agreements.

Practically every page and practically every ounce means something for GM workers that was scarcely dreamed of—just 20 years ago.

GM WORKERS HAD TO HIT THE BRICKS again in 1945. This was the picket line outside AC Spark Plug in Flint.

A Time to Remember

Anniversaries are occasions to remember—to remember people like Joe Sayen.

During the critical days of the Flint sitdowns, Joe was wherever there was trouble. At the height of the tear gas and police brutality, he served as part of the front line which held the plant.

Mounting a fence, he stopped to shout, "We have only one life to give for our Union." His cry became the battle cry of the Flint workers. It was the spirit which carried the day.

International Representative Joseph Sayen died late last year of a heart attack. A UAW staff member since 1938, he had spent his entire life organizing. He was still organizing virtually to the day he died.

This is a good time to remember workers like Joe Sayen.

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FRANK WINN, Editor

Eye-Witness Report

GM Guard Force Falls for UAW Feint; Sitdowners Quickly Occupy Chevvy No. 4

(Editor's Note: During the early days of the GM sitdown strike, the huge Flint Chevrolet plant was operating a few days a week. The strikers had no objection since no cars could be completed anyway. They even encouraged Chevvy workers to take advantage of this chance to make a few dollars. Unionists in the plant began to complain, however, that GM was singling them out for discharge. Roy and Walter Reuther met on the problem with Powers Hapgood, assigned to Flint by the CIO; Robert Travis, UAW organizer assigned to Flint, and Kermit Johnson, a leader of the Chevvy local. Together, they worked out a strategy which not only met this problem, but a lot of others. What follows is an eye-witness account of the tactic which turned the tide in favor of the Union.)

HERE'S HOW CHEVVY 4 SITDOWNERS greeted news of the first agreement between the UAW and GM. This was Flint on February 11, 1937.

By EDDIE LEVINSON

Demands for a sitdown strike in Chevrolet began to be heard. The strike leaders weighed the possibilities of success of a sitdown which in this case would mean capturing a plant. It would be a difficult task. The troops were still in the city and the strikers' ranks had scores of informers among them. Nevertheless, the strike strategists felt it would be a worthwhile effort. The strike was now more than a month old.

Capture of another huge plant would enthuse all the strikers and set at rest reports that their spirit was weakening. It might have a salutary effect on negotiations for a settlement which finally appeared to be getting under way in Detroit. There was also the consideration that it would be a practical demonstration, in the midst of the court proceedings, of the strikers' contempt for judge-made law and injunctions.

CHEVVY NO. 4 VITAL

With the increase of discharges at Chevrolet, UAW members insisted that they be allowed to make a counter attack. Travis, Hapgood, and the other leaders agreed. The problem of how to plan and then take over a large plant worth millions of dollars without betraying the preparations to GM spies required consummate strategy. . . . Travis, Hapgood, and Johnson were equal to it.

Of the several buildings which made up the Flint Chevrolet works, Plant No. 4, the motor-assembly division, was the most important. Should the Fisher 1 strikers be ousted, possession of Chevvy 4 would still prevent a single shiny Chevrolet from rolling out of any GM factory in the world.

The Chevrolet workers insisted Plant 4 was the ideal place to sit down. The strike leaders knew this to be true, but since the project had been discussed by a large committee, they felt it necessary to keep the details a secret until the plan was ready for execution.

Travis and Hapgood proposed that Chevrolet 9, a ball-bearing plant, was the one to be taken. The strikers set up a derisive howl. Ball-bearings could be gotten here, there, and everywhere, they said. It would do no good to take Chevvy 9, they argued hotly, sometimes with contempt for the ignorance of the outside organizers who presumed to tell GM workers that a ball-bearing plant was more important than a motor-assembly plant. The strike leaders stood their ground and their authority prevailed.

FIRST FEINT TO FISHER

Then came the problem of selecting a spy-proof committee which could be trusted with the truth, since their services would be needed at Chevvy 4. Each prospective committeeman was interviewed separately so that no striker knew what others had been considered for the task. Those appointed to the committee were ordered not to talk; those suspected and rejected were secretly and impressively told to proceed to Fisher 1, more than a mile away from Chevvy 4, on the afternoon of the projected plant capture.

Monday afternoon, several thousand strikers were in and near Pengelly Hall, the old three-story brick-and-wood structure which housed the union headquarters. By a prearranged plan, word came to the strikers that some of their number were being attacked outside of Chevvy 9. Led by Hapgood, Roy Reuther, and an inevitable soundtruck, the strikers proceeded to Plant 9, arriving at 3:30 p. m. at the change of the shifts.

Inside the ball-bearing plant, a group of unionists set up a shout for a sitdown strike. Warned by the false reports of informers, the plant management was fully prepared. The strikers in Chevvy 9, not one of the strongest union plants, staged a valiant battle for half an hour, many of them sustaining severe beatings from GM plant police, Flint detectives and other burly men who had been installed in the factory.

Tear gas was thrown by company guards and police. Outside, several score members of the Union's Emergency Brigade, made up exclusively of women and daughters of the strikers, smashed all windows within reach to permit air into the plant. Surround-

(Continued on Page 8)

About Eddie Levinson

Eddie Levinson saw the dramatic struggle through the eyes of a reporter. The NEW YORK POST assigned him to Flint for the duration of the sitdowns. He was one of the few newsmen with both the courage and the insight to tell the truth about the strike and with a paper behind him which would print the facts.

Eddie was so impressed by what he saw that two years later he quit the POST and cast his lot with the Union. He served as UAW Publicity Director from 1939 until his untimely death in 1945.

This report is an excerpt from his book, "Labor on the March." UAW members can obtain the entire book through the Union's Education Department for $1.50. The regular retail price is $3.50.

Cherishing Our Past, We Challenge the Future

FEBRUARY 11, 1937, marks the day that auto workers made history—American history—by bringing a measure of democracy into industry, where, before that time, there had been only the law and order imposed unilaterally by management.

We go forward remembering the past because the strength of our Union lies in our awareness of our beginnings. UAW was born in the shops and it lives there, no stronger and no better than the men and women who are its members.

The gains of today and tomorrow are the fruit of the courage, vision, and sacrifices of yesterday. The men and women who were "there" 20 years ago will remember. Younger men and women should ask themselves what it was like and open their minds and hearts to the meaning of those earlier years.

They teach, as well as any part of the human record, that better tomorrows will always be made out of struggle, out of those qualities of sacrifice, courage, and vision that made February 11, 1937, a historic date not only in UAW but in American history.

Walter P. Reuther

TIMES and men change, and it is good to remind ourselves, as we do in this 20th anniversary edition, of what it was like to be a General Motors worker just two decades ago.

The specific tasks of unionism evolve. The outward conditions of our lives are transformed. Fashions in clothes and cars and houses are different now—and we can say, with a degree of pardonable pride, that we have more of all of them now because of the UAW, along with greater protection against the hazards of life and a greater opportunity for our children to grow and learn and live.

Yet we have only to look back, as we do in these few pages, to remind ourselves that nobody handed us anything on a silver platter. And it's only a short step from that knowledge to the knowledge that no employer ever will.

That is why it is good to remember 1937. For under the outward differences there will always be a sameness. And out of the past there will always come a message that we can use to understand ourselves and the importance of our Union.

Leonard Woodcock

THIS WAS FLINT just 20 years ago. National Guardsmen man a machine gun aimed along a plant entrance. Sitdowners in Chevrolet No. 4 saw scenes like this. To build the Union, they had to face down the threat of machine guns.

ALSO THE FACE OF GM, was this grim Michigan trooper. GM tried hard to make him GM's private soldier.

TEAR GAS temporarily drove away some of the Union members outside the plant, but it failed to dislodge those inside the walls. This, too, was Flint in 1937. This, too, was the face of General Motors.

Eye-Witness Report

Thousands of March to Res

By EDDIE LEVINSON

On the day following the capture of Chevvy 4, J order directing the men to leave the Fisher Body plants ment for contempt and of having a fine of $15 million— the plants—levied against them. Sheriff Wolcott proce the order. A few strikers came to the door, dropped erected, and listened to the labored reading of the lega strikers permitted the sheriff to enter and stood about him in the cafeteria, gibing and assuming poses of mock seriousness while the recital was repeated. The order gave the strikers until three o'clock of the afternoon of February 3 to leave the factories.

The sit-down strikers called meetings in their plants on the evening before the ominous deadline. Seated on boxes, cans of paint, and kegs of nails, determined men in gray shirts, overalls, and work pants, all with loved ones at home, discussed a problem which they knew held life or death for some of them. The entire nation watched, fearing the bloodiest of industrial battles.

PREPARED TO DIE

It was obvious that only an army of sheriff's deputies and militiamen could enforce the court's ruling. In Fisher 2, surrounded by troops who barred all civilians from approaching, the sitters could not take counsel with their outside leaders. Nevertheless, the discussion in both plants was brief and arrived at unanimous conclusions. The decisions were conveyed to Governor Murphy in two telegrams.

"We, the workers in the plant," said the message sent by the strikers in Fisher 1, "are completely unarmed, and to send in the military, armed thugs and armed deputies . . . will mean a bloody massacre of the workers.

"We have carried on a stay-in strike over a month in order to make General Motors Corporation obey the law and engage in collective bargaining. . . . Unarmed as we are, the introduction of the militia, sheriffs, or police with murderous weapons will mean a blood bath of unarmed workers. . . . We have decided to stay in the plant. We have no illusions about the sacrifices which this decision will entail. We fully expect that if a violent effort is made to oust us many of us will be killed, and we take this means of making it known to our wives, to our children, to the people of the state of Michigan and the country that if this result follows from the attempt to eject us, you are the one who must be held responsible for our deaths."

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LABOR ON

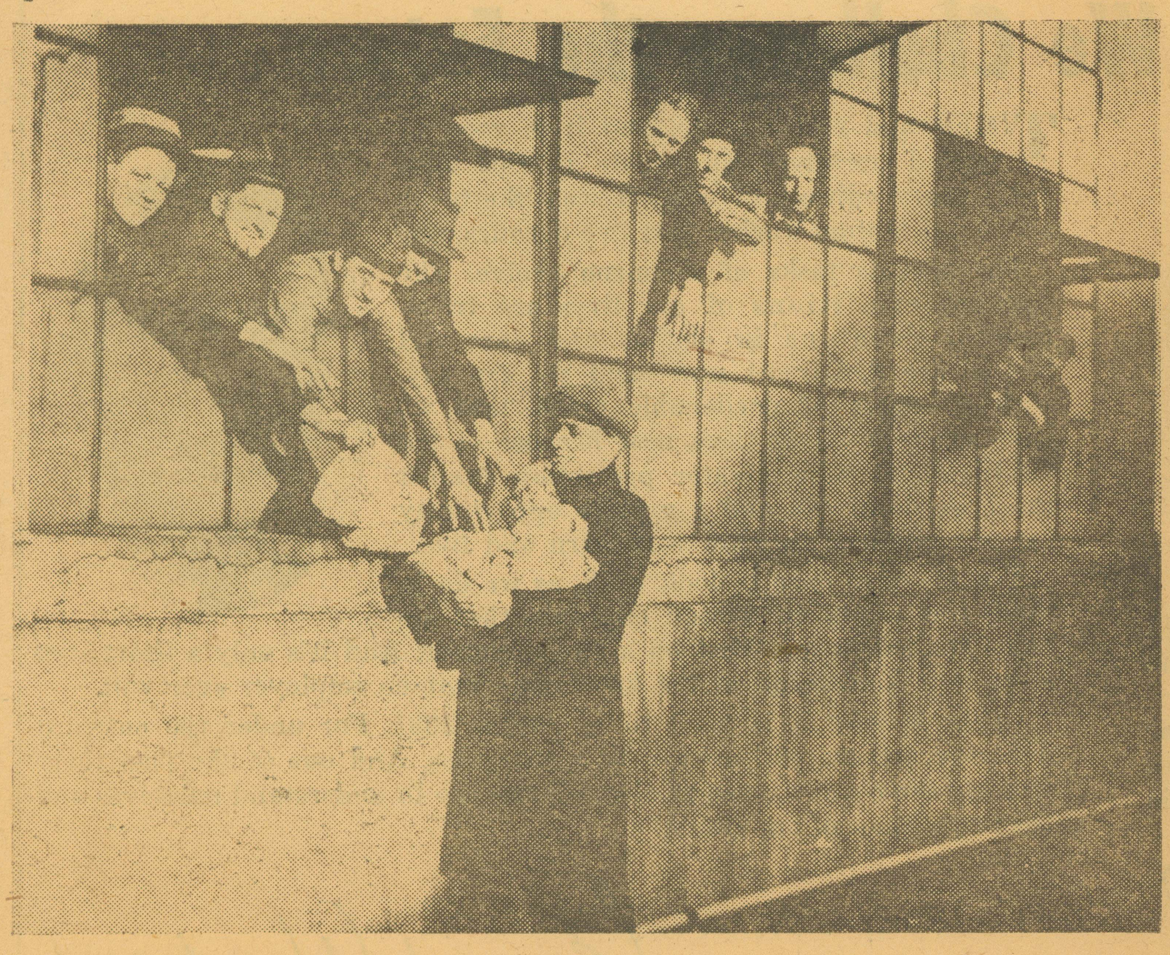
Into the ea plant executi ers, and Flint tent liquor in at the Durant sang the son them raucous, plants the str radios and ca and blackjac line technique waists.

Early mo day, the ro with striker some many sands of v among ther jaws to ta picket line noon deleg arrived in and trucks Toledo, and rubber wor the CIO.

Walter Reu of 500 strong Detroit. The troit also arr lanxes. Kelse waved aloft workers never three o'clock of almost 5,0 circled the la proach to Fish

An Americ sion, then can en's Emergenc green berets grim assembl ried clubs and crowbars, sto pipe.

A few ha



SOMEHOW FOOD always arrived even though GM tried to prevent it. These are sitdown strikers in Cleveland Fisher Body getting grub for the day. The same thing happened many times.

VIOLENCE LIKE THE ABOVE didn't happen often during the sitdowns, but the threat of it stayed with the men constantly. In Anderson, Indiana, pickets took a full dose of it when vigilantes modeled after the Flint Alliance drove away Union members and UAW organizers.

# of UAW Members Rescue GM Workers

VINSON

Like the story of the taking of Chevvy No. 4, this eye-witness account of the climax of the GM sit-down strike is taken from Eddie Levinson's book, "Labor on the March."

Chevvy 4, Judge Gadola signed an Body plants under pain of imprison- $15 million—the estimated value of Volcott proceeded to Plant 2 to read or, dropped a steel barrier they had g of the legal edict. At Fisher 1, the

The temperature was again near zero in Flint the next day, but the vision of thousands of strikers battling armed deputies and possibly the militia was colder still. There was the spirit of a zero hour before an army's charge into enemy territory. Hysteria, mixed with eager anticipation, was evident in some quarters.

LABOR ON THE MARCH

Into the early hours of the morning, plant executives, Flint Alliance leaders, and Flint police heads drank potent liquor in the exclusive Town Club at the Durant Hotel. Boisterously, they sang the songs of the strikers, giving them raucous, mocking accents. In the plants the strikers sat silently at their radios and card games. Wooden clubs and blackjacks produced with belting technique and speed hung at their waists.

Early morning of the ominous day, the roads to Flint were filled with strikers from near-by cities, some many miles away. Thousands of workers, many women among them, came with squared jaws to take their places on a picket line around Fisher 1. By noon delegations of workers had arrived in battered and new cars and trucks from Detroit, Lansing, Toledo, and Pontiac. Akron sent rubber workers, shock troops of the CIO.

Walter Reuther came at the head of 500 strong from the West Side of Detroit. The Dodge workers from Detroit also arrived in disciplined phalanxes. Kelsey-Hayes Wheel unionists waved aloft a banner, "Kelsey-Hayes workers never forget their friends." As three o'clock approached, a long train of almost 5,000 workers, two abreast, circled the lawn that fronted the approach to Fisher 1.

An American flag led the procession, then came members of the women's Emergency Brigades, their red and green berets the only color spots in a grim assembly. Men and women carried clubs and stout sticks; several had crowbars, stove pokers, and lengths of pipe.

A few had knocked the base off clothes-trees, and carried the poles, with metal hangers, on their shoulders. Like Minute Men of '76 and fully determined that their cause was righteous, they had seized whatever weapon lay at hand and rushed off to do battle. The constantly-arriving autoloads of workers soon blocked the street, and strikers, aided by sound-trucks, took over direction of traffic. Not a policeman was in sight. At the windows of the plant were the sit-down strikers, their number augmented from the usual 400 to almost 2,000.

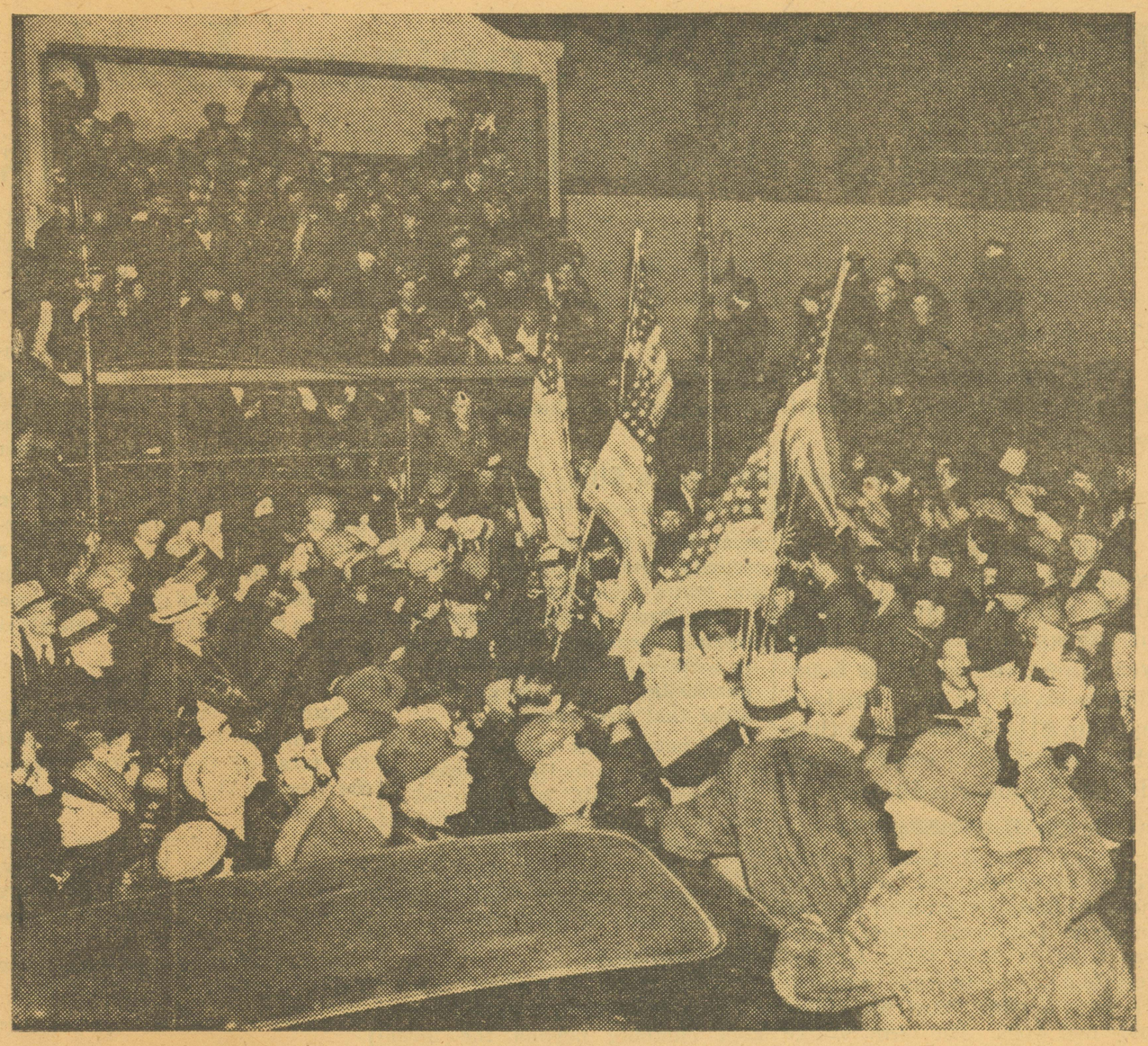
Strips of cheesecloth hung round their necks, ready for use as some slight protection against tear gas. Windows were barricaded by steel plate, pierced with holes for the nozzles of hoses which lay on the floors nearby.

A street valve that controlled the plant's water supply had been enclosed by a new wooden picket shanty. A special detail of strikers guarded the shanty. Inside were drums of gasoline, fuel for a protective wall of fire should an effort be made to capture the valve and cut off the plant's water system.

The zero hour at Fisher 2 and Chevvy 4 was far different. Here there were no crowds of cheering comrades, only a dreary, deserted broad street dotted with soldiers carrying muskets in a ceaseless patrol. The strikers at the windows of the plants displayed no outward reaction to the machine guns and 37-millimeter howitzers poised in the gutters. For hours, the Chevvy and Fisher strikers chanted back and forth, "Solidarity Forever, for the Union Makes Us Strong."

Thus the deadline passed. Governor Murphy, in Detroit, where he had finally prevailed upon Knudsen to meet with CIO President John L. Lewis, wired Sheriff Wolcott that he was to take no action. The sheriff, more than eager to comply, thereupon became a legal authority and asserted Judge Gadola's order was directed at the strikers alone and did not yet call upon him for enforcement.

GM attorneys raged at both the sheriff and the governor, but Flint's day of fear ended in nervous joy for the strikers.



ALL OF A SUDDEN IT WAS OVER. Workers rushed out of the plants and friends, relatives and newsmen rushed in to meet them when—on February 11, 1937—word came of the UAW-GM agreement. This was Chevvy No. 4.

SITDOWNERS CROWD one entrance to Chevvy No. 4 eager to get word to their families that they are still all right; hoping for last-minute news on developments.

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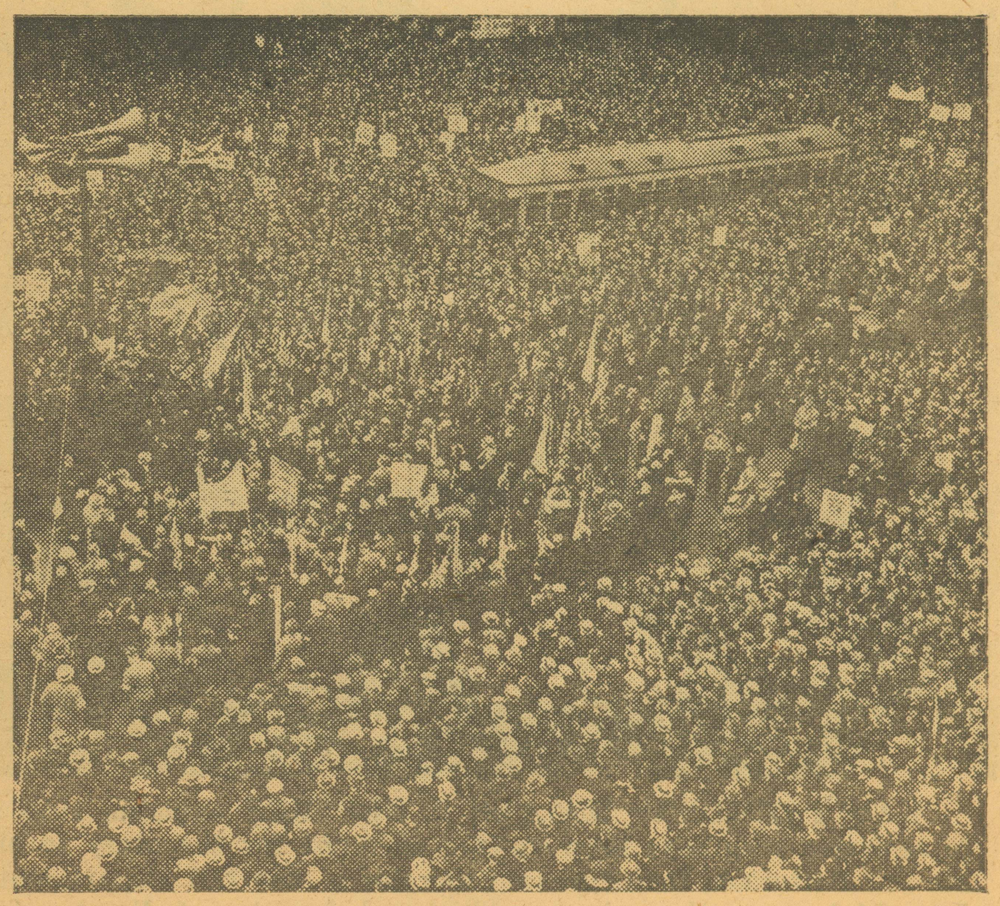
SITDOWNERS LIKE THESE did anything they could to pass the time. They played cards, listened to the radio, kept the plants policed. The hours dragged on, but discipline never broke down.



SOLIDARITY PROVIDED the victory margin in the end. Here's one sample, a portion of the 150,000 people who jammed Detroit's Cadillac Square to protest police attempts to evict workers inside those GM plants.

First UAW-GM Contract Leads To Full $10½ Billion in Benefits

That first contract, signed February 11, 1937, did not provide for so much as a penny in wages, but a month later GM came through with five cents across the board because of Union pressure. That was just the start.

Every contract signed since then has led to wage increases and other economic benefits for the tens of thousands of GM workers.

In a sense, that first agreement was a $10½ billion document.

That's the total value of the economic gains won by the UAW during the first 20 years of bargaining with GM. Last year alone, the economic benefits received by GM workers came to $1⅓ billion more than they would have received under pre-Union conditions.

NONE FROM GENEROSITY

No part of it came through GM's generosity. For years, GM never voluntarily granted a wage increase. Before the Union, workers tried to hold their families together on an average wage of 77 cents a hour. That was when they had work. The term "fringe benefits" hadn't even been invented yet.

In 1936, GM granted a nickel across the board in an effort to siphon off union support. It didn't work. It tried the same tactic early in 1937, but workers wanted more than nickels. They wanted security and inequities adjusted and hours regulated.

The flow of dollars from the world's wealthiest Corporation to workers in sore need of more purchasing power began just after that first contract.

GM never paid overtime—until it was forced to by Union pressure. That extra "half" of time and a half meant just $17 to the typical GM worker the first year, but it was a start. (In 1955, the typical GM worker received $265 in the premium part of overtime.)

EVER HIGHER

GM workers and their Union took it from there. While wages kept climbing beyond the level GM wanted them to climb, workers also kept winning new principles, new standards of justice on the job that cost money.

They won vacation pay, holiday pay, significant shift premiums, life insurance, sick and accident insurance, hospital and surgical insurance, items that not only improved a worker's standard of living but also cushioned the blows of adversity.

Pensions and Supplemental Unemployment Benefits (SUB) were the last two principles nailed down. Each principle won has meant a step upward in the ladder of economic security.

You can't put a price tag on seniority, on a grievance procedure, on the greater dignity a man has in the shop. Those items are priceless. But you CAN measure the economic benefits, all $10½ billion of them.

START COUNTING

Counting a dollar at a time, no man, in one lifetime, could count the total of the economic benefits won by the UAW in the past 20 years.

Eight men, counting a dollar every second for 16 hours a day, would have to count for 60 years just to reach the $10½ billion total.

And by that time, of course, the total would be way beyond that.

GM NEEDED A LOT OF CONVINCING so the Tool and Die workers shut 'er down again during July and August of 1939. The strike helped prove to GM that the Union was here to stay. Were the workers confident? Look at the grins on these strikers from Detroit's Local 235, Chevrolet Gear & Axle!

LIST OF HONOR

The three little words—"Shut 'er Down"—rang out in 17 plants in nine cities, not quite the entire GM chain but enough to halt effectively General Motors' production of passenger cars and trucks.

Here's the honor list, the places and the plants where GM workers sat down in late 1936 and early 1937. Workers in these plants pulled labor up by its bootstraps—by effectively utilizing the seat of their pants:

Anderson, Indiana	Guide Lamp
Atlanta, Georgia	Fisher Body
	Chevrolet
Kansas City, Missouri	Fisher Body
Cleveland, Ohio	Fisher Body
Janesville, Wisconsin	Chevrolet
	Fisher Body
Norwood, Ohio	Fisher Body
	Chevrolet
St. Louis, Missouri	Chevrolet
	Fisher Body
Toledo, Ohio	Chevrolet
Flint, Michigan	Fisher No. 1
	Fisher No. 2
	Chevrolet No. 4
Detroit, Michigan	Cadillac Motor
	Fleetwood Fisher

UAW PRESIDENT WALTER P. REUTHER explains 1955 settlement terms to newsmen who have been waiting all night for the story to break. Beside him are Pat Patterson, then assistant director of the GM Department (standing), and John Livingston, then vice president and department director (seated). At Reuther's right are Louis Seaton, GM industrial relations director, and Harry W. Anderson, GM vice president. Members of both negotiating teams stand behind the table.

Attempt to 'Starve 'Em Out' Fails; We Win 'Battle of Running Bulls'

The violence that was done in the 1937 strike of the GM workers was done by local police squads and vigilantes against the strikers. When attacked, notably in the "Battle of the Running Bulls" in Flint on January 11, 1937, the auto workers gave a good account of themselves, fighting back with anything they could lay their hands on.

In the afternoon of that particular day, Flint police moved on Fisher 2 and announced that there would be no more shipments of food to the strikers in the plant. Some strikers outside pushed a ladder against the side of the plant to get food in through a window.

HEAT CUT OFF

Police knocked the ladder down. Inside the plant, the temperature had dropped. GM had shut off the heat. It looked as if the Corporation was hurrying to settle the strike in the old-fashioned way before Governor Murphy put together the terms of a truce.

Suppertime came but no supper. If Fisher 2 was starved and frozen out, Fisher 1 would get the same business. The strike would be broken and Vice President Knudsen would be free again to go around making speeches in favor of what he called collective bargaining, while local plant managers tossed union committees out of their offices.

A UAW sound truck drove up and came to a halt in front of Fisher 2 and a squad of strikers posted themselves around it. Victor Reuther, the man inside the truck, asked the police to let food into the plant. His voice rang out and died on the cold air.

COLD AND HUNGER

The voice inside the truck reminded the police that they were workers, too. They didn't seem to believe it.

The men inside the plant were cold and hungry. The police still surrounded the entrance, billies in hand. The strike was being broken there in front of Fisher 2, broken by cold and hunger.

It couldn't be allowed to happen. Pickets moved on the entrance, the cops were swept away. The doors were opened and food was hurried into the plant.

More police came back later, carrying clubs and tear gas guns and shot guns. And they went into action against the strikers. The strikers fought back, with sticks, lengths of pipe, bottles, automobile door hinges, water hoses, anything they could reach and throw.

The sheriff drove up in his car and the pickets turned it over. Three other police cars got the same treatment. The UAW sound truck stood there in the thick of the melee, surrounded by a wall of strikers, shouting encouragement and warnings to the embattled men.

GUARD MOVES IN

The police ranks broke after several hours of fighting, then formed and came on again, only to be broken again by the rain of water and door hinges.

The next day 1,500 national guardsmen were in Flint and 14 workers were in the hospital with gun wounds. And the strikers were still in the plants.

When Governor Murphy's truce of January 15 collapsed, UAW strikers at the Guide Lamp plant in Anderson, Indiana, found themselves on the receiving end of police brutality. Vigilantes spread ruin in the local union hall and police ripped into picket huts.

UAW and CIO organizers were beaten up and driven out of Bay City and Saginaw. Pushed into a cab and followed as far as Flint by the vigilantes, they were forced off the road at the city's outskirts and one of them, Tony Federoff, had the top of his head torn away. Three more of them went to the hospital badly hurt.

It was too bad Mr. Knudsen didn't have a sound truck. Nobody on his side of the argument seemed to have heard him when he said he believed in collective bargaining.

Listen to Guy Nunn over the UAW's "Eye Opener" National Radio Network every morning for news—music—shop talk.

Economic Gains Worth $35,000 To Typical GM 20-Year Man

GM economic benefits have increased as much as GM horsepower in the past 20 years.

The car has a lot more git up 'n' go than it had in 1937, and, thanks to the Union, so has the paycheck.

That pre-Union paycheck was a real klunker. For each hour worked, the average GM worker received 77 cents. There were no fringe benefits. Today, he gets $2.67. He receives an average wage of $2.27 an hour plus fringe benefits costing another 40 cents.

The $2.27 has come about through yearly wage increases and through cost-of-living increases. The C-O-L escalator alone has added 32 cents an hour for each hour worked.

FRINGE REVOLUTION

The fringes represent a real revolution. In 20 years, auto workers have risen from the least secure industrial workers in America to the most.

In place of nothing, they have a measure of protection against almost any adversity. Those fired up fringes give a man a real insurance program: hospital, surgical, life, sick and accident, pensions—many well over $200 a month—paid vacations and holidays, a shift premium and the added protection against layoffs the SUB provides.

The economic gains have meant a revolution in living standards. The term "industrial slums" no longer applies to GM towns. Workers live on Main Street. Many own or are buying their homes.

But progress, after all, has to be viewed in terms of individuals. What has the union meant to the man or woman who has been with GM all those 20 years?

$35,000 RICHER

In the two decades, the average GM 20-year man has received Union-won benefits worth a total of more than $35,000. His wage increases, holiday pay and vacation pay have brought him over $31,000 more than he would have received at the pre-Union wage level. He has received over $2,000 in the premium part of overtime pay. The cost of his equity in the pension, insurance and SUB programs also is more than $2,000.

Last year alone, his holiday pay was $124 and his vacation pay, $270. If he worked the second shift, he got another $222; the third, $444.

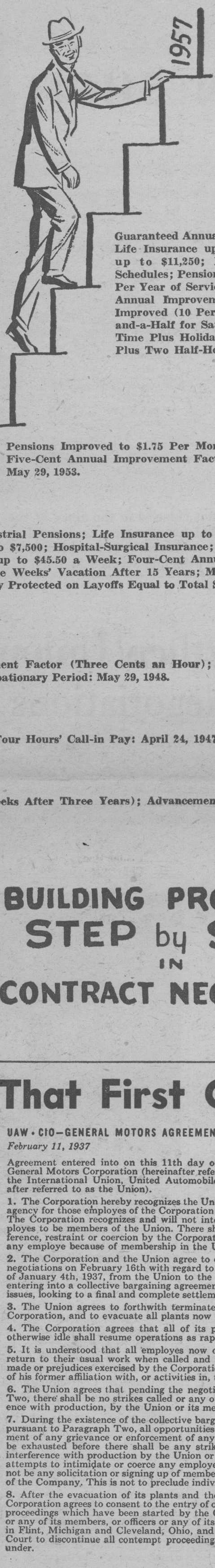
This doesn't include several thousand dollars worth of insurance, and his equity in the pension and SUB funds.

To the 20-year man, the UAW has meant that he had a job after he was 40, that he had protection against the costs of illness and accidents and that his old age is secured through a pension.

SECURITY TOP GAIN

Ask 100 workers what the Union means to them, and 90 of them will place wages pretty far down on the list. Nearly all will place "security" in the top spot.

For the details in building ever greater security into UAW-GM contracts, check out the ladder at the right.



Guaranteed Annual Wage Principle Established; Life Insurance up to $7,500, Accidental Death up to $11,250; Improved Hospital-Surgical Schedules; Pensions Improved ($2.25 Per Month Per Year of Service); Six-Cent or 2½ Per Cent Annual Improvement Factor; Shift Premium Improved (10 Per Cent on Third Shift); Time-and-a-Half for Saturday Work as Such; Double Time Plus Holiday Pay; Full Union Shop; Six Plus Two Half-Holidays: May 29, 1955.

Pensions Improved to $1.75 Per Month Per Year of Service; Five-Cent Annual Improvement Factor; Improved Escalator: May 29, 1953.

Industrial Pensions; Life Insurance up to $5,000, Accidental Death up to $7,500; Hospital-Surgical Insurance; Sick and Accident Benefits up to $45.50 a Week; Four-Cent Annual Improvement Factor; Three Weeks' Vacation After 15 Years; Modified Union Shop; Seniority Protected on Layoffs Equal to Total Seniority: May 29, 1950.

Annual Improvement Factor (Three Cents an Hour); Cost-of-Living Escalator; 90-Day Probationary Period: May 29, 1948.

Six Paid Holidays; Four Hours' Call-in Pay: April 24, 1947.

Vacation Pay Bettered (1½ Weeks After Three Years); Advancement by Seniority; Dues Checkoff: March 19, 1946.

Smoking Privileges; Shift Premium Improved (7½ Per Cent for Third Shift); In-Plant Investigation by Union Representatives: April 16, 1945.

Equal Pay for Equal Work; 80 Hours' Vacation Pay After Five Years; Three Hours' Call-in Pay; Maintenance of Membership: October 19, 1942.

Equalization of Overtime: June 3, 1941.

Time-and-a-Half for Work over 40 Hours a Week and over Eight Hours a Day; Five Per Cent Shift Premium; 40 Hours' Vacation Pay; Umpire System Started; 24-Months' Seniority Protection During Layoffs; UAW Recognized as Sole Bargaining Agent; First Anti-Discrimination Clause: June 24, 1940.

Time-and-a-Half for Saturday Work Over 40 Hours; Double Time for Sunday Work; Two Hours' Call-in Pay: August 3, 1939.

Seniority Rights on Layoff and Recall; Grievance Procedure; Six-Months' Probationary Period; Shop Committees Recognized: March 12, 1937.

Union Recognition: February 11, 1937.

BUILDING PROGRESS STEP by STEP IN CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

That First Contract

UAW • CIO—GENERAL MOTORS AGREEMENT

February 11, 1937

Agreement entered into on this 11th day of February, 1937, between the General Motors Corporation (hereinafter referred to as the Corporation) and the International Union, United Automobile Workers of America (hereinafter referred to as the Union).

1. The Corporation hereby recognizes the Union as the Collective Bargaining agency for those employes of the Corporation who are members of the Union. The Corporation recognizes and will not interfere with the right of its employes to be members of the Union. There shall be no discrimination, interference, restraint or coercion by the Corporation or any of its agents against any employe because of membership in the Union.

2. The Corporation and the Union agree to commence collective bargaining negotiations on February 16th with regard to the issues specified in the letter of January 4th, 1937, from the Union to the Corporation, for the purpose of entering into a collective bargaining agreement, or agreements, covering such issues, looking to a final and complete settlement of all matters in dispute.

3. The Union agrees to forthwith terminate the present strike against the Corporation, and to evacuate all plants now occupied by strikers.

4. The Corporation agrees that all of its plants, which are on strike, or otherwise idle shall resume operations as rapidly as possible.

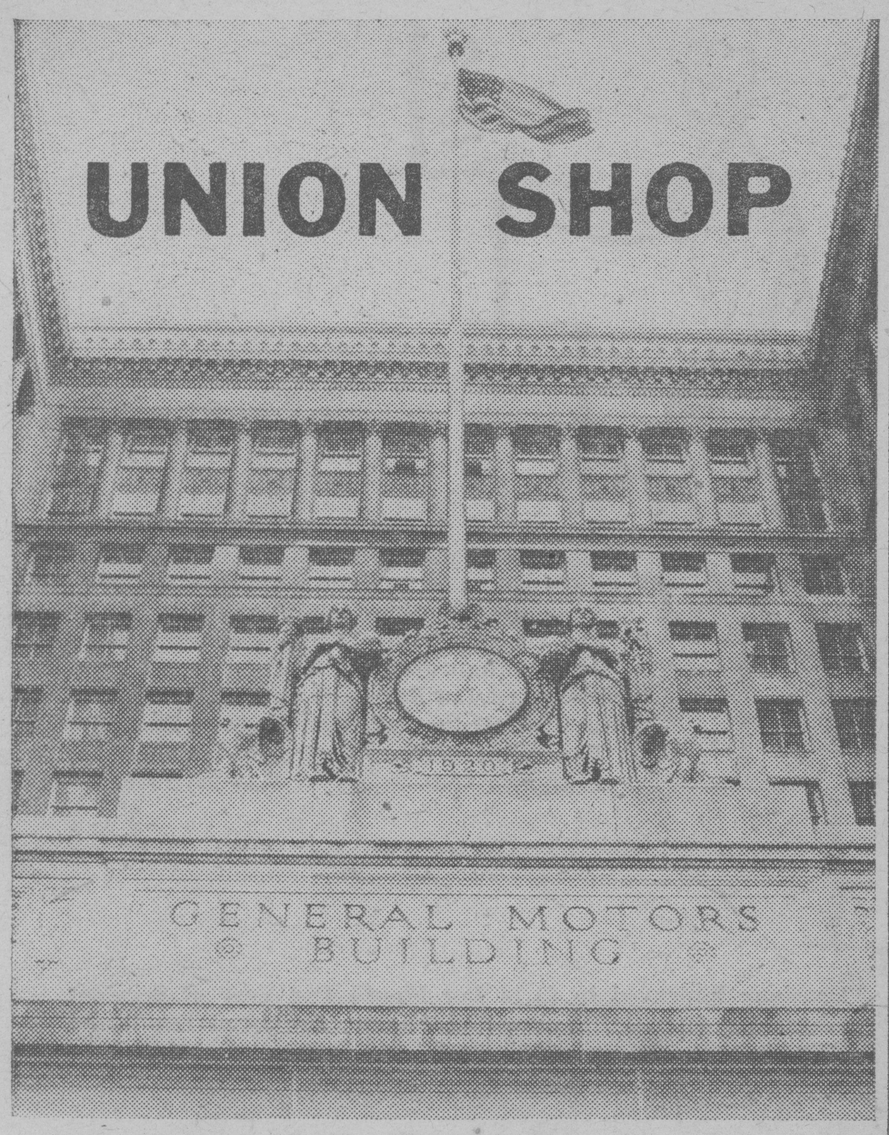
5. It is understood that all employes now on strike or otherwise idle will return to their usual work when called and that no discrimination shall be made or prejudices exercised by the Corporation against any employe because of his former affiliation with, or activities in, the Union or the present strike.

6. The Union agrees that pending the negotiations referred to in Paragraph Two, there shall be no strikes called or any other interruption to or interference with production, by the Union or its members.

7. During the existence of the collective bargaining agreement contemplated pursuant to Paragraph Two, all opportunities to achieve a satisfactory settlement of any grievance or enforcement of any demands by negotiations shall be exhausted before there shall be any strikes or other interruption to or interference with production by the Union or its members. There shall be no attempts to intimidate or coerce any employes by the Union and there shall not be any solicitation or signing up of members by the Union on the premises of the Company. This is not to preclude individual discussion.

8. After the evacuation of its plants and the termination of the strike the Corporation agrees to consent to the entry of orders, dismissing the injunction proceedings which have been started by the Corporation against the Union, or any of its members, or officers or any of its locals, including those pending in Flint, Michigan and Cleveland, Ohio, and subject to the approval of the Court to discontinue all contempt proceedings which it has instituted thereunder.

How It All Started →



ONE SIGN that is not chiseled in the stone of the mammoth, block-long GM headquarters in Detroit is "Union Shop." But it is engraved even more firmly in contract terms—a basic principle secured in 1955.

New GM Sub-Council Grouping Will Bolster Local Bargaining

Nothing is so good it can't be improved.

At the UAW's National GM Conference in Detroit last month, delegates voted to reorganize the GM Sub-Council structure. The number of Sub-Councils was increased from nine to eleven.

They represent communities of interest.

Previously, they were established on the basis of geographic area.

UAW Vice President Leonard Woodcock, director of the GM Department, pointed out this new structure will make it easier to solve common problems such as wage inequities.

By exchanging information and making a united approach, local unions involved in similar operations in plants throughout the country will be better equipped for local collective bargaining, Woodcock said.

Each local will be able to benefit from the experience of other local unions confronted with similar problems in similar operations.

The eleven new Sub-Councils are:

- Chevrolet Assembly
- Fisher Body Assembly
- Fisher Stamping
- Accessories and Parts
- Foundry and Forge
- Heavy Equipment
- Buick-Olds-Pontiac
- Design - Engineering - Model Maker-Pattern Shops
- Tool-Die and Maintenance
- Assembly, Manufacturing and Motor
- Bearings, Transmission and Axle

In discussing the new Sub-Council arrangement, delegates cast searching eyes on the GM profit picture.

UAW President Walter P. Reuther helped this along by pointing out, "General Motors could reduce the price of a Chevrolet by $100 and still make a fantastic profit. But GM is not satisfied with fantastic profits. They want super-duper fantastic profits."

He added, "We can prove conclusively that GM can pay us our wage increases and cut the prices of their cars because of the increases in their productivity through automation and changing technology."

Conference delegates reviewed progress made during the past 20 years. They gave a standing ovation to 20-year men in their midst. Then, the veterans and the rest turned to the problems of the future.

Sitdowners Occupy Chevvy 4

(Continued from Page 3)

ed by hundreds of strikers, Happood was at the microphone of the soundtruck, keeping alive the impression that the strikers' interest was concentrated at Chevvy 9.

Shortly after 4 o'clock, a Union messenger brought Happood word that the occupation of Chevvy 4 had been accomplished peacefully and completely. The strike leader called upon the strikers to disperse, an order promptly obeyed. He then joined the sitters in Plant 4, located several hundred yards from Plant 9. The strategy had worked, completing one of the most audacious bits of strike strategy the country had ever seen.

Some 400 Chevvy 4 strikers, joined by a few score from nearby Chevvy 6, had taken the motor-assembly plant with no more difficulty than a few harsh words to amazed foremen. Within a few minutes Union guards had been placed at the doors and gates and patrol committees organized to guard against surprise attacks.

The sitters blossomed into expert barricade-builders. Steel-plant trucks weighing several hundred pounds were piled on each other in front of entrances and windows until they reached from floor to ceiling. By morning of February 2, National Guardsmen patrolled the plant, but Chevvy 4 strikers, perched on the roof, were serenading Fisher 2 strikers, heroes of the "Battle of the Running Bulls," with "Solidarity Forever."

And from the roof and windows of Fisher 2, across and 50 yards down the street, husky voices shouted the Union song back. Below, in the street, khaki-clad troops with bayoneted rifles walked to and fro, while machine-guns were focused on the captive plants.

For an entire day, soldiers' bayonets barred delivery of food to the men in Chevvy 4 and Fisher 2, which had been included in the militarized zone. Pressure was again exerted on Governor Murphy to use the troops to clear the plants. Among some National Guard officers plans of attack were being suggested. Some proposed simply to shoot the strikers out; others hoped to project vomiting gas through the ventilating systems.

The intelligence division furnished the press with a lurid tale of 500 "loyal" Chevrolet employes being held as hostages by the strikers. The plans and military propaganda came to nothing, however, as Murphy's abhorrence of violence continued to dominate his efforts. Again General Motors looked to the courts.

Dues Adjustment

To Strengthen Union For '58 Negotiations

Viewed from any direction —the $10½ billion in total economic benefits, the more than $35,000 gain of the typical 20-year man, or from your own pay check—the UAW has made a lot of progress in the past 20 years.

All of it has come about because the Union was strong.

GM, always probing, has found little weakness in our ranks.

Future progress depends, of course, on continued strength.

In this day and age, keeping strong costs money. Strength includes research and education and publicity. It requires experts for complex negotiations coast-to-coast. The union's cost of living has been going up.

NO ESCALATOR

The UAW International Union and local unions don't have escalators.

A rank-and-file committee studying the problem of Union financing recommends that dues be increased 50 cents a month. The International Executive Board unanimously voted to recommend this adjustment to the Convention this April.

As with the present $2.50 dues, the per capita would continue to be divided evenly between the International and the Local Union.

The increase would still leave the UAW with one of the lowest dues structures of any American trade union.

UAW dues have remained unchanged for six years. In that time, the Union has won an average of 51 cents an hour in wage increases plus an additional 20 cents in fringe benefits.

During the past 20 years, the value of economic benefits won by the Union is in excess of $2.00 an hour. For each penny per hour paid in dues, members are receiving benefits of more than $1.00 per hour. Even with the increase, members will still be paying less than 2 cents an hour in dues, since a 50-cent boost would cost each member less than ⅓ of a cent per hour.

It would pay back many times that amount in better contracts.

The International Union now receives only 79 cents per member per month in money that is not earmarked for some special purpose. Twenty-five cents of the $1.25 retained by the International goes into the Strike Fund.

Of the remaining dollar, five cents goes into the special Citizenship Fund, five cents for *The United Automobile Worker*, three cents goes to the Education Fund and one cent each to the Fair Practices and Recreation departmental funds. These funds were established by Convention action. Another 6 cents goes in per capita payments.

UAW President Walter P. Reuther is on record favoring the biggest wage increase ever in 1958 negotiations. At the last convention, the delegates adopted as their major goal a shorter work week.

It shapes up as a big challenge. By slightly increasing dues, UAW members will be able to keep their Union and themselves in a strong position to meet it.

THEIR JOB'S SERVING YOU. This picture of the UAW's GM staff was taken at Solidarity House this year during the Union's GM Conference.

Skilled Workers Make Progress

Twenty years of progress has included 20 years of taking care of special groups of General Motors workers.

Almost every negotiating session includes a lot of time adjusting equities. You couldn't list all the inequity adjustments in this paper.

The process got off to a flying start in 1939 when tool and die makers struck. That resulted in a substantial upward adjustment for many skilled classifications. Just a year later, the UAW pushed through a large revaluation of job classifications. The average wage increase was just over 1½ cents. Many got much more.

In 1942, tool and die makers and some skilled maintenance classifications got six cents in addition to the four-cent across-the-board increase. There was also inequity adjustments for skilled classifications.

In 1947, maintenance workers received five cents more on their base rates. In another special raise, in May, 1950, all skilled workers got another nickel on the base rates.

In 1953, skilled workers got an extra 10 cents. Die sinkers and pattern makers got 20 cents.

During the latest set of negotiations, in May, 1955, skilled workers got the largest benefit from the new 2½ per cent annual improvement factor formula plus an extra eight cents. Pattern makers got an added 10 cents.

What Price Dignity?

Throughout this edition, we have talked about the economic gains auto workers have made in the last 20 years because of that handful of pioneers who founded the UAW 21 years ago, and because of that much larger group which struck and sat down just 20 years ago.

But there is one gain that cannot be measured in terms of money: the dignity which has come to each individual worker. Instead of a faceless, name-less clock card number, the auto worker is now an individual human being, treated with respect by management—thanks to the UAW.

There are no dollars-and-cents signs to measure that kind of gain—an advance just as important as any wage hike ever received.