The United Automobile Worker

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

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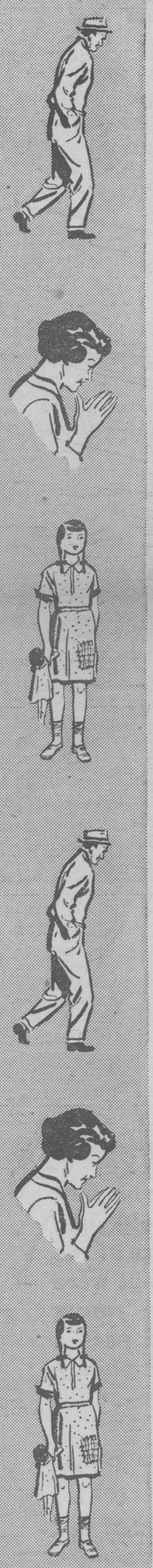
20th Anniversary Edition

The young man checked in for his first day of work in the plant. The old man checked out on his last. The years of the old man's working life at the plant were more than the lived years of the young man. Going in, the young man passed the old man. *(Continued on next page.)*



We Dared to Build Our Dreams

The young man checked in for his first day of work at the plant.

The old man checked out on his last. The years of the old man's working life at the plant were more than all the lived years of the young man.

Going in, the young man passed the old man. They looked at each other and the old man seemed to nod his head at the young fellow going in, but he might have been adjusting his eyes to the light, getting set for a last walk through the gate into retirement.

The shifts change not only by hours but by years. And with the years, other changes. The old man going out, when he looked over and seemed to nod at the kid coming in for the first time, might have wanted to stop the kid and hand him something, tell him something.

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YOU can almost hear him talking to the kid. You think you have it sized up, do you? You have it licked. You'll find out. It isn't that easy. I was in there at a machine before you were born. This is my last day and your first.

It's a kind of relay. I wish I could pass something along to you. But it would take a lifetime to pass on what I know, it can't be said in a few words.

You can see the kid stop for a moment. He's embarrassed. He doesn't know the old fellow. The old fellow wants to talk to him, tell him something, he doesn't know what. The kid wants to be polite to the old man, but he also wants to get in there and lick the world.

Maybe it didn't happen. The old man was just getting his eyes used to the light, he kind of nodded. One going in, the other going out. A kind of relay. A changing of the shifts.

But maybe it did happen. Maybe the old fellow and the young kid stopped and saw themselves in each other. The old guy saw himself coming in that gate for the first time. The kid saw himself coming out, squinting into the light, taking his last walk through the gate.

They stopped and smiled. The old man took the young man by the arm. There's something I've got to tell you, he said. They went across the street. They sat down at a table with a couple of coffees. The kid said he had a few minutes. The older man began to talk. . . .

The greatest discovery of the past generation in the automobile industry has not been the automated factory.

It has been the discovery, made by the auto workers themselves, of their own humanity, their own identity, their own value as people and as citizens.

This discovery, 20 years ago, was an American revolution. It was a new, bright turn in the democratic road that has had and will have many turns but no ending.

The discoverers are 20 years older now. They are survivors, and history, a saying goes, is written by the survivors.

There is, however, more than one way of writing history. Written one way, it comes out on paper, it is printed in books, and is published for readers.

Written another way, it comes out in lives, in acts of faith and courage and dedication. It can be read in the unfolding days and years of accomplishment, in the living round of men and women and families.

The auto workers have written 20 years of this kind of history. They will write 20 more, and more 20s after. The written story is only a paper footnote to the real events, a paper tribute to the real historians.

The words can only be a pale reflection of the deeds. Just a kind of echo of some of the things some of the survivors might say to the younger crowd if they all had time to sit down and look back.

Some of the things the survivors might want to say to the inheritors. . . .

The carriage got its first motor in 1886.

For 50 years autos were built and sold and run. For 50 years, from 1886 to 1936, nobody knew or cared about the men who put them together, about what happened to them on the job or off.

Nobody knew and nobody cared. Auto workers were faceless numbers on a time card. They were nameless digits on the cost sheets.

They made autos in those days by combining so much steel and glass and rubber for so many hours with so much muscle, sweat, and nerve.

Over the years that's how they made autos and killed auto workers.

There didn't seem to be anything that you could do

The Colorful Story of the UAW's First 20 Years

about it. There didn't seem to be any way out—if you were an auto worker in those years.

Your life moved to the rhythm of the line from layoff to layoff, until you came to the end of the line and they pushed you out into the shadows.

There was always another faceless number waiting to take your place.

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There were good years. Yet even in the best years it was crazy. You couldn't plan anything. You couldn't count on an hour of work beyond the present hour.

Autos came first. Auto workers came last. Nobody but the auto workers knew that auto workers were people and it even got hard for them to be sure, with the line denying it and the foreman denying it, and the layoff yawning and waiting for them there in the shadows, at the end of every line.

As old Henry Ford used to say about his car: You could have it in any color as long as it was black.

And then came the depression. It didn't come on little cat feet. It stumbled into Detroit like a drunken giant and fell headlong on the city.

Count yourself lucky if you were somewhere else or hadn't been born.

Now the auto workers came first. First to lose their jobs, their homes. Many in 1930, a lot even earlier.

Those were the black years. In 1932 the auto workers, with millions of other Americans, had little left but their votes.

They used them, but there was a long lag between the vote and the victory. In Washington there was a new deal, but in the auto centers employers were using the same cold, frayed dirty deck.

Caught between speed-up and layoff with jobs melting away, auto worker was pitted against auto worker for the scraps and crusts of survival. Men against women. Country worker against city worker. Old against young. Younger against older.

The bitterness and hostility were built into group bonus schemes and piecework plans that were only masks for speed-up. You couldn't be sure what your pay would be.

Workers had to get into the shop an hour or half-hour early and get ready on their own time.

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They reported to work every day and waited hours for work that didn't arrive. No pay.

Safety and health laws were violated. Women replaced men at reduced rates. Men were laid off indiscriminately. There was no seniority, and if they were rehired at all, they came back as new employes.

Older workers were pushed out, and the definition of an older worker got broader and broader. Married women were laid off because they were married and because they were women.

The labor spy business boomed. The line moved faster. In the cold winter of 1934, in Detroit, Flint, Lansing, Muskegon, Jackson, Toledo, Dayton, Cleveland, Milwaukee, auto workers formed another line. They waited for hours to testify before federal investigators. They told their stories, a report got as far as the desk of the President of the United States.

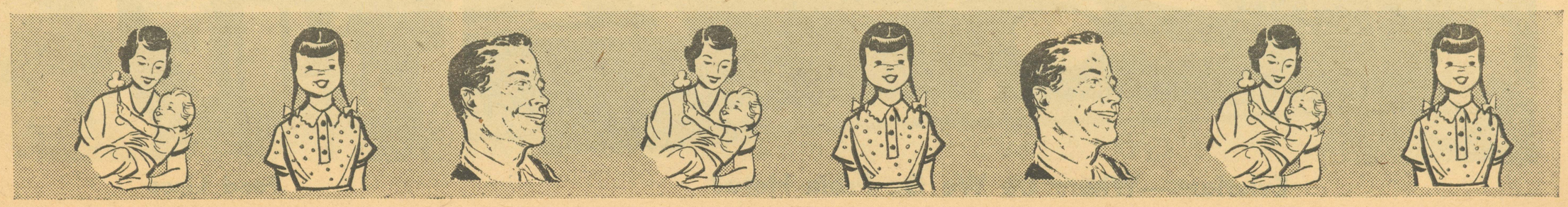
There were, the report stated, three kinds of people who stood in line and told their stories. There were those who seemed, to the investigators, numbed and despairing (although they were not too numbed and not too despairing to tell their stories). There were those, the investigators said, who were embittered, who were against "the system," and who placed their hope in a "social revolution."

The third group, the investigators said, were those who were "convinced that something can be done to better their situation." Hardly anybody was listening but here, in this conviction that something could be done, was the first unmistakable accent of a voice that would shortly be getting attention in the highest places.

This third voice had a message for tin ears. "They are skeptical of government efforts," the message ran. "Unless something is done soon they intend to take things in their own hands to get results."

Almost nobody was listening. It was now almost 50 years since a Frenchman had invented the automobile. The auto workers were getting ready to invent something of their own.

Nineteen-thirty-five, year of the Wagner Act, was also the year of the formation of the Committee for Industrial Organization. It was the year the voices of auto workers spoke through the report that got as far as Franklin Roosevelt's desk. The social lag in the automobile industry was showing badly. It would take more than voices, more than government reports, more, as events proved, than labor boards to bring democracy into the plants.



Big Business Turns Its Back On Basic Needs of People

Unemployment

Despair

Hoovervilles

Old Henry Ford said, in the early days, "A great business is really too big to be human." This was an accurate definition not of what had to be but of the way things were in the plants. Democracy seemed to begin and end at the polling place. In the plant, you couldn't tell a human being from a mine mule without a score card.

Before the Wagner Act there had been a number of labor boards. They had been so many planks for workers to walk.

The workers had called the old NRA the National Run Around. The Wagner Act put teeth into Section 7a of NRA, which had affirmed the right of workers to form unions and bargain collectively. But Liberty League lawyers hired to protect corporations from people quickly formed themselves into a self-appointed "Supreme Court" and decided the Wagner Act was unconstitutional.

If a worker thought otherwise, he could take his grievance to his foreman and then look for another job. Liberty, though, was a two-way street. Auto workers began gathering at the other end.

Those who came together at South Bend, Indiana, in April of 1936 had plenty of nothing. They had no money. They spoke for and about 7,500 UAW members in the United States and Canada. But they had an idea, and the idea had been tested shortly before in Akron, Ohio, where rubber workers had walked picket lines and sat down in their plants for over a month and had won CIO's first big victory.

The idea, briefly and simply stated, was that a man's right to a job was at least as important as the well-publicized property right of corporations. If enough men believed this to form unions in the plants, the idea went, political democracy would have a twin brother on the assembly lines.

AN IDEA 20 YEARS AGO

UAW came out of the South Bend convention armed with this idea and an International Union charter. Akron workers had started up the street. Auto workers began to look up and take notice.

Some of the other local union groups began to affiliate with UAW. Chrysler workers in the AIWA voted to join. So did Associated Automobile Workers locals in Hudson plants and several locals of the MESA.

Somebody looked back later and said: "One of the least influential labor unions in any major U. S. industry, up to the end of 1936, was the United Automobile Workers of America."

It was true. The influence was only gathering in the minds of the workers. It hadn't yet been brought to bear. On the surface, nothing much had changed.

In June, 1936, the idea was tested again, this time by the Bendix UAW Local, with a wage increase, union recognition, and seniority rules as proof that the idea could work.

In October, Chrysler's Dodge Locals threatened to strike against violation of seniority rules. The violations stopped. The idea had proved itself again.

In November, 1936, Liberty League lawyers lost a presidential election to restless workers and Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. The New Deal was still in Washington but the old deal was still standard operating procedure in the automobile plants. The auto workers were still holding secret union meetings in cellars. But they were also beginning to move up the two-way street.

SUCCESSFUL SITDOWN IN FLINT

A quick sitdown in Fisher Body plant No. 1 in Flint that same November ended in the Union's favor. The Union came out of the cellar. A local paper, *The Flint Auto Worker,* began to publish.

Bendix workers at South Bend won further concessions after a seven-day sitdown.

With the Midland Steel Products and Kelsey-Hayes Wheel sitdowns, events moved to a climax.

In the heart of Detroit, workers at Midland Steel won union recognition, seniority rules, and wage increases after a two-week strike. The strike widened the definition of solidarity, enriched the union idea. Until Midland settled, Chrysler, Dodge and Plymouth workers refused to touch frames coming from other plants.

The Kelsey-Hayes sitdown also brought a settlement that put more flesh and muscle on the union concept. The 75-cent minimum Kelsey-Hayes workers won represented a substantial hike, especially for women. There were a lot of women working at Kelsey-Hayes in relation to the size of the plant and the number of women then in the industry.

These two strikes, though, had a wider meaning. No particular effort had been made to conceal the fact that Ford and other major employers were intimately involved in both struggles and dedicated to the proposition that a rising UAW must be stopped in its tracks through the good offices of Kelsey-Hayes and Midland managements.

Shortly after the Kelsey-Hayes strike erupted in Department 49, where workers were making Ford brakes, management agreed to meet with a UAW grievance committee on the speed-up that provoked the stoppage. On the strength of management's promise, work had resumed. At 9 a. m. of the appointed day, the Union committee presented itself at the Company offices. Word came out that Kelsey officials were closeted with one Chester Culver, secretary of the Michigan Employers' Association. The committee waited. Ten o'clock. Eleven o'clock. The Kelsey-Hayes wheels were still lost in Mr. Culver's thoughts. The UAW committeemen cooled their heels until the stroke of noon. Then they got their answer. Word issued from the inner sanctum: Company officials couldn't meet with UAW.

The committee left to pass the word to the workers. Their way into the plant was barred by

Evictions—Where Do We Go From Here?

Food Lines

supervision. They went out into the street and climbed through the plant windows. It didn't take them long to tell the story of Mr. Culver, the closed doors, the three-hour wait, the final brushoff. Kelsey-Hayes workers accepted the challenge; down went the plant again.

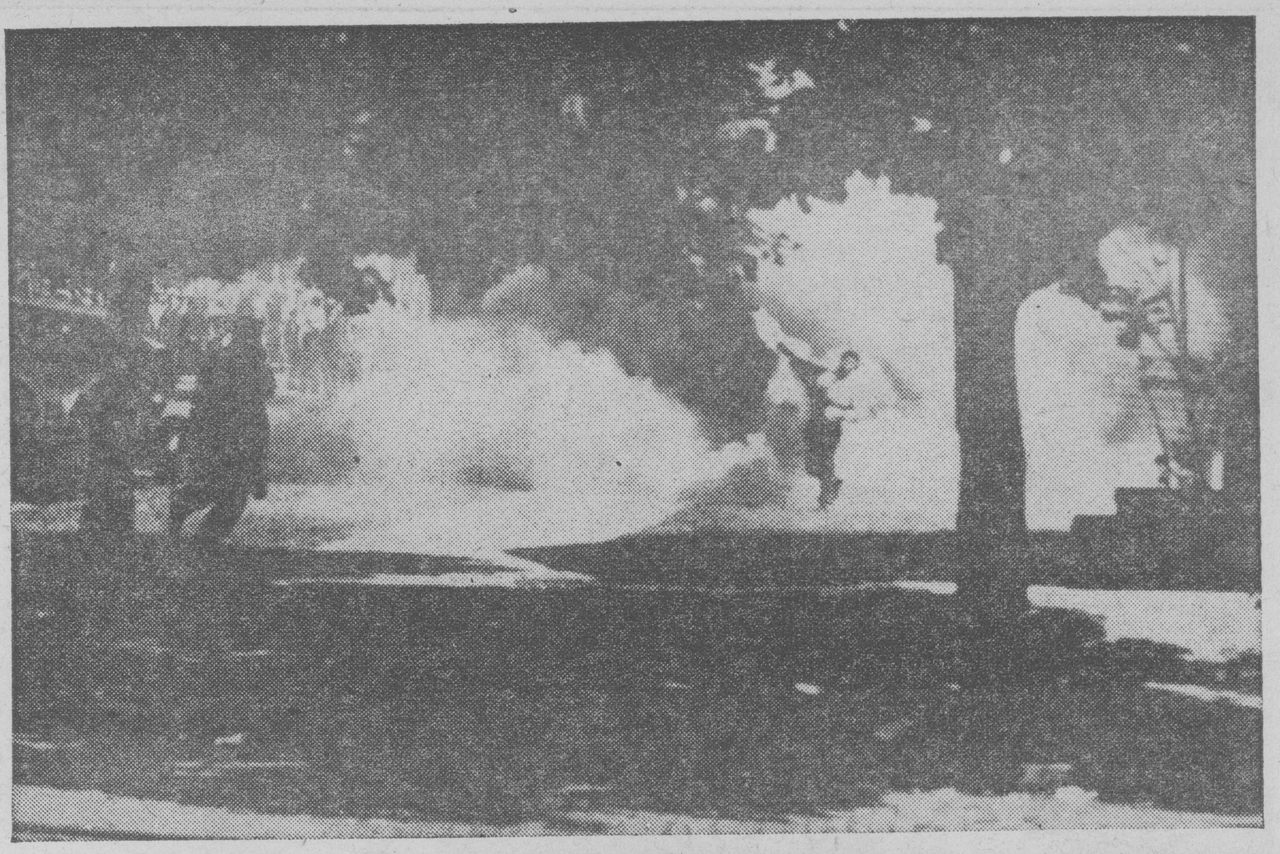
Ford's next move was characteristic of the time. Harry Bennett dispatched a party of his goons with the assignment of intimidating the Kelsey-Hayes strikers. The goons came, they saw—and they retired in the face of a determined phalanx of militant workers.

Ford also tried to break the Midland strike, sending a caravan of trucks to remove frames from the struck plant. The Ford move at Midland had been badly timed. The truck drivers were met by police who, at the insistence of Union representatives, told them to leave because negotiations were in progress. The strike was settled a few hours later.

In both cases, managers of the struck plants were not alone in their hour of need. Their hands were being held and their brows were being mopped by Mr. Culver and Mr. Bennett, the agents of higher powers who at that point were prepared to fight the UAW to the last drop of their suppliers' blood.

In Atlanta, Georgia, a strike flared at the Fisher Body plant after four men had been fired for appearing in the plant with UAW buttons on their shirts.

A month later in Kansas City a Union man leaped over the assembly line and was fired, although nobody had paid any attention to the rule before. About 600 workers sat down in the plant to let the Company know they understood what was happening. The Company withheld a $47 bonus from each of the 600 men, their share of a "GM Appreciation Fund" that had been announced in Detroit as a Christmas bonus plan.



A THOUSAND state militiamen rolled into Toledo, Ohio, when the Electric Auto-Lite workers struck in 1934. One (above, right) caught a primed tear gas bomb in his bare hands and hurled it back into the attacking guardsmen. Courage like this made the UAW possible. A beachhead of trade unionism existed in Toledo when the UAW was born. One of those responsible was Richard T. Gosser, now a UAW vice-president.

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KNUDSEN 'BACKS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Not letting its unappreciative right hand know what its left hand was doing, GM sent its Vice-President Knudsen down to Indianapolis the same day to make a speech to the Chamber of Commerce on the occasion of the opening of GM's new plant in that city.

Mr. Knudsen radiated reasonableness and holiday good will. There would be, he said, "no attempt on my part to discourage organization of any sort as long as it is done on legal and constructive lines. I think collective bargaining is here to stay, but I do think collective bargaining ought to take place before a shutdown rather than after."

Having thus offered collective bargaining the keys to the city, Mr. Knudsen went on in the next paragraph to boot the whole idea out again, saying, "As far as General Motors is concerned, there isn't any man working for the Corporation that has a grievance that he cannot present, first to his foreman and through him to his superintendent or to his manager. If he finally wants to go as far as Detroit, that is possible."

The GM vice-president went back to Detroit. That week-end, there were about 27,000 auto workers idle because of strikes in auto and parts plants. Several hundred strikers occupied the two Detroit plants of Kelsey-Hayes Wheel. The Windsor subsidiary was also struck.

Taking Mr. Knudsen at his first word rather than his last, the UAW wired GM and asked for a collective bargaining conference. The wire told Mr. Knudsen about the discrimination against Union members in GM plants. It told him about the excessive speed of the line, about how that speed was set without regard for the workers' well-being. It told him of the lack of seniority rights, the lack of any form of job security. It told him "of numerous other complaints."

A reply to the Union wire finally winged in from outer space: See the local plant managers. UAW local unionists, contract forms in hand, made the rounds. The Knudsen belief that collective bargaining had arrived to stay had not trickled down to the level where GM cars were made. The answer everywhere was a stony stare and a flat no.

It would take more than a telegram to square GM's practice with the high principles announced by Vice-President Knudsen.

On December 28, 1936, 7,000 workers of GM's Cleveland Fisher Body plant tapped out another kind of message for Detroit. They went on strike and let it be known they would make no settlement that was not part of a Corporation-wide agreement.

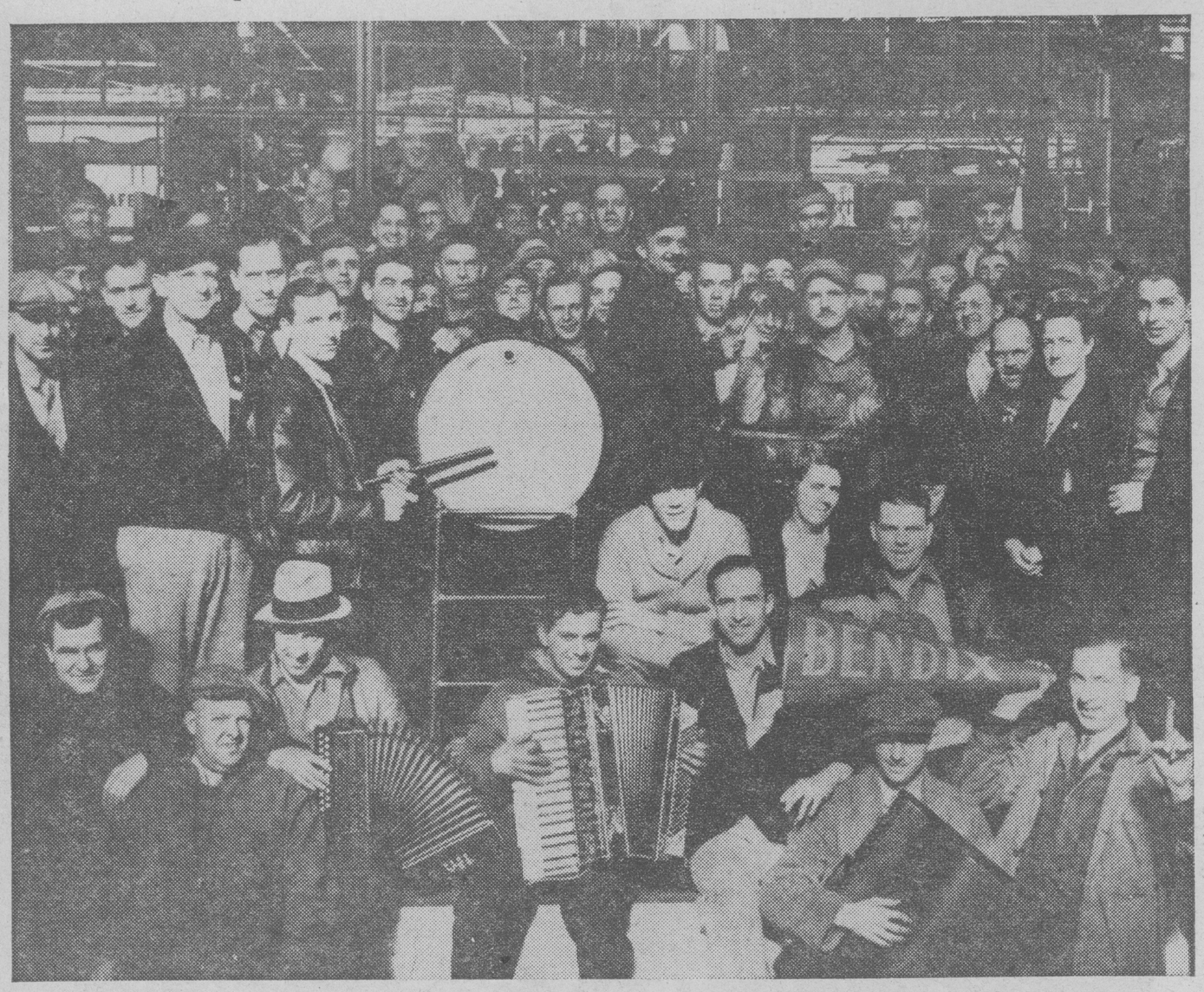
The old year rang out. And until the eleventh hour, the auto industry seemed to have no inkling that the old order was changing, that more than another year had passed, never to come again.

On the evening of December 30, 1936, night-shift men at the Fisher Body plant No. 1 in Flint stopped a loading of dies the Company had planned to ship to Grand Rapids and Pontiac. If the dies had gone, GM could have undermined a Flint strike by using them to make cars in weaker union centers.

FISHER NO. 1 GOES DOWN

Fisher Body workers immediately sat down in the plant to protect their job rights. Pickets formed, Union guards were placed in the clock houses, the gates were locked.

The plant gates were locked but the floodgates were open. Fifteen other GM units went down like a row of dominoes. General Motors, which believed in bargaining with auto workers one by one, tried to organize a united front of the automobile industry against the UAW through the Automobile Manufacturers' Association. The Ford Motor Co. refused to go along with the GM proposal that all companies cease operations.



BITTERLY OPPOSED in their efforts to form unions, workers in mass production industries suddenly came up with a new idea. One of the first sitdown strikes occurred in 1936 at the Bendix Aviation plant at South Bend, Indiana. There the workers (who shortly organized as Local 9, UAW) used whatever equipment they could get to put together a band for entertainment during the long sitdown hours. Sweet as their music was, the settlement was even sweeter. They gained recognition of their Union, higher pay and seniority rights.

POLICE BRUTALITY was all too common when workers first began to organize and employers called upon city and county officials to "protect our property rights."

Scores of Thousands Sat Down So They Could Have a Union

The auto workers dug in. By January 8, 1937, some 89,000 workers were sitting down. By January 11, 113,000 of GM's 150,000 production workers were on strike.

It was a cold winter but a new year. There were many conferences, many press releases, many headlines, much editorial writing, miles and miles of letters to editors. But history had caught General Motors front and center on the national stage in a cruel white light and the light wouldn't let go. Neither would the auto workers. It was 1937 and it would never be 1936 again.

Mr. Knudsen might have been exaggerating when he said that collective bargaining was here to stay; it would take a little time to convince Mr. Sloan that Mr. Knudsen had seen the future in a vision on the road to Indianapolis. But in the end, which came on February 11, GM's right and left hands met for the first time at the conference table with the United Automobile Workers.

The auto workers had done what they had told the federal investigators they would do. They had stayed up very late in a lot of cities and towns, acting as history's midwife.

It wasn't an easy birth. A *Detroit Free Press* editorial on January 7 of the new year lit a little candle before the old shrine of St. Muddle. Under the heading, "The War on General Motors," the *Free Press* allowed:

> **"President Sloan says the whole question is whether a labor organization will run the plants of General Motors, or whether the management will continue to do so. This seems to us a sufficiently accurate definition of the situation."**

Like the people who made near beer, the *Free Press* was a poor judge of distance. What was "sufficiently accurate" for the *Free Press* was far from the truth of what was happening.

STRIKE A BLOW FOR LIBERTY

Then there was the letter-writer who signed himself "Non-Partisan" and wrote to the editor: "All labor agitators should be classed as public nuisances, placed under arrest and put to work in chain gangs."

It wasn't the first time that a declaration of independence had been greeted with howls of treason and rebellion. It wasn't the first time men had been called dirty names for getting up off their knees. Nor was it the first time sticks and stones were used, when it became clear names wouldn't hurt them.

In another time of troubles, Tom Paine had said, "Where liberty is *not*, there is my country." And he wrote of the upholders of "law and order": They pity the plumage and forget the dying bird. Paine would have been at home in the auto towns. It was a country where liberty was not. It was a country closed off from the knowledge and concern of the wider nation, where the self-appointed defenders of law and order had mistaken the peace of an industrial plantation for social justice, and where the silence induced by fear had been mistaken for contentment.

What had happened was a revolt of the slaves, a rebellion of the serfs. The old definitions didn't fit the new events. Nobody had ever heard of a plantation owner bargaining with his slaves. No baron in his castle on the hill had ever been known to come down to negotiate with the men who worked the land. Only the knights sat around the conference table.

> **Since the old definitions didn't fit the new events, the defenders of law and order tried to save the definitions instead of understanding the events. They longed for the peace of the past, although it was an unjust and dishonorable peace, imposed and enforced by the strong upon the weak.**

And so the defenders tried to slap a curfew on history; they tried to place the twentieth century under house arrest.

General Motors, having trampled the Wagner Act under its corporate feet, wrapped itself in the mantle of legal innocence and accused the auto workers of illegally occupying its plants.

FIGHT FOR YOUR SALVATION

Mr. Knudsen had come out for collective bargaining in Indianapolis and Mr. Knudsen was an honorable man. The local plant managers, however, had never heard of collective bargaining, never heard of the Wagner Act. GM was picking and choosing among the laws; it liked some legality very much, as interpreted by its own lawyers. The legality of the American Congress, which bound it to deal with the Union of the auto workers, it would have no part of. It just wanted to make automobiles and sell them, and forget about auto workers, their grievances and their demands for justice.

The auto workers faced the choice of being legally done to death according to the old definitions, or of making a declaration of independence that would itself become the foundation of new law and new rights. They chose to ring out the old, to ring in the new. The bursting of their chains made some noise and was regarded in some quarters as violence. Violence, too was a matter of definition. The defenders of the castle on the hill had never noticed the violence of the assembly line or of the espionage system that had cost GM the sum of $994,855 in the first half of 1936.

20th Anniversary

UAW-TV PROGRAM

SUNDAY, JUNE 10

2:30 p. m. (EST)

NBC TV Network

Consult your newspaper for local time and station

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NEARLY 150,000 people jammed Cadillac Square in Detroit, right, when the Union called a rally to protest police attempts to evict sitdowners. The turnout helped convince city authorities at least that the sitdowners meant business. This picture was taken while the crowd was still assembling, before it reached its peak.

Those Sitdowns

This corporate money going to underworld toughs, to strongarm boys and brass-knuckled goons was well-mannered money. It was paid out to keep unruffled the lace-curtains of stockholder respectability, to keep factory hands from dragging the mud of unionism into the best people's parlors. Harry Anderson of General Motors told the LaFollette Committee he spent about 25 per cent of his time administering this type of labor relations. There is nothing to show that GM stockholders rose in their wrath at the news to demand a change in Corporation policy.

So the auto workers rose in their wrath. That was the meaning of the sitdowns. The auto workers were revolutionaries—like Washington and Jefferson, Patrick Henry and Ben Franklin. Instead of dumping tea in Boston Harbor, they sat down in the plants. They didn't want the plants, but they decided to squat where they worked, in the place where their job rights were at stake.

At the Standard Cotton Products Co., makers of upholstery in Flint, these new revolutionaries snuggled into wool stuffing to sleep and keep warm. For in those days and nights in the auto towns it was as cold as it had ever been at Valley Forge.

GM, pitying its plumage, tried to get its plants back from the birds who had occupied them, instead of trying to settle the grievances that had led to the strike.

On January 11, 1937, the heat was shut off in Fisher 2 in Flint. The struggle that followed has gone down in labor history as the Battle of the Running Bulls. Police surrounded the plant and announced that there would be no more food shipments to strikers. They broke plant windows and shot tear gas into the ranks of the sitdowners. They rushed the plant with tear gas and guns. The workers counter-attacked and after hours of skirmishing won the day.

14 FLINT SITDOWNERS WOUNDED

When the battle ended, 14 strikers were in the hospital with bullet wounds and the National Guard was in Flint, but Governor Murphy refused to use guardsmen against auto workers. GM began to adjust its bifocals for a first reading of the handwriting on the wall.

Anti-union Law and Order Leagues sprouted in Lansing and nine other Michigan cities. Two hundred self-styled patriots from a dozen states met in Johnstown, Pa., to form a national strike-breaking movement. In Atlanta, the Klan vowed to ride against CIO.

The Black Legion sprang up again in Michigan, where it had flourished several years before. In its heyday the Legion had won the recommendation of high corporate officials as a cure for labor troubles, but it had slithered into a decline after a murder rap against its leaders had exposed its true nature. Now, with the most highly respected elements of the community again tempted to violence in the name of order, the Legion coiled for a comeback.

The strike continued, and spread. Coke fires in metal barrels warmed pickets outside the gates. Baskets of food and cans of coffee were hauled up into the plants from the ground outside. Wives stood below, reporting news of home.

GM "AGREES" TO TRUCE TERMS

On January 13, the strike spread to the Chevvy and Fisher Body plants in St. Louis. The same day in Port Huron, a strike began at the United Brass and Aluminum Co. On January 14, in Lansing, UAW leaders met across a table for the first time with General Motors managers.

There were 15 hours of talking. At 4:30 on the morning of the 15th, a truce was signed: in exchange for evacuation of the plants General Motors agreed to bargain with the UAW over its chief demands, including a demand that UAW speak as sole representative of the auto workers.

News of the truce didn't lift any hearts in the picket shacks, but strikers took everybody at their word and began to live up to the bargain.

Not so GM. A newspaper reporter turned up an exchange of telegrams between Knudsen and George Boysen, former GM paymaster and owner of a sparkplug factory. Boysen, head of the Flint Alliance, vigilante group that advocated shooting the workers out of the plants, posed as a worker long enough to wire Knudsen for a collective bargaining conference on behalf of GM workers allegedly in the Alliance. Knudsen in his reply forgot that the UAW demand for sole recognition was one of the major points up for discussion in the conference to follow evacuation of the plants.

The Knudsen telegram threw that demand out the window in advance, assuring Boysen that his group and any group that came along could have the General Motors ear—"without prejudice to anyone."

A TRUCE THAT DIDN'T LAST

In Anderson, Indiana, 15 minutes after the Guide Lamp plant was evacuated, about 150 police and special deputies surrounded it, tore down picket shacks, and forbade picketing. In Detroit, workers of the evacuated Cadillac plant received telegrams to report to work, although GM had agreed not to operate while negotiations continued.

The truce went up in the smoke of the coke fires. GM backed hastily away from the Flint Alliance and promised to keep its distance while it talked with UAW leaders, but the strikers had learned that GM's word was not as good as Mr. Knudsen's speeches. The strike went on, and the talking shifted from Lansing to Washington.

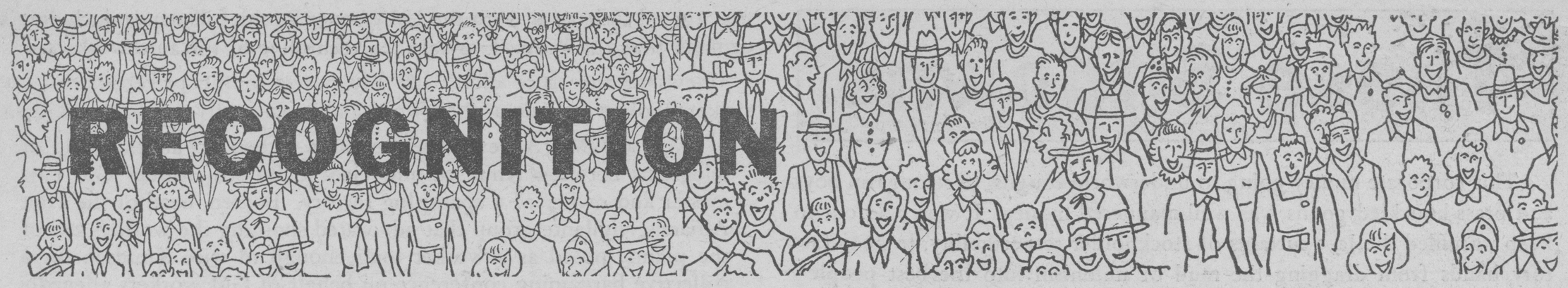
On January 19, the Meldrum Avenue plant of Briggs in Detroit was closed by 2,000 unionists who were tear gassed and nightsticked by police.

Washington conferences were held between GM and CIO. GM spokesmen had memorized a song in praise of the Corporation's "present bargaining methods," whatever they were, and while the lyrics of this ballad were being tried out on Secretary of Labor Perkins in Washington, GM's workaday minions back home in the provinces were hustling workers' signatures on to back-to-work petitions under threat of discharge.

YOU DID ANYTHING YOU COULD to amuse yourself. You sang or reread the old magazines or played poker for matchsticks. But, above all, you sat there.

YOU GOT YOUR FOOD from the outside like these workers in the Fisher Body plant in Cleveland. Miraculously, the "eats" always got there . . . eventually.

YOU CROWDED TO THE DOORWAY to wave to your wife and kids like these workers in No. 4 Chevrolet plant in Flint . . . that is, unless you crouched behind a barricade to defend yourself against an attack.



On January 29, the Corporation went into court for another stab at stopping the strike by injunction. The first had been smothered in general laughter when it was discovered that Judge Edward Black of Genesee County owned $150,000 of GM stock on the day he ordered the strikers to vacate the plants. The second court move was made against a background of violence in Anderson, Indiana, and in Bay City, Saginaw, and Flint. In all of these cities, UAW organizers were mobbed and beaten. Vigilantes in Anderson took over and wrecked union headquarters and threw up roadblocks to keep unionists from other centers out of the city.

General Motors plants were limping back into production on a part-time schedule. If, despite its defiance of the National Labor Relations Act, the Corporation could get the Circuit Judge to call the UAW strike illegal, property rights would again be in their heaven and all would again be for the best in the best of all possible company worlds.

It was now the first week in February. Union lawyers pointed to GM's unclean hands at a hearing, asked how a company that had provoked a strike by trampling the law of the land could cry "Stop thief!" at a band of men who were trying to protect the job rights that stood between them and destitution.

To the very end, the issue remained what it had been from the beginning. Did factory workers have rights in common as workers in the same plant, human rights in a job that a corporation should recognize and discuss collectively with the workers' agent? If General Motors had said yes in practice to this question (as its vice-president had seemed to say yes and as a federal law required), there would have been no strike. No vigilantism, no judicial decree, no back-to-work petition, no palaver about law and order in high or low places could submerge that issue or keep it from gnawing at the conscience of a nation of free men.

FINAL STRIKE BREAKING EFFORTS

For just as free men in the nation at large needed a framework of law and government based on the consent of the governed, so the working communities of plant and corporation had to have a system of rules solidly anchored in the consent of the workers.

There may have been more card games than speeches about industrial democracy as the auto workers bedded down for their long 1937 winter of discontent. But neither General Motors nor the government of the United States nor the reflective citizen in the street missed the meaning of the stilled plants, whatever was done, and much was done, to obscure that meaning.

And as the strike neared its climax, as the auto workers struck Chevvy 4 in Flint and the Circuit Judge handed down the ruling General Motors wanted more than it wanted the consent of the men who worked in its plants, and as the whole nation waited to see what face justice would wear for the grand finale, and as the caravans of Union stalwarts converged on Flint from the cities of Michigan, something cracked, something turned, something moved.

The sheriff refused to swear in new deputies. The governor refused to use the militia. The President of the United States asked the General Motors Corporation to face the representatives of the auto workers across a conference table and settle the strike.

February 11, 1937, was the day the paper was signed. The UAW was recognized as exclusive spokesman for workers in the 17 struck plants. GM announced a five per cent wage increase. Free speech descended on lunch hour and rest period. There would be no more discrimination against Union members. The legal passes against the Flint sitdowners were halted. A new legality had been born. Negotiations were to start at once on the remaining demands.

SOLIDARITY BRINGS IN THE UNION

It was a Magna Charta on wheels, a machine-tooled emancipation proclamation. It was anything you wanted to call it, but the name wasn't as important as the deed. The ceremony at the end wasn't as charged with history as the idea at the beginning. The signatures of the men at the top would have been written in water without the will of the men at the bottom who made the turning point turn by standing together for a principle.

When it had started at Cadillac, one guy had sneaked home and come back with his accordion. One of the fellows had wanted to go home because he attended night school, but he was kidded out of it. A lot of the married men had wanted to stay, but were afraid of what their wives would say, or do. Everybody was given a chance to go home.

Those who stayed covered their work to protect it from stains. All kinds of committees were formed: one to protect Company property, one to keep the plant clean, one to fix guards, another to maintain contact with the world outside. Another to handle food.

Every man of the four hundred men in the plant had worked two shifts of three or four hours each as pickets.

Card games and discussion groups were always in session. There were magazines to read. There were radios, guitars, accordions. If you didn't like mountain music, you were in the wrong nightclub.

Some of the men were old. One of the younger fellows who later became a reporter

THERE WAS JOY ALL OVER. It spread from Flint, where bearded sitdowners paraded, to Oshawa, Canada, where Mayor Alex Hall (above) had supported strikers, and on across the continent workers everywhere rejoiced.

LEADING the Cadillac sitdown strikers out of the plant near the end of the 1937 General Motors strike are, left to right: Julius Hochman, ILGWU; Richard Frankensteen, Leo Krzycki, Homer Martin, Walter P. Reuther. This was the famous false armistice. The strikers kept their word; GM didn't. The UAW discovered GM's duplicity in time. Cadillac workers set up picket lines; in many other plants workers continued to sit down inside.

for a Detroit newspaper wrote of them during the strike, "I often wonder how they feel after sleeping on a wooden bench all night. I go to bed young but I wake up old."

Old and young, they stayed for a principle. "There seems to be a growth of sentiment in the papers," the same fellow wrote, "that the UAW isn't the voice of the workers. My department was organized 90 per cent and I know at a meeting Thursday we voted to strike with but two opposed to the idea."

That was Cadillac from the inside; to strike was an idea. In the words of the striker who became a reporter, it was also "a great deal like an all night poker game."

"You don't know," he said, "how long it will last and there is a lot more at stake than the pennies in the pot."

For men and wives and kids who had just weathered a man-made depression, a man-made wage increase was welcome. But the new pennies in the pot were only a by-product. It was the genie in the lamp that brought the new day to the factories, a new dignity into lives that had been at the mercy of the line, at the beck and call of unchallenged power. And the genie's name was solidarity.

"MOMMA, WE'RE MAKIN' HISTORY"

A garment girl was yelling out of a loft window: "Hello, Momma, we're makin' history." It was a cartoon in a New York paper. It was springtime, 1937, and Momma's daughter had caught herself in a historic posture, standing up to the boss with the rubber workers and the auto workers.

One of the least influential labor unions in any major U. S. industry had just succeeded in making an impression on the country's greatest corporation, and suddenly being a worker took on new meaning, new dignity.

One hundred ten girls sat down in Woolworth's main Detroit store. They slept on the counters, hung their laundry on a fire escape to dry, and collected a five-cent hourly wage increase.

The kitchen and dining room staffs of the Willard Hotel sat down in Washington. Bellboys lolled in the lobby and waiters sipped milk shakes in the bar. The hotel recognized their union.

Barbers sat down in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. In Chicago, 62 miles of freight tunnels under the Loop were paralyzed by a strike. Girls of the National Pants Co. sat down in New Castle, Pennsylvania. Sixty thousand workers stood in Cadillac Square. The streetcars couldn't move.

In every region, in all the industries, America's forgotten men and women reminded each other that they were human beings, discovered that the story of human struggle and human freedom had unwritten chapters for them and their children. Liberty in 1937 became a two-way street. Free enterprise, suddenly, included people.

PACKARD, HUDSON, BRIGGS FOLLOW

In auto, Chrysler followed GM. Then came Packard, Hudson, Briggs. It was contagious, not automatic. The dominoes fell, but the solidarity of men and women toppled them. By September of 1937, the men and women of the UAW had cut 400 companies down to human size.

In a few short months, the face of industry had changed; even its heart had been touched. How deeply, time would tell. New air had entered a lot of old work places. A whole new frontier had opened. A lot of claims were staked. But a wide wilderness remained to be cleared. For men on both sides of bargaining tables, the new freedom brought a new vertigo. A union had been born in struggle. The question now was: how would it live and grow.

FACTIONS PLAGUE THE UNION

The Union's president, Homer Martin, had no chart for rough waters. Management had signed papers, but management's men in the shops too often wanted to believe that the Union was a bad dream from which they would awaken.

As nostalgia and resentment gripped management, so ideology invaded labor. Factions formed. Martin thought he could ride it out with a high hand, flouting the Union constitution, suspending officers, intriguing with the last great holdout in Dearborn. To worsen this time of troubles, the whole country dipped and soured economically.

In this atmosphere of economic stagnation and of uncertainty in the shops, Martin throughout 1938 maneuvered against his Executive Board members, while supervisors and foremen gambled and prayed that unionism was a sometime thing. 1938 slipped away in this fashion, with the 1937 victories imperilled. The year 1939 began with Martin denouncing CIO and meeting on the backstairs with Harry Bennett of the Ford Motor Company.

Martin insisted he had been on the backstairs because they happened to be handy, not because they led to any sell-out. The UAW Executive Board invited him to prove it by coming up with a bona fide agreement with Ford. He was also instructed to call a special convention of the Union.

Martin's response was not to open meetings with Ford, but to suspend 15 of the Board's 24 members. The democracy that auto workers had only yesterday introduced to the shops was being throttled at the heart of their Union.

The hounded majority fought back. Joined by five other officers, the banished 15 removed Martin from office for violating the constitution, elected R. J. Thomas president, and issued a call for a ratifying convention.

MARTIN CALLS RUMP CONVENTION

Martin didn't wait to receive the judgment of the rank-and-file. He rushed headlong down the road to schism. Casting in his lot with the AFL, he called his own convention. The delegates who showed up were noisy, but they spoke for no more than 18,000 workers.

A special convention of the UAW-CIO met in Cleveland the end of that same March to repudiate the Martin regime. The CIO group represented 371,213 members. They weren't all paying their dues regularly, but they still believed in the Union. The Union not as it had faltered and fumbled since the big victories, but as it might be after its wounds had been bound up and its house had been put in order.

The March, 1939, convention gave the UAW-CIO a new lease on life, the possibility of a new militancy, a new sense of purpose and direction. The companies, however, had determined that labor's momentum of 1937 must not be recovered.

A badly shaken corps of managerial personnel had regained enough poise to pretend the Union was a mirage. Grievances piled up in the shops, a wave of firings whetted the appetite of foremen for the shiny apples of yesteryear, word ran that the good old days were waiting in the wings to bring the house down with the famous open-shop routine.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT as President acted boldly to enable labor to organize. His understanding of the problems of everyday people helped America beat back the depression.

MRS. FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT continues to be a champion for working people everywhere; has always supported labor. Here she is at the 1947 UAW Education Conference chatting with Walter P. Reuther.

SPIRITS WERE HIGH when tool and die workers shut down General Motors again in 1939,

a maneuver which caught the Corporation napping; unaware of UAW determination.

General Motors Tries to Break a Divided Union; 1939 Tool and Die Strike Takes GM by Surprise

Martin's split still poisoned the air of the shops. Dual shop committees formed by Martin's lieutenants ran about, clamoring for management's attention, claiming rank-and-file loyalties. It was a temptation management couldn't resist. General Motors moved to exploit the situation, to destroy collective bargaining and smother the Union on its bed of pain.

GM's Mr. Knudsen stepped forward again into the spotlight. With a fine impartiality, and with newfound respect for the National Labor Relations Board, he announced that it was impossible to tell whether the UAW-CIO or Martin's rump caucus represented the auto workers. Chaos would have to reign, Mr. Knudsen indicated, until the NLRB got around to taking representation votes.

Meanwhile, UAW-CIO members of the Briggs Body Corporation struck against the discharge of more than a hundred fellow-workers, winning their reinstatement and advancing much-needed evidence of the continued vitality of the Union.

Even more eloquent testimony would shortly be available, provoked not so much by what Mr. Knudsen said as by what he was thinking, or by what UAW's GM Director Walter Reuther figured he was thinking.

It was common knowledge that UAW's limited bargaining power in 1939 would vanish when the dies for the 1940 models were completed. Reuther, aware that seasonal layoffs were approaching and with them the loss of the Union's economic punch, decided that General Motors was stalling.

BASIC LOYALTY OF WORKERS

Reuther had statistics to prove that over a five-year period the average tool and die maker in the Detroit area worked only six months a year. This was no news to the tool and die makers, but it proved to be the basis of a strategy that was to convince GM that the UAW-CIO still commanded the allegiance of the auto workers.

A few weeks before the 1940 tooling program was completed, the Reuther strategy collided head-on with the Knudsen strategy as GM's tool and die makers, seconded by job-shop colleagues, struck for a wage increase, and production workers lined up to collect unemployment compensation.

A baker's dozen of GM's key tool and die shops went down. For a few violent hours, the men of management tried to believe they could revive the school of brass knuckles and tear gas as an approach to labor relations. For 29 days the jigs and fixtures lay still in the shops. Then, in the first week of August, 1939, General Motors came out of its tent and acknowledged that UAW-CIO, treasury gone, dues down, sorely beset within and without, still lived, still spoke and acted for auto workers.

It was no longer 17 plants. Now GM recognized UAW as spokesman in 42 plants. And there was a wage increase, to sweeten the pot.

Chrysler refused to profit from the GM experience. Arbitrary firing, refusal of wage increases, these reflected the deeper disbelief of Chrysler management that automobile unionism had roots in the needs and hopes of Chrysler workers.

Show us, they said in effect, show us that you mean it. We don't want to live with this reality. Your truth is not ours. Strike, and let the truths clash.

CHRYSLER WORKERS HIT BRICKS

The truths clashed in a 54-day strike. The Chrysler truth was badly flawed with cynicism. The Company tried to manipulate the Negro community, tried to smash the strike with Negro workers. For men denied work because of their color, Chrysler dangled jobs, other men's jobs. The Negroes saw the fist beneath the glove. They refused to play the Company game. At the end of 54 days, Chrysler's truth was wiser and larger. It now included the knowledge that the Union could not be ignored, could not be waved or bludgeoned away.

The NLRB elections that Mr. Knudsen had so eagerly awaited came with the turn of the year. The secret ballots were sharp echoes of the original affirmative voices raised on the picket lines of 1939, high-fidelity recordings of the true sentiments of the rank-and-file.

Packard, UAW-CIO by 4 to 1. Motor Products, UAW-CIO by 10 to 1. Briggs, UAW-CIO by 13 to 1. Thumping votes for UAW-CIO in 11 Chrysler plants.

April was the cruellest month for Mr. Knudsen. In April, 1940, UAW-CIO piled majority on majority to win NLRB votes in 49 GM plants.

Out of the confrontation of truths, a larger definition of democracy had emerged. Men without voices only two years before had cleared their throats and were making sounds that local plant supervisors could now hear above the noise of their machines. The industrial wilderness was being cleared.

Out in Fort Dearborn, however, an old man continued to believe you could have it in any color as long as you wanted it in black.

"I have heard no complaints from our men," Henry Ford said. "There is nothing a union can give them they haven't already got. I haven't given the Wagner Act a thought."

When Henry Ford heard the word unionism, Harry Bennett reached for his blackjack. The old man was an eccentric, but he wanted everybody else to keep in line. When they stepped out for one reason or another, Bennett's Service Department would beat them back. It was like that for a long time.

Time moved around the Rouge works year by year, leaving it rotting in the industrial dark ages. Machines and models changed, old Henry and little Harry went on, almost forever, dishing it out in black to every organizer who tried to get over the moat and across the drawbridge.

The story of how it went on almost forever and then changed is more than a twice-told tale. Nobody wants to remember it now, except that it can't be forgotten. It can only be lived down by remembering it, by making every minute of the present and future a prayer and a resolve that it will never happen again.

FORD SHOWDOWN APPROACHED

When UAW-CIO turned from General Motors and Chrysler in 1940 for the climactic struggle with Ford, the wounds were still bleeding, the broken bones had still not mended, the reign of terror that kept Ford workers in line was still a way of life and death within the few square miles of earth where old Henry Ford held history at bay.

The beatings that Bennett's men had given Union organizers in Kansas City and Dallas were green memories. The swollen faces of Reuther and Frankensteen after the beating they got on the Ford overpass in May of '37, the fractured skull and the broken back of the men assaulted at the Ford gates the same bloody day, all the violence and terror in all the plants from Edgewater, New Jersey, to Long Beach, California, had entered into the blood of the old man's industrial arteries to provoke a resistance that would lay the old ways low.

Harry Bennett and his boys had shaken them up in the aisles once too often. The job selling, the extortion, the intimidation, the speed-up, had corrupted some, had broken many, had really worked, almost but not quite forever.

Beginning in 1940, the day of reckoning approached. The waves began to lap against the feet of the old empire-builder. Against every shop rule, a new tide was coming in. Under the very eyes of the Gestapo, fear changed to defiance.

It hadn't caused Ford any thought when the NLRB found his Company guilty of unfair labor practices in Detroit in 1939. As 1940 began to break against the battlements, NLRB decision after NLRB decision went against Company lawyers, against the Ford myth of being a sovereign state within the nation. Ford was ordered to reinstate hundreds of workers, to pay millions of dollars in back pay. Here was food for thought. Ford appealed.

BENNETT REWRITES CONSTITUTION

At the same time, UAW forced a test of the constitutionality of an anti-handbill ordinance in Dearborn. Harry Bennett, who was something of a comic genius, had told the Dearborn Common Council that handbilling in front of the plant would cause traffic snarls. Determined to keep traffic moving at all costs including sacrifice of the Bill of Rights, the city fathers had delivered themselves of the ordinance.

Bennett's re-write of the American Constitution had not been ratified by the Congress or any state legislature. UAW President Thomas went out to Dearborn with a handbill crew and got himself arrested, putting Ford's decree to the test. Judge Lila Neuenfelt, a womanly justice of the peace who had read the American Constitution recently and who had the courage of several lion tamers, weighed Harry Bennett's ordinance in the scales of her profession and found it lighter than hot air.

With devastating candor, she declared her finding: the Dearborn anti-handbill ordinance was unconstitutional, both by United States and by Michigan standards.

UAW handbillers came back. The written word flowed freely again in Dearborn. Armed with warrants drawn from a more pliable justice, Dearborn police went through the motions of arranging a number of arrests. Judge Lila Neuenfelt, who had refused to issue warrants, was waiting in her court. As quickly as the police brought in the UAW handbillers she freed them.

Bennett, still playing for laughs, offered to have his own men distribute UAW handbills inside the Ford plant if UAW distributors would take a walk. Thanks, Harry, but no thanks, said the unionists. So free speech crowded in, right up to the gates, bringing Ford facts to Ford workers.

THE RIGHT TO SMOKE AT WORK

Ford's multi-million dollar stable of lawyers fought an expensive delaying action through the courts. The findings of the NLRB were upheld by the Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati. Ford went higher. In February, 1941, the Supreme Court of the United States refused to review the lower court ruling. The Ford bulletin boards of February 18, 1941, carried an announcement that the Company would comply with the law.

Henry Ford was alone now with his workers and their Union. News that the king was naked spread through the empire. At Lincoln and at Highland Park, men won the right to smoke. And where there was smoke, there was fire. Union wildfire. In every department, stewards were elected. Grievances began to move toward settlement. It looked like an end and a beginning.

And it was. There was a desperate, eleventh-hour resurgence of the goons as they sensed their dominion crumble. They came down the aisles once more, ripping off Union buttons, transferring or firing key unionists.

It was too late. Ford workers this time fought back. Ten departments were brought to a standstill by strike. The NLRB was deluged with new charges against the Company. UAW applied for elections in three Ford plants. Hundreds of Ford workers signed Union cards daily.

Harry Bennett didn't believe it was the end of an era. He repeated the Ford promise to obey the law, then added: "We will bargain till hell freezes over but they won't get anything."

At midnight on April 1, 1941, the Ford Rouge plant fell silent. Harry Bennett's hell froze over, and the Ford workers marched across it together to freedom.

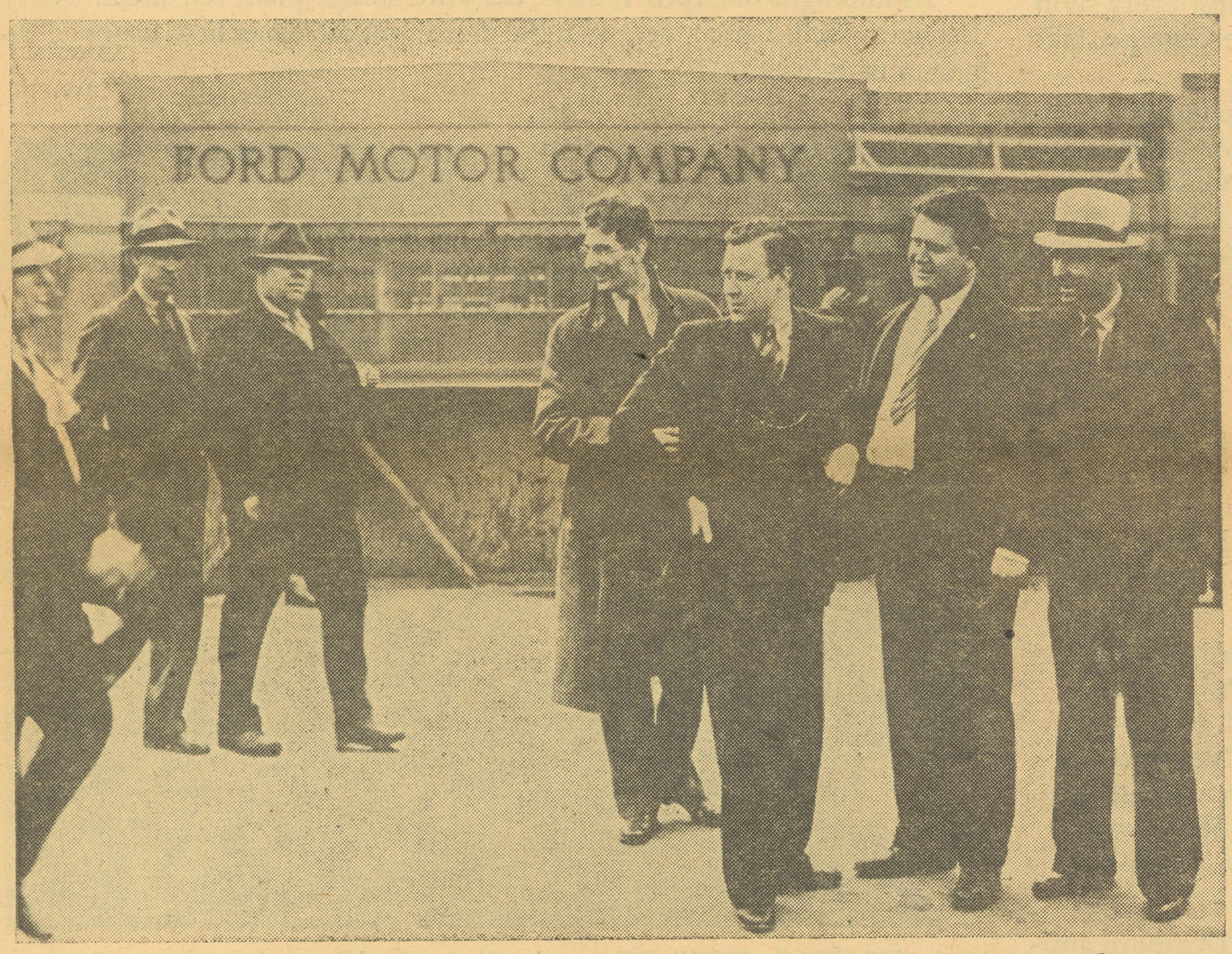
KANSAS CITY, Missouri—Sixteen pickets, members of the United Automobile Workers of America, a CIO affiliate, are shown being booked after arrest for attempted picketing at the Ford assembly plant here. The UAWA called a strike here on December 10 where Company officials protested recently there was inadequate police protection, and 150 police promptly arrested all 49 men who attempted picketing.

(The cutlines above which Wide World Photos sent with this 1937 picture was an omen of the frenzy in Ford's future.)

THIS WAS FLINT IN 1937, tear gas and tommy guns. It was an approach to labor relations which GM had in the back of its mind as late as 1939 and which was being developed to a fine point at Ford.

The Famous '37 Battle of the Overpass

UAW ORGANIZERS CHAT PEACEFULLY with reporters and a visiting minister blandly unaware of the trouble developing. The UAW organizers are, l. to r., Robert Kanter, Walter Reuther, Dick Frankensteen and Jack Kennedy. They're standing on the overpass by the Rouge waiting for handbillers to arrive.



SMILES FADE as trouble—the Ford Service Department—moves in. The man in the center of the Ford trio is Wilfred Comment, then superintendent of the B Building. The others are servicemen, in other words, thugs.

THE SERVICEMEN immediately go to work. Frankensteen is getting his lumps in the center. Reuther is surrounded; gets worked over. Serviceman in left foreground, having run out of a victim, menaces photographer.

Ford Empire

Ford cried havoc and let slip the dogs of industrial violence for a last round of rioting. Bennett put on a good show, sponsoring a fake sitdown with hired strikebreakers. Bennett's master appealed to an old enemy, Franklin Roosevelt, to save him from the Reds. But it was American history that was closing in on the old man. Time no longer bypassed the Rouge works. Ford was moving now in the mainstream. The Ford Motor Company, it could be said in more than one sense, had been brought into the Union.

The strike of the Ford workers lasted 10 days and ended with the Company's agreement to recognize the Union's grievance procedure and to abide by the results of a secret vote of the 83,000 qualified Ford workers in the Detroit area.

When that vote was taken on May 21, 1941, 70 out of every 100 workers polled voted for the UAW-CIO. The first union contract with Ford was signed on June 21, 1941. The Ford workers had won a substantial victory, a staggering annual pay increase, and a kind of peace with honor and hope.

Peace, however, was indivisible. There was a shooting war in Europe. It was five months before Pearl Harbor.

In five short years, the automobile workers had won enough everyday equity in the plants to give a certain substance to the slogan "Detroit, arsenal of democracy." During the next five, those who were left behind to machine the tools of victory in war fought a holding action against the mock patriots of both extremes to keep the substance in the slogan.

Long before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor had bombed us out of a lingering dream of neutrality, the auto workers and their Union had attacked the folly of trying to live and do business as usual in a world on fire.

FACING REALITIES OF WAR

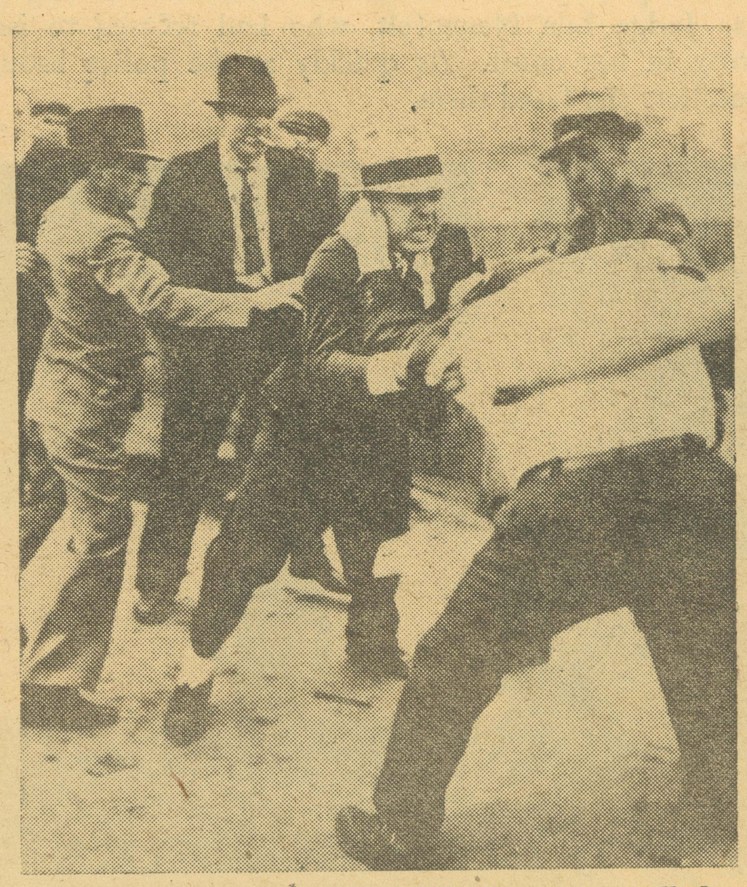
In the summer of 1940, with France prostrate under the Nazi panzer divisions and with Britain braced to take the shock of total war alone, American industry's dollar-a-year men were warming chairs in Washington and mile after mile of chrome-bright peacetime cars were still snaking off Detroit's assembly lines,

This daydream of production and profits as usual was interrupted suddenly by a proposal of Walter Reuther that the entire industry use its excess capacity for the mass production of military planes.

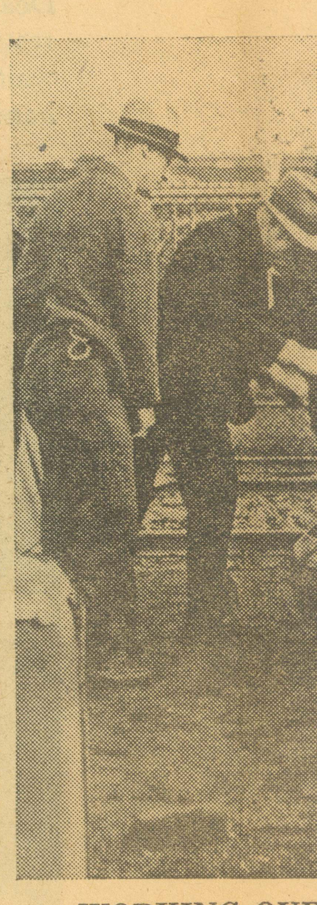
President Philip Murray of CIO took the Reuther plan to the White House along with a CIO proposal for the all-out mobilization of American industry. From the White House, the plan went to the dollar-a-year men of the Office of Production Management. Chief of production for OPM was none other than Mr. Knudsen of General Motors. For the second time in five years, auto workers were embarrassing auto manufacturers by proposing new models in ideas.

The idea that auto plants could be used to produce planes and other war materiel did not sit well with manufacturers during that blazing summer of 1940. It did not sit well with them that fall and winter as they continued to call the Reuther plan impractical. And throughout 1941 they clung to the illusion that American industry would wage a comfortable part-time war, holding off aggression with one hand while dickering for favorable amortization terms with the other.

Events never quite shattered this illusion, but the conversion forced on the country by Pearl Harbor demonstrated the practicality of Reuther's fundamental notion: a whole industry could shift its plants and tools from civil to military production.



EXPERTS IN ACTION! His coat pulled over his head—an old Serviceman trick—Frankensteen gets pummeled.



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UAW-CIO joined with CIO and the AFL in making a pledge to relinquish labor's right to strike for the war's duration. UAW never relinquished its right and what it regarded as its duty to protect the job rights and the job standards of auto workers, those who left the plants for the armed forces and those who were left behind.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN UNIFORM

At the peak of its wartime membership, UAW had almost as many members in the armed services as there had been in the whole Union in the spring of 1941. Even as the Ford drive culminated that spring, another vast effort had begun in the aircraft industry that had bubbled up from handicraft obscurity to the status of mass-production giant with war's approach.

Plants of the Curtis-Wright Company, of North American Aviation, of Douglas, Goodyear, and Vought-Sikorsky were organized by UAW-CIO. In November, 1943, UAW membership stood at 1,222,566, with more than 250,000 members in the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

Numerically, the auto workers could boast of having the largest trade union in the world, less than 10 years after somebody watching closely from the sidelines had called UAW the least influential union in any major industry. But unionism was not a numbers game.

In the beginning, the number had been zero. The Union had been only an idea in the minds of the men in the shops. It was still an idea, and it could only live as long as the idea was communicated to the numbers. For there was solidarity in numbers only if the numbers knew the meaning of solidarity.

Meanings don't come clear overnight. The meanings of unionism didn't come clear to the owners and managers overnight. They didn't seem to understand that an American auto worker could want a union for American reasons. They kept looking for Russian reasons in American actions. They didn't get the meaning of the American auto worker's basic gripe in the days when Detroit was neither the arsenal of democracy nor the cradle of liberty, only a wilderness of factories where creatures of flesh and blood bucked the lines until the flesh weakened and the blood thinned.

NEWCOMERS TO THE UNION

By the time of Pearl Harbor, the union idea had taken root and pushed up some leaves, but it was still regarded as an exotic plant not only by management but by many of the men, women, and children who did war work. A lot of these newcomers had never heard of what had happened at the Ford overpass or at the Battle of the Running Bulls. They thought a union was a paper you signed. They were organized rather than unionized, and there was no time in wartime to work out the larger and deeper meanings of belonging to something that included millions of others besides number one.

There was also the problem of mental holdouts in management whose commitment to the struggle against the Nazis was bounded on the north by cost-plus profits and on the south by a constant itch to knock unionism down and drag it out to the tune of the Star-Spangled Banner.

The auto workers who were left on the home front were bound to the men in the forces by ties of blood and solidarity. They couldn't separate

AFTER THE OVERPASS, the UAW continued its handbilling efforts. This Ford worker likely is as impressed by the courage of these Murray Body workers as he is by their message.

themselves from those who had gone. They couldn't feel good about watching relatives and friends going off to lay their lives in the balance when they themselves were fated to give only of their time, their sweat, and their energy in the war plants. They didn't feel good about the slogans that wafted in the breeze over the homefront arsenals like the public-relations flags proclaiming that here a factory full of men and women had worked hard and well for the common victory. They knew there was no way of striking a balance between a job well done and a life offered.

All they could try to do beyond the daily job was hold the democratic ground already gained against hysterical pressures, save enough of the newly-won democracy in the plants to keep faith with those who had left to fight dictatorship abroad. All they could do was sweat it out and get it over, so that when the killing was done there would be firmer and higher ground for living. And do it in a spinning and rolling situation beyond the control of any group of men, whether labor or management, whether civilians or soldiers.

BATTLES FOR DECENCY AT HOME

UAW and other unionists shouldered their way into the wartime alphabetical agencies to protect the wage earner and consumer interest against the indifference or hostility of the prophets of boom.

From whatever vantage point they could reach, UAW representatives made rude noises whenever local unionists tipped them off about the waste of critical materials.

They fought for price controls and rent controls.

They breathed a degree of life into a number of joint labor-management production committees.

They worked to check plant stoppages when stoppages occurred despite the no-strike pledge. Above all, they worked to prevent stoppages before they occurred by settling grievances that arose when a die-hard management minority deliberately blurred the distinction between patriotism and pushing workers around.

Those were the war years, a continuous holding action on any number

KING OVER continues as a un- goes down. Notice the hand- Comment's pocket at left.

A BATTERED REUTHER and Frankensteen talk to reporters AFTER they've been cleaned up following beating.

FORD HOSPITALITY shows clearly when the overpass victims appear in court. Left to right are: Alvin Stickle, Reuther and Kanter.

UAW LEADERS watch the ranks form at the Rouge for the start of the 1941 Ford strike. They are, l. to r., Michael Widman, Walter Reuther, Jim Morgan, George Addes and Harry Ross.

of important home fronts until those who had gone away came back. Some of the relatives and friends did not return. There was no man-made scale that could take the measure of these personal losses. Together they pointed to a fact of life: no union of men for whatever purpose could settle for small answers and forget the big questions.

Workers whose families depended on take-home pay for survival could never ignore the importance of another quarter in the pay envelope. Yet neither could they cut themselves off from the wider movements of men and events, whether in Detroit or Washington or the remotest world capital.

The wider definition that auto workers gave to trade unionism was not a freak or a fluke. It didn't come out of R. J. Thomas' head or Walter Reuther's head or Emil Mazey's head. It came out of Pearl Harbor and D-Day. It came to the door with the telegram from Washington that began, we regret to inform you that your son, your brother, your husband . . .

POSTWAR PROBLEMS FACE UNION

The postwar years of the UAW were a struggle to narrow the gap between nickel-unionism and nickel-management on the one hand and the liberated atom on the other.

They began with a public dialogue between the world's largest Union and the world's largest Corporation on the subject of wages, prices, and profits.

The case of the General Motors workers was advanced in a brief, "Purchasing Power for Prosperity," presented to the Corporation by UAW's GM Director Walter Reuther in October, 1945.

The Union asked for a maintenance of the wartime level of real wages, a maintenance of purchasing power in the peacetime economy.

Since workers were bearing the cost of reconversion in loss of overtime and in lower hourly rates, the Union asked a 30 per cent increase in wages. The UAW brief showed that industry could grant such an increase without raising prices.

American durable goods industries had come out of the war in wonderful financial condition. The automobile industry was one of the most profitable, and General Motors was one of the most profitable of the auto industry's corporations.

WAGE BOOST WITHOUT PRICE RISE

The relationships that would govern the peacetime economy were rapidly being fixed. Congress was rushing tax relief to business, a lush peacetime market was eager to satisfy pent-up demand for industrial products. Everything pointed to years of peaceful prosperity, of capacity operations and record profits—if the right relationship between wages, prices, and profits could be found at the bargaining table.

UAW wanted to find that proper relationship not only for its own members but for all workers and consumers. It wanted, in the words of Walter Reuther, to make progress with the community and not at the expense of the community. The community interest in the winter of 1945-46 demanded higher wages without higher prices. It demanded that wage earners get enough purchasing power to consume the ever increasing flow of goods released by American know-how.

There was little serious quarrel with these general propositions, as they were advanced by the Union. The trouble started when Union negotiators tried to explore the relationship of wages, prices, and profits at the bargaining table. It was then that they ran head-on into the concept of the Corporation as a sovereign state within the nation.

GM did not, could not, deny that there was some connection between wages, prices, and profits. GM could not, either, affirm with a straight face that prices of GM cars were not set by its own calculations but by some impersonal law of economics revealed to Charles Wilson in a flash of lightning and a crash of thunder on the summit of the GM Building.

Since the connection existed, UAW negotiators said, let's explore it. Let's remove collective bargaining from the jungle of name-calling and table-pounding and place it in a civilized compound of facts and figures.

GM replied, in effect: We don't want to leave the jungle. There is a connection between wages, prices, and profits, they agreed, but only management knew what it was. It wasn't anybody else's business. It was in industry's safe and industry's combination, and would you please stop twirling the dial.

This was no high school debate. The whole country was listening because Detroit was democracy's peacetime proving ground, and nobody wanted to be downgraded into depression by a leaking away of purchasing power that could begin in Detroit and end in national and world catastrophe.

There was another issue, unvoiced yet present in the minds of negotiators. Nobody wanted to mention it because it involved the ugly concept of power, and power outside of the technical field is supposed to be unAmerican. Bluntly put, it was this: How strong was the Union, after the wartime interval? How much pushing around could industry do, how much pushing around would the workers and their Union take in the closed, everyday world of the plants when the public was looking somewhere else and the worker and the foreman were alone?

It was a bleak question but it was a real one put by practical men to themselves in the still of the night. How deep were the roots, how strong were the loyalties, how green were the memories? What were the chances of unmaking some modern history? In a word, was the UAW a coral island that might sink back into the sea or was it a firmly-held beachhead from which the future could be taken?

GM Tests the Union

It was an old question, it had been answered before, most management men no longer asked it or answered it with complete seriousness. It didn't take a front seat at the conference table, it just leaned back against the wall and blew smoke rings. But it was there.

It was there because nothing is ever static, nothing is ever automatic, nothing is sure forever. A union is people and people change. People learn and forget things, they carry some things with them and leave others along the side of the road. The managers of General Motors had been dealing with the UAW, in one fashion or another, for almost 10 years. They were still probing the Union tissues that knitted auto workers one to another. They still wanted to be shown that the Union was living tissue and not a maintenance of membership order of the War Labor Board.

They really knew the answer but they wanted to be shown. They refused to bargain on the relationship between wages, prices, and profits, although this relationship was a matter of public concern. The accent shifted from free enterprise to private enterprise.

Against the UAW position of seeking a wage increase out of industrial profits without disturbing the level of prices, General Motors placed an offer and a threat: the offer was a wage rise in the stage money of

MISSILES FROM INSIDE thrown by Bennettmen caused pickets to scurry. In the foreground is "Gravyboat" Jones, then chairman of Pressed Steel Unit.

EARLY IN 1941 members of the UAW Auxiliary distributed copies of the United Automobile Worker following a ruling by the U. S. Supreme Court.

WOMEN HELPED keep up morale and "manned" the soup kitchen in all the major strikes. This scene could have been in any one of scores of strike headquarters.

THE SIGNS at Flint showed Solidarity, but GM had to be convinced.

THE LINE GREW until the block-big General Motors main offices were completely circled by pickets marching 10 and 12 abreast.

inflation. The threat to break through the last flimsy price barriers still standing in postwar Washington and force the general public to pick up the tab for the wage increase in the form of higher automobile prices.

General Motors, to keep its profit margin intact, tried to talk UAW negotiators into the old rut of nickel unionism, tried to get them to settle for a money gain that would be here today and gone tomorrow.

The Union team bargained in behalf of the principle of higher real wages, of greater purchasing power as a national base for lasting prosperity and full employment.

A NEW ROAD TO SECURITY

The GM workers, through their Union, tried to tell the country they were tired of the old treadmill, of the old private deal behind the public's back in which everybody lost. They wanted to set out on a new road leading upward to security and abundance, even if they had to take the first hard steps themselves to point the way.

They took those first hard steps in the General Motors strike of the 1945-1946 winter. The picket shacks went up again, the lines formed. Men who had known the worse winter of '36-'37 told newcomers as they warmed themselves at coke fires and in union halls that things hadn't changed much, you still had to struggle every step of the way.

Things hadn't changed much perhaps, but one matter was settled. The question lurking at the back of many minds was given an answer that would hold for a long time as human affairs go. The Union was a living tissue of minds and hearts and loyalties, not a maintenance of membership order of the War Labor Board.

The GM workers had gone on strike on November 21, 1945. On December 21, President Truman's Fact-Finding Board in the GM-UAW dispute declared that "ability to pay will be regarded as one of the factors relevant to the issue of an increase in wages."

One week later, GM sent Walter Gordon Merritt, whose union-busting experience went back as far as the Danbury Hatters' Case of 1908, to appear before the Board. Merritt's appearance was brief. He stated that the Corporation "feels that it should not participate" in the Board's proceedings "so long as ability to pay is to be treated as a subject of investigation, fact-finding and recommendations."

GM AND THE SOCIETY OF SENTINELS

Shortly before the Board published its findings, a series of nationwide ads sponsored by a "Society of Sentinels" proposed the repeal of all the social legislation of the past generation: the National Labor Relations Act, the Wage and Hour Act, the Social Security Act, all federal laws for the control of prices and all laws to aid farmers; and an end to all appropriations for federal housing.

Revealed as a vice-chairman of the Sentinels a few days later was Stephen DuBrul, chief economist for General Motors and a member of the GM bargaining team.

GM President C. E. Wilson had said it wasn't so, but the facts proved him blushingly wrong.

President Truman's fact-finders reported their findings: GM could grant a wage increase of 19½ cents an hour without raising prices.

That was January 10. On January 11, apparently without much consideration of the Board's report, GM turned it down. The strike, however, could still have been settled on the basis of the Board's ruling, for the Union agreed to scale down its demand to the Board's figure. A national conference of GM workers wired President Truman that production could resume if GM would accept the 19½-cent figure, reinstate the old contract, and negotiate a settlement of local plant issues.

The Board ruling had vindicated the Union's position that GM was able to grant a substantial wage increase without raising prices. The 19½-cent figure, while it did not meet the GM workers' full equity, could be considered a down payment on future increases as GM production rose in the postwar years.

GM ASSAULTS PRICE BARRIER

But, as the UAW stated at the time, wages were no longer the major issue. The major issue was prices. With assurance of tax rebates, GM wasn't concerned about getting back into production. GM was interested in cracking the flimsy price barrier in Washington.

GM's Charles Wilson put it bluntly at a hearing of the Senate Committee on Education and Labor. "If you want higher wages paid you are going to have to have higher prices," he said.

He drove his point home with the observation that if the country was going to "hold the line on prices then we'll have to worry along with strikes and all take a big loss."

The agreement reached on March 13, 1946, on the afternoon of the strike's 113th day, granted a retroactive hourly wage increase of 13½ cents from November 7, 1945, and an 18½-cent hourly increase beginning with the return to work. Correction of plant inequities brought the GM settlement up to the level of the fact-finding board's 19½-cent figure.

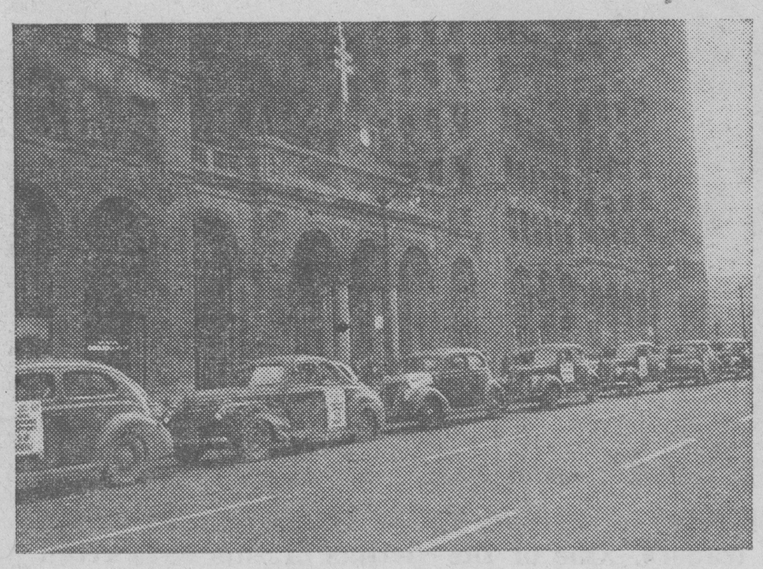
But the economic encounter had been inconclusive, not because GM couldn't comfortably pay out of profits the wage increase the GM workers won, but because industry's assault on price controls was soon successful. The inflationary pressures the GM workers had resisted for 113 days proved irresistible. GM and industry generally regarded the higher rate to wage earners as a cheap price to pay for the chance of blaming labor for inflation.

The next years would be a series of encounters on the economic front. The principles advanced in General Motors negotiations of 1945 would be elaborated and given workaday life in the plants, finding their way into the clauses of contracts and laying the bases of a new wage strategy to protect auto workers and other wage earners against the risks of an inflationary economy dominated by bigger and bigger business.

THE ESCALATOR CLAUSE IS BORN

After 113 days of picket-line bargaining, 12 cents of the 18½ cents gained by the General Motors workers in 1946 was money that had earlier been filched from their pockets by rising prices. It was catch-up money, not live-better money, keep-the-wolf-from-the-door money, not send-your-son-to-college money.

And it would be gone again as the treadmill turned. The next encounter would have to give contract life to the principle for which the GM workers had walked picket lines after the war. The treadmill would have to be turned into an escalator. A wage earner's income would have to keep pace with price levels. Purchasing power wasn't the theory of some

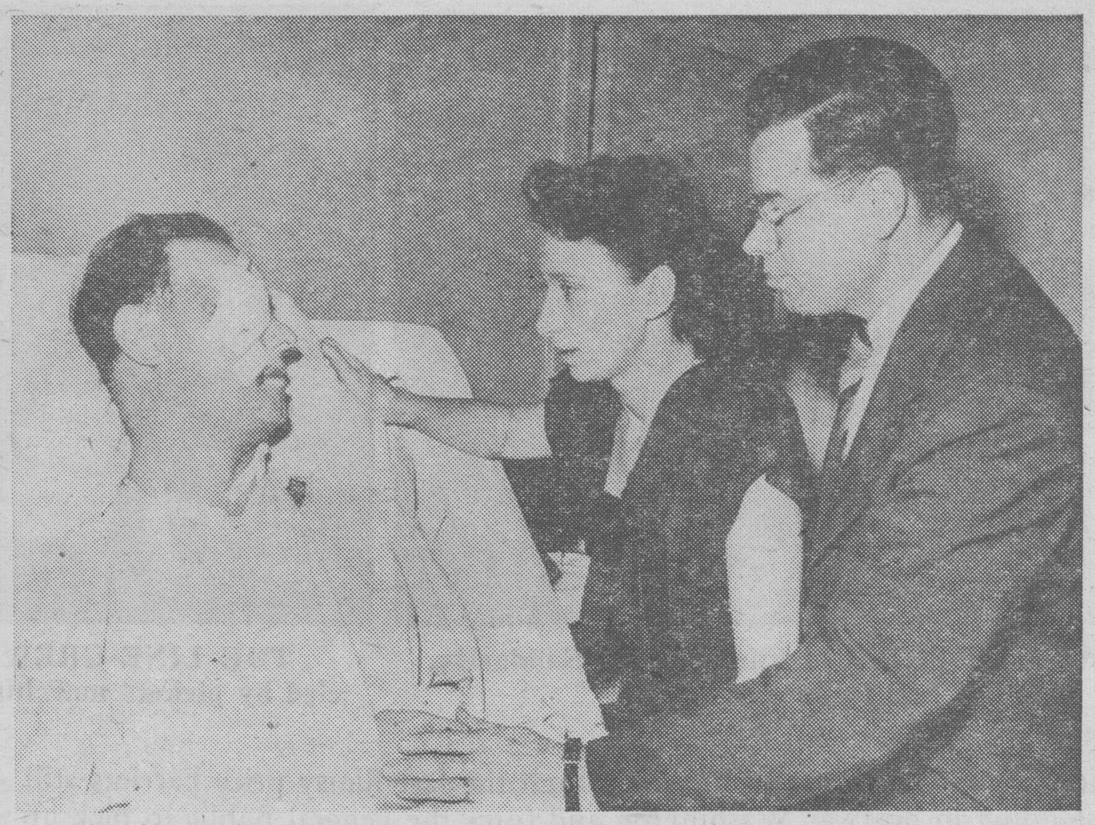


FORD WORKERS completely surrounded GM's main offices with a Solidarity motorcade rolling bumper to bumper.

THE PICKETLINE stretched from coast-to-coast. This was the Linden, New Jersey, struggle against GM's might.

AC WORKERS in Flint already were veterans of the picketline. They kept marching to prove their determination.

A SHOTGUN BLAST into the Reuther home just missed ending the life of the UAW President in April of 1948. Mrs. May Reuther sat many anxious hours by his hospital bedside after the assassination attempt on her husband's life.



ANOTHER ASSASSINATION effort, a shotgun blast in the Victor Reuther home, came near taking the life of Victor Reuther, then UAW Education Director. He is shown here in his hospital bed with his brother, Roy, and wife, Sophie.

economist. It was what made the worker a consumer and what kept the merchant in business.

UAW kept the principle alive in 1947 negotiations, but it was not until the 1948 contract with General Motors that the principle was written into a formal agreement. With it came another new departure in wage bargaining, contract recognition of the worker's right to benefit from the rising proficiency of American tools.

An escalator to keep you even with prices, a share and a stake in rising productivity. These twin fruits of the General Motors postwar struggle were now gracefully accepted by Corporation representatives. They would keep the worker abreast of change.

"You have ably presented labor's case," the Corporation's letter to the Union read. But labor's case was not all in. And labor's case at home had been complicated again by things that happened to the peace in other countries.

The wartime alliance that had held the postwar world together had fallen apart. American friends overseas were still struggling out of the economic and physical ruins of war. What the Communists couldn't take with their action squads, as in Czechoslovakia, they were close to taking through domination of French and Italian trade unions and political parties.

FACTIONALISM CREEPS IN

The United States faced a clear choice: Either support our friends, the free governments and free unions of Europe, or let them go down one by one, until we stood alone against the Red imperialists. Either give Europe the food and the machines whose lack bred the misery and bitterness Communism exploits—or lull ourselves with the old isolationist dream that we could go forward alone while the rest of the world was dragged back into slavery.

That was the creeping crisis of 1946, 1947, 1948. It was written large in the headlines. Its consequences were felt in the Union even as auto workers faced the daily economic round in the plants.

Another factional struggle weakened the UAW. This struggle had its roots in a basic conflict between the vast majority of wage earners who were trade unionists for the best American reasons and a small but hard-working minority who took their cues from the foreign policy line of the Soviet Union.

The Communist minority had begun to make trouble during the war. In 1940, after the Stalin pact with Hitler, American Stalinists fomented strikes to disrupt the flow of supplies to the embattled British. After Hitler's attack on Russia and the United States entry into the war, the American Communist party's line shifted to a policy of utter surrender of labor's position in the plants.

In each instance, the American interest was ruthlessly and cynically cast aside. But as long as the Communists were supporting the war, they were not seriously molested and only within the labor movement was there a true appreciation of the threat they posed to free institutions. At a time when Eddie Rickenbacker and other industrialists were making goodwill visits to Russia and returning with glowing reports on the new Soviet ruling groups, only within the trade unions was the true record kept, against the day when the line would change again.

COMMUNIST AIMS SQUASHED

At the 1941 UAW convention, the Union's International constitution was amended to bar Communists, Fascists and Nazis from elective or appointive office in both the International and in local unions. Everybody knew it was easier to amend the constitution than to smoke out a Stalinist during the all-out-for-victory phase of Communist tactics. But the record was being written, the ground was being prepared for the inevitable showdown.

The election of Walter Reuther to the presidency of the UAW at the Atlantic City Convention of 1946 signalled the beginning of the end of Communist influence in the Union. Reuther came out of the 1946 engagement surrounded by a hostile executive board determined to block his every move.

Hope lay in the rank and file. In one year there was a quiet revolution in the shops and union halls. Out of it came a 1947 Convention triumph of a new leadership team solidly grounded in rank-and-file support and firmly committed to a progressive, militant trade-union program, in which the workers' interests as wage earner and citizen would be paramount; a program which identified those interests with the interests of the national and world community of freedom-loving peoples.

Shots Out of Darkness

The defeat of the Communist element in the UAW was the prelude to their general ejection from the American labor movement. UAW and CIO swung their support behind the Marshall Plan, which the Communists had opposed. At the bargaining tables, the 1948 gain of the cost-of-living escalator and the annual improvement clause represented the first major steps in applying a general economic program.

One April evening of 1948, a shotgun fired through the kitchen window of a Detroit home almost took the life of the UAW president. The shooting of Walter Reuther—like the later attempt on the life of his brother Victor—is still an open case. The assailants are still at large. Whoever they are, there can be little doubt that although they aimed at the Reuther brothers they were trying to lay low a brand of unionism, and were prepared to commit murder to do it.

The Reuther shootings shattered for a time whatever illusions may have been in the air about latter-day unionism's blue skies, happy days, and easy progress. They were a harsh call back to a frequently unpleasant, even tragic, reality. There were no automatic gains, no easy conquests.

UAW's wage program broke with an older notion that there was nothing wrong with the working man or woman that another few cents in the pocket couldn't cure. Auto workers didn't lose their interest in wage gains. They simply added to that interest a demand that the gains they

BRIGGS THUGS tried to scare away the Union with merciless beatings for Union leaders. One of the victims of this 1946 reign of terror was Ken Morris, then a militant officer of Local 212 and now co-director of Region 1. He is shown recovering from a vicious beating by hired goons.

made be lasting, not just intermittent bribes to keep them quiet during the life of a contract, money that looked real but wasn't.

The new program was based on building fundamental principles into contract language. The money gains would flow from the principle. And each principle would respond to a specific economic need or aspiration of the wage earner.

TOO OLD TO WORK; TOO YOUNG TO DIE

The principle of the escalator clause was one aspect of the new program. The principle of the annual improvement clause was another. After the principles were established, the money gains in each category followed.

Another fundamental principle, first established in the Ford contract of 1949, arose from a fact of life familiar to all men, but brought home as sharply as anywhere in the auto towns: a man grows old, he has so much work in him, so much allotted time and energy to pour into the productive stream.

What happened to a man when the wells of time and energy ran thin? What had the conditions of work in industry enabled him to fish out of the stream and save for himself and his family when he was too old to work and too young to die? Did a man who had poured his life's blood into industry's iron veins deserve more from industry at the end of the line than a certificate of merit or a gold watch?

Nobody had asked these questions of auto manufacturers and stayed for an answer—until UAW negotiators sat down with a Ford Motor Company management group in June, 1949.

There hadn't really been enough time. In the old days before the Union, there wasn't even a seniority system. With the birth of the Union had come the seniority system, first line of defense of the worker against premature economic death.

Pension questions were in the air during the war, but so was the Luftwaffe, and the auto workers had put first things first.

The questions were raised again in 1946, but the immediate danger of inflation took priority. With the levelling off of living costs in 1948, the UAW announced that pension demands would have top billing in the 1949 encounter.

TENSION MOUNTS OVER PENSIONS

Editorial writers reached for their squirt guns. Industry's Cassandras reached for their crystal balls, found disaster around the corner. Pensions were impractical, like everything else workers had wanted and needed.

UAW locals received a letter from the International Union, alerting them to the imminence of the pension drive. A UAW Education Conference of 2,500 key delegates from the locals was centered on the pension demands.

In February, 1949, the UAW called an International Economic Conference on pensions. In April the Union's National Ford Conference, an assembly of Ford workers from all the Ford plants, met to discuss and prepare the pension demands.

A new Company line violating old agreements on line speeds provoked a strike on May 5 in the Rouge B Building and in the Lincoln plant. These issues had to be cleared away before pension talks could start. The strike was settled on May 29. On June 2, UAW negotiators walked into a room and sat down on one side of a table. They had come to talk pensions with Ford. The Union had decided to stay for an answer.

Ford's first answer was unpleasant. The Company not only rejected the UAW demand. It proposed an 18-month freeze on all economic issues.

Chrysler negotiations began. Back in the plants, Ford workers were taking strike votes, on the ground that one wintry answer deserved another.

The situation was tense and uncertain as UAW held its Milwaukee Convention, beginning on July 10 of that year. Delegates backed pension demands by voting emergency strike assessments. The currents that ran toward strike were strong. It wasn't freezing weather.

Back in Detroit, the clock in the conference room ticked off ninety days of fruitless bargaining. The Union gave strike notice under the law.

OLDTIMERS GATHER AT CASS TECH

Then the Union held a new kind of labor rally. It was a gathering of men whose seniority status had been written, over long years, in the color of their hair and in the lines of their faces. It was a caucus of veterans and pioneers, who had lived through the dark ages of an empire, when time had moved around the Rouge works and every foreman was a king. It was a gathering of the oldest and most honorable clan.

They packed the auditorium of Cass Technical School to hear Walter Reuther, who had been a Ford worker himself, talk about the old days that had gone and the new days that were still coming.

CHRYSLER WORKERS shoulder their picket signs before "closing 'er down" for the 1948 strike. Chrysler always had to be convinced workers would strike if they had to.

Reuther told them about the time back in 1932 when he and other skilled trades workers in the B building were lined up twice in the same day and given two wage cuts, ten cents an hour before lunch and a nickel after.

"We went back after lunch," he remembered. "Since there was no revolution, they thought, hell, these guys liked that, so they lined us up and took another nickel away after lunch." After 17 years, it was funny.

Then there was talk about pensions and Reuther made a pledge. There would be, he said, no 1949 contract at Ford unless a pension plan found its way into the agreement. There was no dissenting voice.

Over in the conference room there were dissenting voices, but it got harder and harder to hear them against the rumble in the plants and the sound of the clock as it measured out the final hours.

Ford was bargaining now. The freeze had become a spring thaw, although it was late in September.

There were 36 hours to go. As they wound from the clock into the transcript, a new day came through the windows and touched the lined faces of the negotiators, making them look older than when they had first come into the room to talk pension.

It was as if the hours at the table had become years in the plants. It was as if Union and management had found agreement on the debt industry owed its veterans by sitting down in a room and growing old in 36 hours.

PENSIONS FOR FORD WORKERS

Talking about averages, ratios, and percentages, the men in the room had lived again the lives of Ford workers from the dark ages when all the cars were black to the first light of the newest day, when a little more color would be the fashion, both in cars and lives.

A new day had come to Ford. A great business was no longer too big to be human. The date was September 29, 1949.

FORD OLDTIMERS set up their own picketline during the 1949 UAW-Ford pension negotiations. Union negotiators pointed to them and said, "They're what the pension demand is all about," and the Union kept faith with its senior members.

Chrysler Workers Win Pension Strike

The Ford pension plan was the first pension program won through collective bargaining in any mass-production industry. It was the first to embody the three basic principles of a sound pension program:

1) The non-contributory principle: management financing.
2) The actuarially-sound principle: creation of a trust fund into which the Company pays cost of both past and future service credits.
3) The equal-representation principle: program administered by a joint Union-management board.

One week after the Ford settlement, the steel industry leadership was still unable to read the handwriting on the Ford Motor Company's wall. Five hundred thousand steelworkers had to strike to win a pension program that included the non-contributory principle.

CHRYSLER FORCES LONG STRIKE

At Chrysler, management's vision was even more gravely impaired. Negotiations there had begun on July 6, 1949. On January 8, 1950, more than 800 Chrysler local union officers, committeemen, and shop stewards met and recommended that a strike deadline be set.

On January 10, the UAW Chrysler Division leadership decided to serve a seven-day strike notice. Chrysler workers had already, in September of the previous year, voted eight to one in favor of strike action.

There had been little serious bargaining. Chrysler wasn't having any new days, any pioneering or industrial statesmanship. Chrysler was having a strike, which began at 10 a. m. of Wednesday morning, January 25, 1950, and lasted every day of 100 days.

The Chrysler contract, slated to live until August, 1950, was terminated by the strike. The Union, in the strike's third week, served a series of non-economic demands on the Corporation.

UAW International moved to collect the special strike assessment voted by the last convention. There was a mass rally in the State Fair Coliseum attended by 25,000 Chrysler workers.

NLRB votes required by Taft-Hartley Law had been held in General Motors plants in February. 88.6 per cent of the valid ballots cast went to the UAW. This vote, the historic Ford settlement, the massive strike expenditures of all UAW members through the International Union, all these were part of the pattern, elements in the struggle that in time would win a measure of justice for the men who were too old to work yet not too old to expect more of life than the scrapheap that would have been their fate before the Union.

CHRYSLER WORKERS BACK PRINCIPLE

In the spring of 1950, their fate was in the hands of the Chrysler strikers. It couldn't have been in better hands.

In the conference room, Corporation spokesmen had been going through a statistical song-and-dance known as the three-penny operetta. This was a low economic farce far under the standards set by the President's Steel Fact-Finding Board, a 10-cent-per-hour pattern for the current round of bargaining.

As of April 11, Chrysler had taken 11 weeks of strike. The 10-cent pattern had been granted not only by Ford, but also by Nash, Massey-Harris, Kaiser-Frazer, Budd Manufacturing, and others. GM negotiations had started March 29, but GM officials were too interested in the progress of the Chrysler strike to do much bargaining.

The only effective bargaining for a long time had been done on the Chrysler picket lines. Chrysler officials finally were impressed, not so much by the Union statistics as by the determination of the men who were staying out of the Chrysler plants.

On May 4, when the strike was 100 days old, that determination paid off in a settlement that met the 10-cent pattern and embodied the UAW pension program. Three days later, the Union's GM Conference empowered the National Negotiating Committee to terminate the General Motors contract.

The story wasn't over. Strike expenditures in the Chrysler encounter, announced UAW Secretary-Treasurer Mazey, stood at $3,001,391.12 on the final day, two-thirds of the total in direct donations to local unions. Another million dollars, Mazey estimated, would go for relief before the first post-strike payday.

SHARING THE SACRIFICE

Four million dollars might be petty cash to GM; the whole Chrysler experience in the hundred days, so rich in the intangibles of sacrifice and anonymous courage, was much more than any GM economist could put a price on.

And so it was that the Chrysler workers helped the General Motors workers to win the historic GM settlement of May 23, 1950, eight months after the initial breakthrough on the pension front at Ford.

Solidarity was more than a word in a song. Solidarity had wrought what the UAW called "the most significant development in labor relations since the mass-production industries were organized in 1936-1937."

The 1950 GM agreement went through the $100 ceiling on pensions established in the Ford contract. It brought a 33⅓ per cent increase in the annual improvement factor, continued the 1948 escalator provisions,

OLDTIMERS all over the nation watched the progress of the Chrysler pension strike.

and established what was then a unique hospital-medical program, according to whose terms GM agreed to pay half of Blue Cross and Blue Shield coverage for each GM worker and his family.

With the major pacesetters firmly committed to what had begun as just another impractical Union proposal, other contracts rolled in. When Briggs settled, granting a union shop and checkoff as well as the pension program, Briggs workers were not too caught up in their own affairs to forget to thank the Chrysler workers and to acknowledge the part played by the GM settlement in clinching their own gains.

ALLIS-CHALMERS WORKERS COME BACK

Out in Wisconsin, there was rebirth. Rising from the absolute wreckage of their Union two years before, Allis-Chalmers workers won an agreement that in the light of Local 248's strife-torn history could only be called sensational.

And so the first chapters of the pension story were written down in contract language, the first veterans walked through plant gates with something more than a ceremonial timepiece to thank them for lifetimes of labor.

There had been no short, straight line from the principle to its application. Corporation officials had not risen to the heights of industrial statesmanship effortlessly. They had been given a hand up

PICTURE TAKEN through a keyhole shows tense moment in 1949 UAW-Ford negotiations. Reuther, back to camera, makes his point. John Bugas, top Ford negotiator, facing camera, mulls it over.

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by all the Ford, Chrysler and GM workers who had driven a good bargain without ever entering the conference rooms.

It had been that way every time a principle was at stake, at every major turn in the road since GM's local plant managers in 1936 had refused to believe that Mr. Knudsen knew what he was talking about when he said collective bargaining had come to stay.

If the past performances of history were any guide, it would always be that way. No good and needful thing would ever be won without struggle, or without the united strength that proves capacity to struggle.

In the beginning the first agreements had been single sheets of paper, thumb-smudged and rumpled. Now they were volumes of many pages, with index and supplement and appendix. Union negotiators were backed by a corps of technicians in research and social-security departments, who worked hard and long and well to state the workers' case.

At first there had been only the wilderness and the worker's will to cut his way through. Now a clearing had been made, the size of the contract reflected the growth of a body of civilized law in the factory community.

Yet between the lines of every indexed agreement could still be read the same act of faith and will that had wrung the first reluctant signature from management years before. The biggest mistake anybody on either side of the table could ever make would be to forget that the Union lived between as well as within the lines of the contract.

On the eve of the UAW pension drive, Federal Social Security payments averaged less than $35 a month, and it would have been difficult to isolate half a dozen clear voices among employers uttering any word in favor of increasing them.

By linking its pension demands to Social Security benefits, UAW touched a nerve that ran directly to the employer pocketbook. A rash of public responsibility developed. Labor suddenly was not alone in advocating an increase in federal payments. When the federal increase came, it was the end result of a process that had begun with the initial pension victory at Ford. The Union's victory had served a wider interest. It had not been "for members only."

Of five major planks in the UAW postwar wage platform, substantial prog*ress had now been made in* fixing four in the contracts: cost-of-living adjustments, annual improvement increases, hospital-medical protection, and pensions. The fifth plank, a dream of auto workers before they ever had a union, was still a dream. It had been mentioned in the report that had gone as far as President Roosevelt's desk in 1935, the first story of the real lives of auto workers to make any headway in the outer world.

GRIM-FACED Chrysler workers gather at strike rally (top) show the kind of determination which led to the joyous victory celebration pictured here.

The annual wage was only a dusty New Deal footnote when the UAW's 13th Convention placed it at the top of the Union's bargaining agenda. That was the spring of 1951. This was the signal, as in the pension campaign, for a new flow of editorial ink, a new rendering of solemn snap judgments before anybody had bothered to take a close look at the question.

A guaranteed wage for mass-production workers had been a dream not because it was impractical but because anything the auto workers had wanted in the days before the Union was a dream—or a nightmare. The Union itself had been a dream, impractical, utopian, and crazy. And then one day the Union lived. It had been that way with every gain the auto workers had made. First you had to have a dream. Then somebody told you you were dreaming. Then you made the dream come true. It could be the same with an annual wage, thought the delegates of the 13th Convention.

The auto industry, with every car that came off the lines, was proving the need for it. The industry was moving back to an earlier pattern of instability, bunching its production in the first part of the year, hiring temporary workers who took employment from regulars, disrupting families and communities.

The temporary workers were being dumped on the street, to swell public relief rolls, in some cases to resort to crime. These public costs never got onto the books of auto manufacturers as elements in the cost of making automobiles. They were costs that the whole community paid.

The catch was that employers had no direct, immediate, and what might be called selfish interest in admitting them as the costs of doing business. They would not change their way of doing business until these public costs were laid squarely at their doors.

The auto worker had always borne the brunt of unemployment in the industry. He had always taken the rap for what used to be called the "inevitable" layoff at model-change-over time. Before the Union came along to win him call-in pay, he was called in but not paid whenever management had failed to manage well enough to have work ready for him.

Management began to manage better as soon as call-in pay became the penalty for not managing work schedules well enough. Work was the main objective,

PRESIDENT HARRY S. TRUMAN had a deep understanding of workers' problems. His successful campaign tour of industrial centers in 1948 was recalled by many attending this 1954 Labor Day rally in Detroit.

FROM THE BEGINNING history was made every day on organizing fronts across the land.

AT THE 1947 CONVENTION in Milwaukee, the UAW's international flavor got a big boost from the ever-active Canadians. This banner read, "Quebec! The New Frontier of the UAW-CIO."

not call-in pay. Management learned how to plan when an organized movement of workers provided an incentive by touching the sensitive nerve that ran from head and heart to pocketbook.

Similarly with pensions: management awoke to the need for greater Social Security benefits when it found itself paying the difference between federal levels and the levels fixed by collective bargaining.

Management had confronted realities when labor's demands had made it costly to dodge realities. It could be and would be the same with a guaranteed wage. The guaranteed annual wage would be a kind of call-in pay for modern times.

A CONTRACT MUST BE A LIVING DOCUMENT

Meanwhile, a war provoked by Communist aggression in Korea had unsettled economic relationships on the home front, creating a situation which had not been foreseen when five-year contracts were signed in 1950.

UAW members had accepted long-term agreements with major corporations on condition that cost-of-living protection and annual increases in base wage rates be granted them. The Union had reminded management of this fact as early as February, 1951.

Workers' cost-of-living allowances fluctuated with the movements of the consumers' price index of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. A change in the method of computing the BLS index as of December, 1952, made it necessary to negotiate a conversion from the old to the new index.

This situation created an opportunity to make other adjustments rendered urgent by inflation. Rising prices had eaten into the pensions of retired workers. Skilled trade rates in the jobbing shops had climbed away from skilled rates in the captive shops. Twenty-four cents of the GM workers' hourly pay were floating free of his base rate on inflationary waters.

UAW asked industry to face these issues in 1953. The Union asked industry to acknowledge the fact that long-term contracts designed to govern human relationships must respond to unforeseen and unpredictable changes in the outer world and to the new realities born of these changes in the shops.

General Motors was the first to appreciate the sense of UAW's position. On May 22, 1953, GM acknowledged the living-document principle and agreed to several changes. Ford on May 25 agreed to further changes. On May 27 Chrysler signed an agreement incorporating both the GM and Ford improvements. Finally, on May 28, General Motors agreed to match the additional gains made by the Union in negotiations with Ford and Chrysler.

SKILLED WORKERS GET AN EXTRA BOOST

Among the major changes were an increase to five cents an hour in the annual improvement factor; an addition of 19 cents of the 24 cents in the cost-of-living float to the base rate; a 10-cents raise in the skilled trades hourly rate; an increase in maximum pension benefits from $125 to $137.50 monthly, with the gain extended to workers already in retirement; and Blue Cross-Blue Shield group rates for retired workers.

Auto workers were already worried about automation. Mechanical brains and automatic factories threatened to throw entire trades and skills onto history's slag heap, turn whole thriving communities into ghost towns.

Management seemed content merely to praise automation, as it seemed content merely to denounce the annual wage, without looking hard and long at either. Labor had to look hard and long at both, because labor knew in its bones that all the happy talk about the march of technology would never save working men and women from the headaches and heartaches of the short-run.

Labor no less than management welcomed technological advance. But labor wanted to tame the tiger for human purposes. Labor didn't want to shuffle crabwise into any old electronic tomorrow; it wanted to confront squarely the social consequences of technological change. Labor presented itself as a determined custodian of the human in a world where untrammeled technology might as easily shrink as expand the human sphere.

A management that could scour the hinterland for idle hands, throw them for a season into established communities where housing was already tight, squeeze them into a crowded production line to jostle regulars, then yank them out again and show them the door to idleness and relief, a management that could do this clearly believed that workers were expendable. Workers, in this view, were pack mules good enough to lift a production index to a seasonal peak, not good enough to deserve the kind of economic security that annual salaries brought to company executives.

Management clearly believed there was no bond of equity between the man at the machine and the man in the executive suite. The fellow at the top had a sensitive stomach that required food 365 days of the year. The guy at the bottom could live by the hour or the piece. His lot was to take all the short-run bumps and lurches, all the twists and turns of the road that led to the employer's long-term bliss.

GAW TO MEET MIGHTY NEED

Equity, the auto worker discovered, was a concept that needed broadening. It had to become, like freedom in 1936 and 1937, a two-way street. A measure of industrial democracy had been brought into the plants since the time of the sitdowns. Now it must be extended to the broader reaches of the economy, where slumps and recessions were made.

The main features of the UAW annual wage or guaranteed employment proposals were published in April, 1954, one full year in advance of negotiations. Management had a whole year to spread them out on the floor and walk slowly around them again and again. Yet in that entire year, not once did management venture a detailed analysis of the Union plan. It confined its pronouncements strictly to the terrain of propaganda, uttering prophecies of bankruptcy and general doom.

Lost in its images of disaster, management forgot one simple fact: a union is not in existence to put employers out of business and thereby throw its members out of jobs. The UAW annual wage plan was a plan to keep UAW members working by shifting the costs of unemployment from the worker to the boss. It was a call-in pay plan writ large enough to meet contemporary needs.

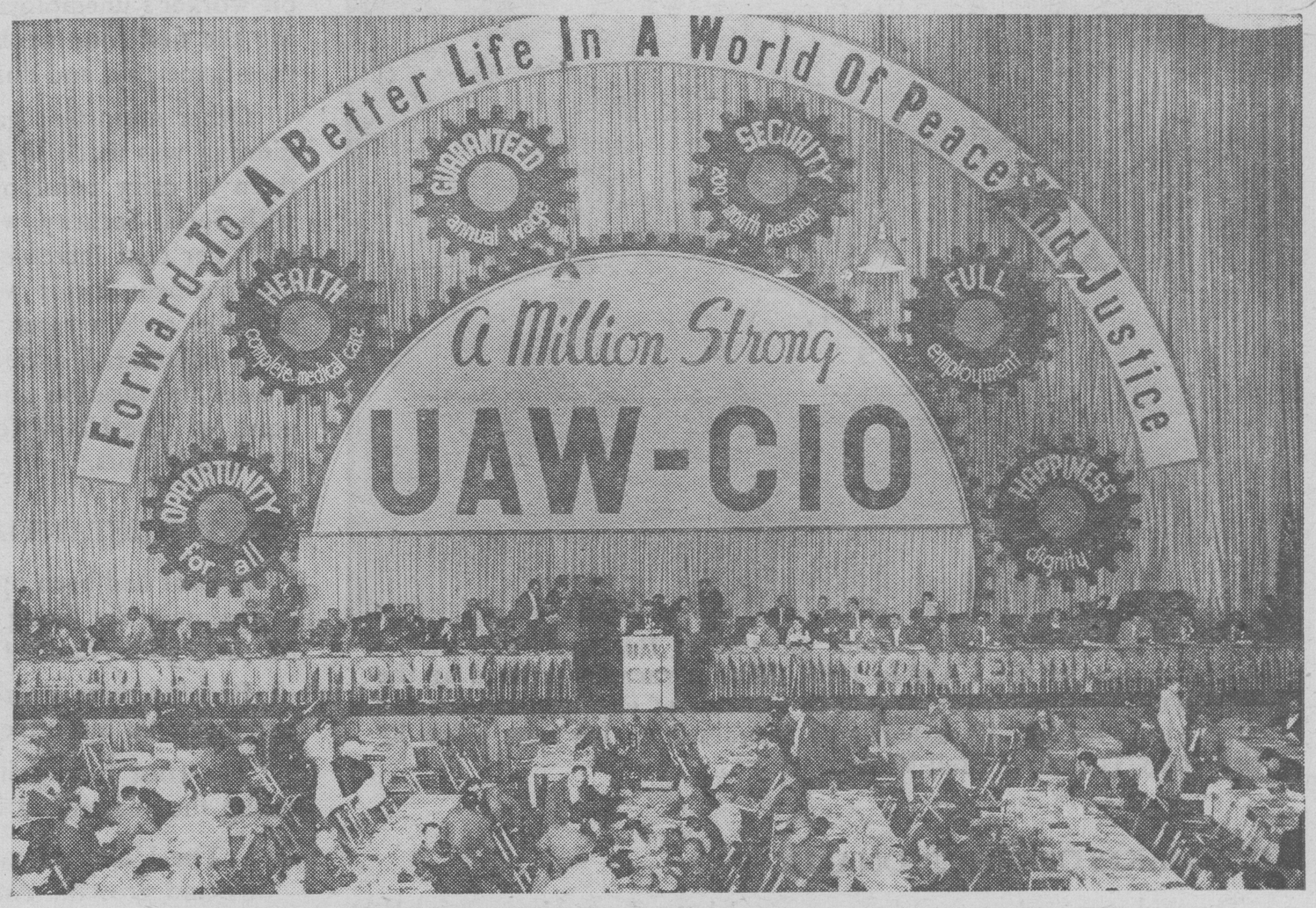
THE END of a destructive period of factionalism came at the 1947 Convention when the Reuther slate gained a majority on the Executive Board. Reuther congratulates newly-elected Vice-Presidents John Livingston and Richard Gosser and the new secretary-treasurer, Emil Mazey.

UAW Launches All-Out Drive To Win GAW; Ford Counters with Phony Stock Purchase Plan

The employer's liability under the plan was limited. His costs, moreover, were largely avoidable. Once an adequate reserve in the proposed trust fund had been created, employers, by keeping workers working, could escape further charges.

With automation threatening wholesale disruption in employment, with American leadership of the free world based on our repeated assertion that democratic institutions gave the best answers to the fundamental problems of economic stability and progress, employers had the highest and most urgent incentives to negotiate a guaranteed wage plan. Stabilized employment and sustained purchasing power were indispensable ingredients of American strength. They guaranteed no victory in the world struggle for men's minds and loyalties. Yet without them that victory would surely escape us.

If these larger reasons did not appeal to employers, UAW technicians had provided a more specific and precise incentive, finely tooled for the purpose of sending a stimulus along the self-interest nerve. Just as pension demands had been related to Federal Social Security payments, so an employer's financial responsibility under the guaranteed wage plan was related to state unemployment compensation.



THE GUARANTEED ANNUAL WAGE was moved to the front in Union planning as soon as pensions were secured. The 1951 Convention in Cleveland featured the demand as part of the backdrop, a vivid reminder of the goal ahead.

A DREAM BECOMES A REALITY

Under the guaranteed wage plan as with the pension program, the Union wanted a trust fund established and a joint board of administration. Again, there was no call for any promised land, only the opening of another door on the future. The Union wanted employers to acknowledge in contract words and phrases their responsibility for stabilizing employment and sustaining purchasing power Out of the fundamental principle, once acknowledged in contract form, would flow the benefits.

When the historic 1955 contracts were finally signed, *The Detroit Free Press,* whose editors for years had reached for their kleenex every time an auto manufacturer sneezed, had this to say:

> *"The magnitude of what has just happened in Detroit is beyond the mental reach of any man to comprehend. The guaranteed wage idea will grow big and grow fast. It will affect the lives of every man, woman and child for years to come."*

Whatever else the *Free Press* believed about the annual wage, this passage suggested no doubt that the auto workers had won the principle and opened another door, not only for themselves and their families, but for the broader community.

Nor had there been any doubt in the minds of Corporation officials as negotiations progressed. General Motors did not refuse to bargain on the issue without a Supreme Court ruling as it had at first refused to take up the pension issue in 1949. Young Henry Ford did not say, as old Henry had said once upon a time, that he would throw the keys away if . . .

GM and Ford did two other things instead. They broke competitive habits for the occasion and formed a kind of united bargaining front against the UAW. And they tried to drive a billion-dollar wedge between the Union and its members.

AIRCRAFT PROBLEMS cropped out when the industry, which mushroomed during World War II, failed to measure up to its postwar responsibilities. This Douglas worker and his family in Long Beach, California, helped meet that situation on the picketlines in 1950.

When the annual wage was first being studied by the Union, some of the UAW members leafed through their book of memories and began to wonder what basic contract gains they would have to trade to get the new demand. They wondered, for example, if they would have to give up overtime pay, as workers had surrendered it under the Hormel plan in Austin, Minnesota.

FORD OFFERS "PARTNERSHIP" PROGRAM

The Union assured them there would be no trading of past for future gains. Corporate radar, however, had picked up the echoes of these questions and decided to turn them to account. They decided to make it easy to surrender the annual wage demand, to create a rank-and-file stampede for green pastures, and to provide a rift between Union ranks and leadership.

Destiny had chosen Ford again to lead the way, so Ford led with what the Company claimed was half a billion dollars. It was essentially the same as the General Motors offer, made a couple of weeks before but not publicized because of a temporary agreement between GM and UAW negotiators that bargaining would be done without publicity.

The Ford offer bore the imposing title of Stock Participation, Income Stabilization, and Separation Allowance Plans. It was billed as the biggest and most generous offer ever to alight in the center of a bargaining table.

The Union team asked the Company men to tell them, dollar by dollar, how good the allegedly big package really was. The Company men obliged, for the record. To hear them tell it, the package was worth every cent of 12 cents an hour.

Central to the Company offer was the stock-purchase proposal. Every Ford worker with one or more years of seniority could contribute up to 10 per cent of his gross pay to purchase of Ford stock. The Company would add five per cent more.

It turned out that the prize in this prize package was a booby prize; a grey-flannel suit with only one pair of pants tailored for that minority of Ford workers willing and/or able to invest, over a long period, a fixed percentage of their income in Company stock. Purchase of stock by the worker was a condition of the Company's contribution. Holding on to the stock was another condition. It was an invitation to the Ford workers to live beyond their means; the offer did not respond to the worker's need for protection against layoffs, as did the GAW proposed by the Union.

There is no doubt, however, that the grey-flannel suit looked good, however well it would wear. And the Company claimed that it cost as much as or more than the Union overalls. GM and Ford management were clearly inviting the men and women in the shops to trample the annual wage demand and the Union bargaining teams into the dust.

PAT GREATHOUSE, former director of Region 4, was chosen vice-president of the UAW in 1955, filling a vacancy created by the elevation of John W. Livingston to director of organization for the merged AFL-CIO. Greathouse is welcomed to his new office by Secretary-Treasurer Emil Mazey.

FORD MAKES OFFER PERSONALLY

This bid was underscored by a personal letter from Henry Ford II to the UAW. The letter repeated newspaper insinuations that the UAW leadership team was afraid of the rank and file. It conveyed Mr. Ford's hope that UAW's decision on the prize package would reflect the wishes of Ford workers.

UAW's reply to the Company, a letter from Walter Reuther to Henry Ford II, was presented to Company representatives by the National Ford Negotiating Committee on May 30, 1955.

The Union letter stated that UAW was anxious to avoid a strike and to bring about a peaceful settlement on a basis of fairness and equity. It summarized the Company offer, taking note of Ford's contention that management's proposal would cost upwards of 12 cents an hour. It agreed that no decision should be reached without the full, democratic participation of Ford workers.

UAW agreed to modify its GAW proposal so that it could be financed within the limits established by the Company's own representatives as the cost of financing the Company plan. The Union compromise thus left the two parties differing only on two methods of achieving a mutually-desired goal: a greater measure of security for Ford workers and their families against the hazards and hardships of layoffs and unemployment.

The Reuther letter proposed that the Ford workers themselves, by secret ballot, make a choice between the Company and Union methods of achieving the goal.

When the letter was presented to the Company negotiating team, Ford asked for a recess. Then another recess. At the end of the second recess, the Ford group came in, sat down, and resumed bargaining. The industry front had been broken. The principle of the guaranteed wage was won on June 6, 1955.

On June 1, 1956, the guaranteed wage provisions of the 1955 contract went into effect. Employers would add supplementary benefits to a laid-off worker's unemployment compensation to raise his total payments during the first four weeks of unemployment to 65 per cent of his normal take-home pay, and during the next 22 weeks to 60 per cent.

Other important gains were registered in the 1955 contracts. A beginning was made in giving workers vested rights in pensions, entitling them to carry pension rights with them to other companies. Pensions, with Social Security, were raised to as high as $240 a month. There was a 50 per cent increase in permanent and total disability pensions. The improvement factor was boosted to six cents, or two and one-half per cent—in certain cases three per cent—whichever proved higher. There were substantial additional gains: in holiday pay, in skilled trade increases, in vacation and hospital-medical payments, in adjustment of inequities. The UAW for the first time won an unqualified union shop in General Motors.

MANY SUBSTANTIAL GAINS

A door had been opened. Employers had acknowledged responsibility to maintain the living standards and purchasing power of workers laid off through no fault of their own.

Benefits were geared to state unemployment compensation, giving employers an incentive to improve state laws, to stabilize employment.

The trust fund principle was won. So was the principle of administering the guaranteed wage plan by a joint Union-employer board.

The Union of automobile workers had entered its 20th year of life and growth. An old friend of the auto workers, who had been with them at Flint during the sitdowns, had come back to UAW for a visit in 1954 and had written a story on her second impressions for Harper's Magazine.

Mary Heaton Vorse called her piece, "The Union That Grew Up." She had come back to a Union that had 1,124 locals in 415 towns and cities of 34 states, five Canadian provinces. She didn't recognize in this young giant the beleaguered bands of workers who had held out in the plants against the cry of newspapers and vigilantes to "shoot them out."

She remembered the spirit of the workers. She remembered the hard work of the women's auxiliaries, the colored tams the women wore: red in Flint, green in Detroit, and in Saginaw, blue.

She compared the Flint of those past days with the Flint of the summer of 1953, when the tornado struck Beecher Township, when UAW gave $100,000 to the disaster fund, and when UAW members participated in the vast house-raising of Operation Tornado.

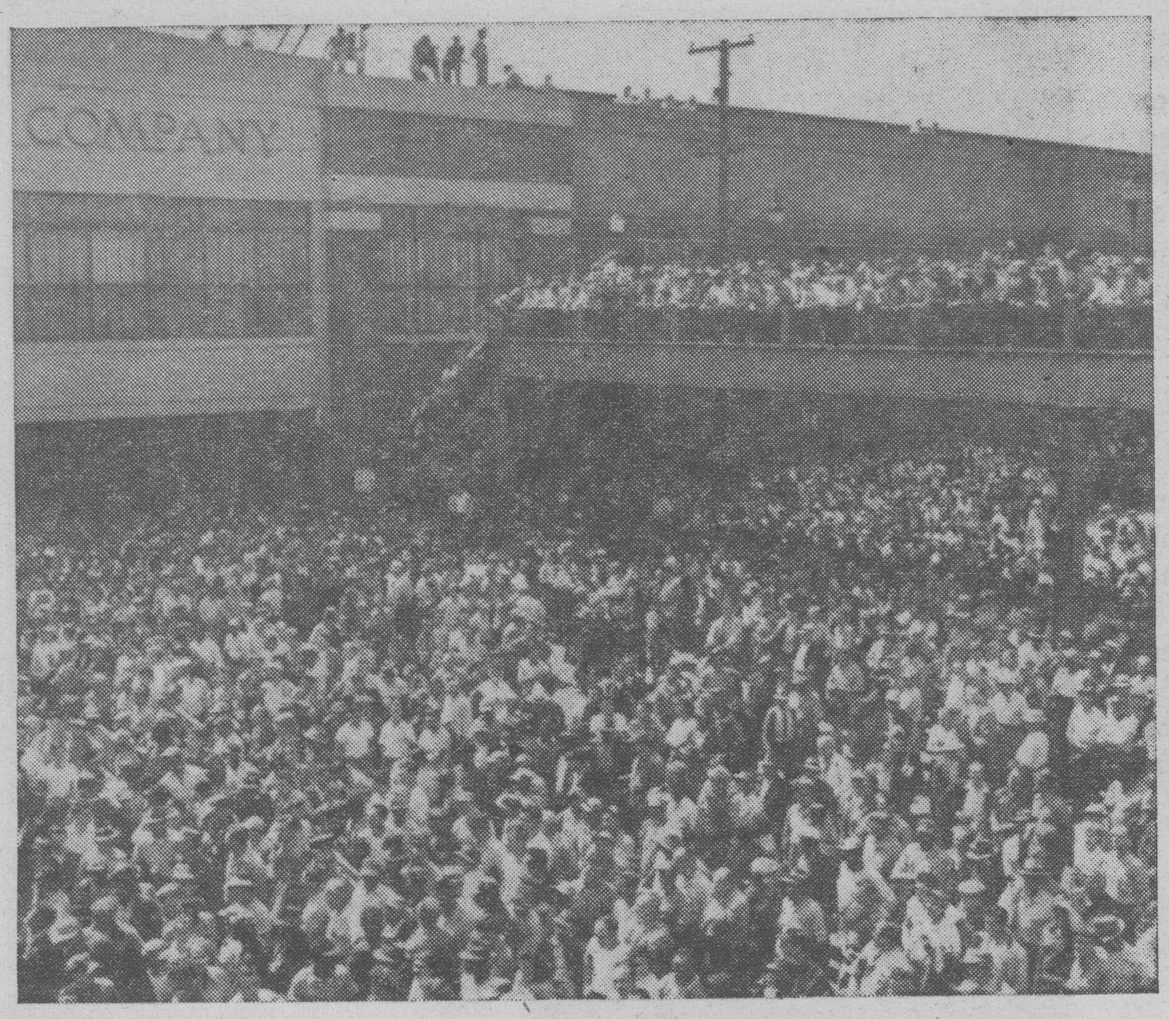
SENSE IN A CIVIL RIGHTS CRISIS

Mary Vorse recalled the race riots in Detroit in 1943, when the only oasis of sanity had been the plants where the Negro and white UAW members had continued to work side by side. She remembered 1950, when UAW had done so much to eliminate discrimination in ABC Bowling.

She had come back to a Union that had grown, never stopped growing. Men were older, life was more complicated. She saw a Union that felt a responsibility to respond to every economic need and aspiration of the men and women in the plants, along the whole broad front of democratic action and striving.

THE BETTER LIFE for UAW members has included pioneering programs at the UAW Health Institute in Detroit and similar programs in other UAW centers. The emphasis is on diagnosis and preventing disease.

THE HAPPIER LIFE includes summer sessions for kids at the FDR-CIO Camp and Sand Lake Camp in Michigan, the Ottawa Union Center in Illinois and other UAW-backed facilities where youngsters like these have a grand time outdoors.



LEFT—Ford Rouge workers hear news of the settlement that made history, the 1955 contract which established the principle of the guaranteed annual wage.

ABOVE—Walter P. Reuther announced the 1955 settlement with General Motors which nailed down the principles of the UAW-won pattern. At left are weary GM executives.

She saw a Union already moving to protect its own members and the whole community from the impact of automation. She went into some of the plants. One of her guides said to her, "You should see the DeSoto plant—and even that's nothing compared to the Ford plant in Cleveland. That plant is all machines, it doesn't need men."

Mary Vorse left to write her article about a Union that had grown up. The men in the plants, faced by the new mechanical monsters of the electronic age, had a right to feel that their Union, however much it had grown in the full years since 1936, was none too big and none too strong to defend their interests as wage earners, as citizens, and just as plain human beings in the coming struggles of what already promised to be a second industrial revolution.

The first thing the Union had to do about automation was dispel some of the easy optimism generated in management circles about the prospects of the new push-button era. Walter Reuther had been taken through Ford's Cleveland plant by one of the Ford executives and had been shown the lines of mechanical men busily turning out engine blocks.

The Ford executive turned to the UAW president and asked, "How are you going to collect union dues from these guys?" The UAW president turned to the Ford executive and replied, "How are you going to get them to buy Ford cars?"

PREPARING FOR A PUSH-BUTTON AGE

In establishing the principle of employer responsibility, through a guaranteed wage program, to stabilize employment and sustain purchasing power, the Union had found part of an answer to the questions posed by automation.

Employer responsibility under the guaranteed wage program would affect management decisions on timing, serve as a governor of the process of change and adjustment. Decentralization, accelerated by automation, would be less disruptive when undertaken within the framework of the guaranteed wage program.

The automobile industry had already embarked on a full-scale program of automation. Existing job classifications and wage structures were already becoming obsolete.

A need had arisen for broader seniority groupings. There would arise a multitude of transfer and retraining problems. There would be profound changes in the American and world economy within a decade.

Workers, both as wage earners and citizens, had a stake in the new technology. Under the forced draft of the second world war, the federal government had undertaken a vast program of assistance to industrial research. This government program had given the first great impetus to the automation process. And the program had been financed by American taxpayers.

The wage earners had paid for the push buttons out of their own pockets. The revolutions in materials handling, in marketing, transport, distribution, and control of machinery that had come about in recent years were not private accomplishments of private enterprise. For good or for ill, they were in the public domain. Their consequences would be felt by the whole nation.

The auto workers' Union had always believed in making progress with the community, not at the expense of the community. Events of the second industrial revolution had already demonstrated the common sense of that proposition.

Automation in Detroit could lead to unemployment in South Bend. Automation in Ford and General Motors could lead to grave trouble in Chrysler and the independents. The high initial expense of automatic equipment posed a threat to small business. Decentralization would not necessarily lead to less concentration of ownership and corporate control. Indeed, the formation of new companies would be discouraged by the high capital requirements.

PREPARING MEN AND WOMEN FOR JOBS

It was no longer just a question of throwing older workers on the scrapheap, as in the old days. Now whole cities could become obsolete.

CHRYSLER came a long way. Announcing the '55 contract to the press and television crew are: l. to r., UAW Vice-President Norman Matthews, John Leary, Chrysler vice-president, and UAW Secretary-Treasurer Emil Mazey.

THE PATTERN spread through the rest of the automobile industry and on into agricultural implement. One of the first to follow the Big Three settlements was the UAW-American Motors pact announced by UAW Vice-President Leonard Woodcock, right, and Edward Cushman, AMC industrial relations director.

Retraining! Earlier retirement in cases of the displacement of older workers, when retraining wasn't practical. Changes in seniority groupings, job classifications, wage structure. These were not small personal matters, for the isolated worker to tackle. They were not just matters for his Union. They were community problems.

There were larger political questions involved. There was need for a new congressional investigation of the concentration of economic power, along the lines of the earlier Temporary National Economic Committee, a possible need for national chartering of corporations that were in effect national and only nominally policed by the states. There was the whole question, in short, of making the second industrial revolution a democratic revolution.

Labor was determined to confront and to help solve the problems arising from automation because it was truly hopeful of automation's ultimate promise: freedom from drudgery, new opportunities to learn new skills, vast new increases in material standards of living, and a whole new world of leisure and human fulfillment.

The Union would continue to build on the foundations of the annual wage laid in the 1955 contracts. Its next major bargaining demand would be a shorter work week. The end of work was a wider, deeper, richer living, and there was no end to living.

Therefore the Union went on, from crisis to crisis, from achievement to achievement, laying the foundations of economic citizenship, elaborating a body of law for the industrial community, opening door after door for the workers—who were not only workers but fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, husbands, wives, sons and daughters.

TWENTY YEARS OF SOLID PROGRESS

At the end of 1955, the two great branches of American labor merged their organizations into one union. CIO surrendered its separate sovereignty and identity without regrets, aware of the great possibilities that lay ahead for a truly united labor movement, conscious of the unfinished business on democracy's agenda at home and abroad.

CIO had been in the vanguard for 20 years. Twenty years in the life of a man or an institution was not a long time. The passing of a 20th milestone was no occasion for any final summing up.

There was always the danger that with the passage of time there would be a slowing down, a tendency to lose force, to lose a clear sense of purpose, to suffer a sea change from momentum to inertia.

It was always good to take stock, to plunge beneath the troubled surface of the daily round to the deeper simplicities that moved us when we were younger: that moved the men who made autos in the winter of 1936-37. There was always the need to keep faith with the simple human realities that fired men and policies when the Union was young, when it was only an idea and a vision.

There was always a need to recapture the visions of an earlier day. So the auto workers celebrated their 20th anniversary as a Union. UAW members were not merchants of nostalgia. They wanted to remember the past only to refresh their memories of struggle and achievement and carry these memories with them into the future. Their primary allegiance went to the unfinished, the possible, the growing, the unborn.

CELEBRATING THE PAST

First things came first with auto workers. Where they were going was more important to them than where they had been. They wanted to reach back a moment and salvage the best of the past and then let the past go. They didn't want it to be a dead hand on their shoulders.

In the shops and halls, the deeper, lasting life of the Union went on, the continuing struggle.

Political action went on, in a nation where a wrong political decision affected the whole economy, where a drop in farm income would lead to unemployment among farm equipment workers.

The work of the Union's Women's Department went on. At one of the many meetings one woman worker asked, "What I want to know is why businessmen can deduct the cost of entertainment and whisky on their tax returns, but I can't deduct the cost of a nursery school or a babysitter."

It was a good question. The Union was interested in finding an answer. It was the kind of question that could be asked at a union meeting and attract both a sympathetic ear and an organized attempt to come up with a solution.

The Union was a kind of mobilized movement exploring the ground between question and answer—from the simplest gripe at the machine to the highest and trickiest problem of preserving peace in the Middle East or the Formosa Strait.

EDUCATION A CONTINUOUS PROCESS

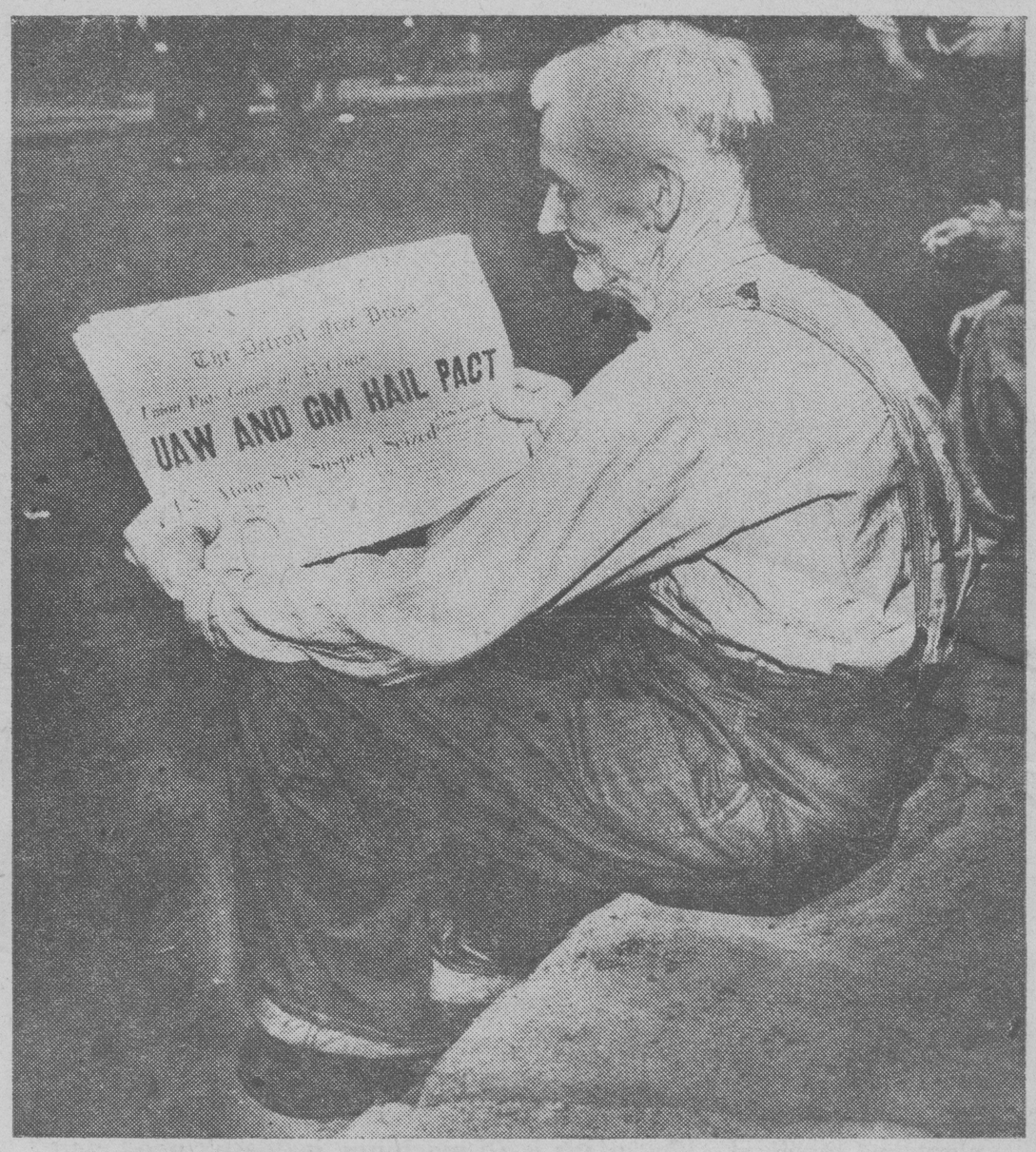
Education went on in the locals, moving more and more into the mainstream of the local union's daily life. The education program had been geared closely with the guaranteed wage drive. The International Education Department had produced a film, "Work or Wages Guaranteed."

The final development of the Union's guaranteed wage plan had been first presented at the Sixth International Education Conference in Chicago. After the conference, the Union sponsored an intensive training program in the principles of the plan for staff members and local union leaders.

The fair practices program went on, because the auto workers had painfully learned, but sometimes forgot, that solidarity is more than a word in a song and that life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is every American's right.

The recreation program, first begun in 1937, went on, turning now to the good and vital work of giving the Union's senior and retired citizens a sense of belonging to the Union and wider community.

Pensioners were growing in number. They were enjoying a longer life. The UAW was spending more than $50,000 in the Detroit area



HISTORY for this worker meant a new life, a chance to retire on a well-deserved pension. He sat down on the curb to read about the 1950 settlement at GM. The whole history of the Union has meant more security, more of the good things of life for millions.

alone keeping in touch with retired members, arranging parties, meetings, counselling service; maintaining three drop-in centers five days a week as clubs for the veterans of the plants.

Room for the drop-in centers had been donated by local unions. They had comfortable chairs, card tables, TV sets, pool tables, books furnished by the public library.

RETIRED WORKER PROGRAM GROWS

There were films and discussion groups. There were five area meetings each month, a picnic in summer, a Christmas party in winter. There were monthly birthday parties. There were talks with Social Security and health insurance experts, and with heart specialists.

Pensioners were as active as they wanted to be. They served on house committees, on the city-wide steering committee, and on a visiting committee to call on sick colleagues.

The Union had remembered them and honored them. They had not been cast out into the shadows. They were the honored elders of an industry and a Union that they had built with their own hands.

A strike in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, had entered its third year. UAW members of Local 833 of the Kohler plumbingware company in that city were also honored in the Union because in continuing their own just struggle they were a reminder to all workers everywhere that no good and needful thing had ever been won easily, and never would be.

The Union went on. It went on because it was an act of faith that even in an age of automation—especially in an age of automation—people are important and are here to stay.

The Union went on because it was the organized embodiment of the workers' will to assert their humanity against the encroachment of the machine, to tame the machine to the uses of human life.

OUR UNION IS ALL OF US

The Union is an instrument of the men and women in the plants. Its power and its purposes are determined by their will, their courage, their awareness that there is more at stake than the pennies in the pot or the package on the table.

The UAW in the spring of 1956 is nothing more and nothing less than the men and women who belong to it and to whom it belongs; just as in 1936 it had been the men who said they wouldn't be driven and spied on and tossed on the scrapheap when the line had used them up.

If the auto workers of 1956 reach higher and see farther, it is because they stand on the shoulders of the men who had struggled in the past; the men who huddled before the coke fires in front of many gates; the women who ladled soup and kept families together; those who passed leaflets, those who bargained; those who had dared to wear union buttons in the plants.

The Union is the young men going in, the old men coming out, and all the men and women between, in all the cities, in all the states and provinces.

The Union is a memory and a vision. The memory carried forward into the vision, in an endlessly moving line of courage, of will, and of hope.

It is a great Union. It is a great Union because it grows and grows, yet never gets too big to be human.