

January 4, 1937

Mr. Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., President
General Motors Corporation, and

Mr. William S. Knudsen, Executive Vice-President
General Motors Corporation,

General Motors Building
Detroit, Michigan

Dear Sirs:

A grave situation has arisen between the employees of the General Motors Corporation and the Management of such Corporation, the seriousness of which you must appreciate. This entire situation not only affects the Corporation and its employees, but also the Public. It is for this reason that I call to your attention again the real issue which exists between the Corporation and the International Union, United Automobile Workers of America.

On December 24, 1936, I forwarded a letter to you requesting that a conference be held between the officers of your Corporation and this organization on behalf of the employees of the General Motors Corporation. I suggested in my letter that this conference be held for the purpose of discussing and negotiating certain fundamental issues which had arisen between the employees and the Management. These issues, as I indicated, cover the recognition of the Union by the Corporation for the purpose of collective bargaining, recognition of seniority rights for the purpose of maintaining job security for the employees, the elimination of the speed-up system, and the establishment of a minimum wage which would assure a decent standard of living to your employees.

In your reply, dated December 31, 1936, you suggested that the employees of the General Motors Corporation should discuss any of their grievances with the plant managers. This procedure you term the system of "collective bargaining". The justification for your proposal was that there is such a diversity of factors among your various plants that it is impossible to have any national agreement between this organization and the General Motors Corporation.

There are two basic reasons why your proposal cannot meet the problem at hand:

First, the employees throughout the plant of the General Motors Corporation have encountered widespread discrimination and wholesale discharges because of their mere affiliation with the union at the hands of the plant managers. In other words, there appears to be a nation-wide policy on the part of the General Motors Corporation not to permit the organization of a union among the employees. This policy had been in practice in absolute violation of the National Labor Relations Act, and also in contravention of the accepted principles in the United States today. Not until there has been a discontinuance of such a policy can there be any effective discussion of grievances between the employees and the respective plant managers.

Second, of course, there are diverse factors among the various plants of the General Motors Corporation. But it must also be recognized that with respect to certain fundamental policies, they are adopted and fixed by the National Executive Officers of your Corporation. It is with respect to a few such fundamental issues, which can only be accepted by the Executive Officers of your Corporation, that this organization demands a conference with you for the purpose of negotiating the same, looking toward a national agreement between the International Union, United Automobile Workers of America, and the General Motors Corporation.

The fundamental issues, for which there must be a national policy fixed by your corporation, are the following:

1. National Conference between responsible heads of General Motors Corporation and the Chosen representatives of the International Union, United Automobile Workers of America. Such conference

(more)

To Mr. Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., President
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to discuss and bargain collectively on the following points as a basis for national agreement between the General Motors Corporation and its employees, as represented by the International Union, United Automobile Workers of America.

2. Abolition of all piece work systems of pay, and the adoption of straight hourly rate in its place.
3. 30 hour work week and six hour work day and time and one-half for all time worked over the basic work day and work week.
4. Establishment of a minimum rate of pay commensurate with an American Standard of living.
5. Reinstatement of all employees who have been unjustly discharged.
6. Seniority, based upon length of service.
7. Recognition of the International Union, United Automobile Workers of America as the sole bargaining agency between the General Motors Corporation and its employees, for the establishment of joint tribunals and joint rules of procedure for the adjusting of any or all disputes that may arise from time to time between employees of General Motors Corporation and the management.
8. Speed of production shall be mutually agreed upon by the management and the union committee in all General Motors plants.

Again, it is with respect to the foregoing problems that I demand that an immediate conference be held between the officers of this Organization and the officers of the General Motors Corporation, looking toward a national agreement relating to such issues. It is absurd for your Corporation to suggest that with respect to basic problems of this sort the determination of their acceptance be left to the individual plant managers.

The failure on the part of your Corporation to accept the fundamental doctrine of collective bargaining with its employees is the sole and only cause for the serious situation that has resulted. This Organization, on behalf of the employees of the General Motors Corporation has merely requested the opportunity to confer with the Executive Officers of the General Motors Corporation to negotiate and reach an agreement with regard to certain problems which affect your corporation on a national scale.

The employees of the General Motors Corporation are fully aware of their many grievances which have accumulated over the years. The public is now becoming aware of the anti-social policies practiced by the General Motors Corporation upon its employees.

These anti-social policies of your Corporation with regard to the issues which I have thus presented are leaving no alternative to the employees--they must resort to their inalienable legal right to strike.

Very truly yours,

HM:JL

Homer Martin
General President