

How workers can defend their jobs and unions . . .

Unity against GM!

Workers control of the unions!

An independent labor candidate for president!

The UAW called a rally against GM in Ypsilanti on Friday, February 28.

About 3,000 came, including workers from the GM Willow Run plant and other plants, and union officials.

Workers wanted to fight GM's whip-sawing, demands for concessions, plant-closings; they wanted to keep the Willow Run plant and other plants open.

But UAW speakers and other speakers, including Jesse Jackson, said little or nothing about this. They chanted vague slogans, like "Rebuild America, keep hope alive," and called on workers to register to vote and to vote for Harkin on March 17. Jackson said something about a march on GM in passing. UAW officials mentioned mini-strikes in passing.

In fact, so far, the top UAW leadership has taken a formal position against *concessions* to GM, but it hasn't even taken a *formal* position against the plant-closings, in favor of keeping Willow Run open. UAW officials at the rally said that representatives of UAW Local 1776 at the Willow Run plant could come to the UAW convention whether Willow Run was open or not, as if this were some wonderful expression of solidarity. In fact, this showed they had no plans at all to fight to keep Willow Run open and save these workers' jobs.

The top leadership of the UAW has been going along with concessions and plant-closings for over ten years, and collaborating with management in trying to crush all opposition to concessions and plant-closings, like New Directions. Their policies are becoming more and more dangerous. Caterpillar, GM, and other monopolies that the UAW bargains with are testing the waters. By locking out Caterpillar workers, limiting pickets, and shutting so many plants in Michigan, the companies are trying to see if it is time to try to move to totally crush the UAW.

How can workers defend their jobs and their unions in this situation?

1. Support any and all actions against whip-sawing, concessions, and plant-closings, no matter how limited they may be, whether they are addressed by union officials and capitalist politicians or not. Almost any action is better than no action at all, because it gives workers an opportunity

to get together, meet, learn about each other, make plans, learn more about the various forces involved. An exception is isolated actions that allow management and pro-company union officials to single out the most thoughtful and militant workers. But even if workers advise against these, they should be prepared to *defend* them against the bosses and pro-company union officials.

2. Support Jerry Tucker's call for the right of UAW members to vote on top union officials and for top UAW officials to get out of bed with GM, Ford, Chrysler executives. Support Tucker's campaign for president of the UAW. Workers have to have the right to elect their own representatives. If they don't, they have no way to organize a unified struggle against the enemy.

3. Support and join Labor Party Advocates. Over 50% of union members say it is time for the labor movement to form an independent political party of working people now. How can workers organize a unified struggle against their enemies if they do not have their own, independent political party, if they are divided into different parties, Republicans, Democrats, independents, socialists, etc.?

4. Work to unify all these struggles into a single struggle for an independent labor candidate for president, independent labor candidates for all offices, and an independent labor party. There isn't a single, major presidential candidate, including Harkin, who has taken a clear position against GM's whip-sawing, concessions, and plant-closings, and in favor of mobilizing millions of working people in the U.S. to force the giant enterprizes to cut interest payments to the banks and executive salaries, instead of workers' jobs, wages, benefits, work rules, etc. Why should workers support candidates who don't support workers? Workers need their own candidate for president to unify millions of working people against GM and build a labor party. Workers, workers organizations, local unions, can run their own candidates for local, state and national offices to build support for this.

These are steps that workers can take now. The workers have the power. They need to use it. Revolutionary workers should be in the front ranks of this struggle. ■

Briefly . . .

Cassandra Rutherford, the young Black woman arrested for allegedly beating some white women during the Freedom Festival in July, 1991, was found not guilty on the first set of charges. This shows that workers who opposed the campaign to railroad her and others were correct to do so.

Labor Party Advocates meets Tuesday, March 3, at 7 p.m., at UAW Local 600 Hall, Dix and Wyoming, Dearborn.

International Working Women's Day is Sunday, March 8. Info on events: 584-6556.

UAW Local 600 is organizing a march to commemorate the March 1932 march against hunger, at which workers were killed and wounded by Ford's hired guns. Meet Saturday, March 14, 11 a.m., at UAW Local 600 Hall.

Mercia Andrews, leader of the Workers Organization for Socialist Action in South Africa, will be speaking Sunday, March 15, at 7 p.m., at the Antioch Baptist Church, 8629 Cedar Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio. Information and transportation: 584-6556.

The UAW is organizing a **rally in solidarity with striking Caterpillar workers** Sunday, March 22, Peoria, Illinois. Information and transportation: 584-6556.

Spark forum, Sunday, March 29, 5 p.m. Pullman Hall. Detroit.

Truth sold 20 copies of *Truth* to workers at a meatpacking plant, an auto plant, and the UAW rally against GM. We also distributed 1000 leaflets against GM's plant-closings. All workers were very concerned about GM's plant-closings and thought the same could happen to them. Young workers were especially enthusiastic about the idea of a workers party, a workers government, and workers control of the economy. ■



10,800 UAW workers are still on strike against Caterpillar.

What's happening in the U.S.?

Since the end of World War II, the vast majority of working people in the U.S. have lived fairly comfortably. They have had enough food, clothes, shelter, medical care. They have relied on top union leaderships to periodically negotiate contracts that defend their gains and even make improvements. They have relied on politicians "friendly to working people" in local, state, and national government to pass legislation favorable to working people and to allocate funds for programs that working people favor.

Of course, working conditions have often been very difficult. There have been recessions in which many workers have lost their jobs and suffered. There have been bitter strikes and labor disputes. Conditions have always been much worse for women workers, Black workers, Southern workers, foreign-born workers. But, on the whole, the situation was one that the majority of working people tolerated.

Today, everything is changing.

U.S. plant, equipment, production methods, transportation, management, are old, outmoded, obsolete. The U.S. is losing its position as the number one world power, and all the advantages that went with it. U.S. enterprizes are no longer making the same super-profits they once made as a result of superior productivity, favorable terms of trade, and investments in other countries. They no longer have the profit margin they need to be able to *buy-off* large sections of the working class, maintain a relatively large labor aristocracy that lives, thinks, and acts like bosses. They don't even have the profit margin they need to easily make concessions to large numbers of angry workers. They are trying to cut jobs, wages, benefits, work rules, social programs, everywhere they can. The top leadership of the unions is not negotiating contracts that maintain the workers gains, much less make improvements. They collaborate with the heads of the giant enterprizes in trying to divide and crush opposition. The politicians "friendly to working people" pass little or no legislation favorable to working people. They try to lull people to sleep, confuse, and demoralize them.

The situation is obviously a very difficult one. Workers are trying to figure out how to defend themselves, how they can keep or get jobs, wages, food on the table, clothes on their backs, and roofs over their heads. They are trying to figure out what is wrong, and what can be done. There is a lot of suffering, confusion, conflicts, violence.

But out of all this suffering, confusion, conflicts, something very positive is going to happen.

The working class is going to totally change, beginning with the youngest generation and the women.

Young workers, women workers, and eventually the vast majority of workers, are going to see that *they cannot rely on anyone but themselves* to fight for decent jobs, wages, benefits, working conditions, and everything else that working people need. They are going to see that they cannot rely on the top union

officials, on the rich politicians.

They are going to take the steps necessary to turn themselves into the kind of people capable of fighting for what they need, and *guaranteeing* what they need.

In other words, workers are going to become *totally independent*. They are going to learn to think and act for themselves on all terrains — economics, social issues, politics, culture, etc.

At this point, it is impossible to predict *exactly* how this development will take shape. But based on past experience in the U.S. and throughout the world, some things are certain.

Workers are already paying more attention to the news on TV, radio, and in the papers, and to working class and revolutionary publications. They spend more time thinking and talking about economic, social and political issues. This trend is going to continue.

Workers are already trying to exercise more control over union representatives; they are going to replace union representatives who don't do what the workers want them to do.

Over 50% of union members already think that it is time for the labor movement to form an independent political party of working people. They are going to use their unions to do this. They are going to see that they can't leave politics — questions of policies and power — to upper-class professional politicians. They are going to see that they are going to have to study economic and social problems themselves and come up with solutions. They are going to learn to write their own platforms, speak, run for public office, act as representatives of working people in government bodies full of enemies of the working people.

They are going to see that the working class produces everything, that it is the only class capable of running the banks, basic industry, transportation, and agriculture, in the interests of the people. Workers are going to form committees in work places to train themselves to run various enterprizes. They are going to call in experts, devoted to the people, to help them. They are going to fight for more and more control and ownership until everything is in the hands of the workers, and the people have

GM's whip-sawing and plant-closings show we need socialism

The owners of GM said openly that they are going to go from plant to plant and demand that workers make concessions in jobs, wages, benefits, and/or work rules. Workers who agree to make concessions will have jobs; workers who don't, won't.

This shows that we need socialism. That is, a society in which the masses of working people constitute the government, in which the government owns and controls all the basic resources of the society, and in which the government organizes the production and distribution of basic necessities, so that everyone has what he or she needs.

As long as a small handful of private individuals, like the owners of GM, own and control all the basic resources of this society, they can use this ownership and control to *blackmail* the people, that is, to try to force the people to work for them in exchange for less and less. The people have no alternative because they don't have in their hands the basic instruments necessary to produce the food, clothing, and shelter they need. The people are slaves.

everything they need to survive and prosper.

This is what the working class is going to be driven to do, in order to survive. It's not going to be a class of slaves any more, who work for others. It is going to become a class of workers who work for themselves, and who know how to rule in their interests and in those of the vast majority. The working class is going to become a *ruling class*, an independent, political, revolutionary, ruling class. It will establish free and equal relations with workers of other countries on this basis. It will build a truly socialist or communist society in which workers own everything and everyone has what he or she needs.

This is what is going to come out of the crisis, confusion, and conflict taking place today, sooner or later.

What should workers, and those of other classes devoted to them, do now?

— Get the best job you can and keep it, without compromising yourself, without supporting the bosses against other workers.

— Learn to read and study working class, revolutionary, and other publications; learn to think critically and independently about them; don't take others' words for things; think things through yourself.

— Learn to fight for the largest possible unity against the class enemy at every point.

— Learn to work with other workers with different political views, for example, in the Jerry Tucker campaign, or Labor Party Advocates.

— Build a party, a political organization, composed of the best elements of the working class, and the best elements of other classes devoted to the working class, oriented toward accomplishing the final goal of the workers' struggle — the total liberation of the working class from all forms of exploitation and oppression and the construction of a socialist society. This is what the Trotskyists, the Fourth Internationalists, are fighting for. We urge you to support us and join us.—M. Guttshall

Some people say that socialism is wrong because it means taking property away from people who have a right to it. But what the owners of GM own today — plant, equipment, raw materials, parts, cars, office buildings, financial resources, etc. — is the product of the labor of millions of workers over the years. It's not the product of the labor of the handful of owners and executives at the top. Socialism puts property back in the hands of the people who have the right to it — those who produced it. Capitalism takes property out of the hands of those who have a right to it, and puts it in the hands of those who, at best, made a small contribution to producing it, and at worst, into the hands of parasites, who did nothing.

Workers in the old USSR today — the oldest socialist country — are fighting to get rid of the privileged bureaucracy in this country (which is much like the trade union bureaucracy in the U.S.) and get direct control of the basic resources themselves. The privileged bureaucracy on the other hand is trying to break up and sell these resources to Western bankers and businessmen, in exchange for a spot for themselves. Like evil stepmothers, they'd rather chop the baby in half, than let the real mother have it. In the case of the old USSR, it's the workers who are the real mother. It is the workers who have the right to own and control everything in the old USSR because they are the ones who produced it. And the same thing goes for the U.S. ■

Truth is published by the Trotskyist Committee of Detroit. The Trotskyist Committee of Detroit is named after Leon Trotsky, a leader of the first successful workers socialist revolution and a founder of the Fourth International, the world party of the socialist revolution. The Trotskyist Committee of Detroit is associated with one of the international tendencies of the Fourth International, the International League for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International. Editor: Margaret Guttshall

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