

# Flint Auto Union Launches Drive For 30-Hour Week at 40 Hour Pay

Only Way to Save Men's Jobs and Keep the Union Strong; Proposal Sent to International and Locals; Fisher Body Local Will Publish Material to Educate the Membership

FLINT, Mich., May 6—The first important blow in the struggle of the auto workers for the 30-hour week at 40-hours pay was struck here Saturday when the Fisher Body Local No. 581, representing the militant 7,000 workers of the great South Fisher plant, passed a strong resolution calling upon the General Motors Negotiating Committee to make this an immediate demand.

The resolution, which stated that "from all indications this essential demand is being tossed into the waste basket in violation of the decision of the Cleveland convention," explicitly demands that "the 30-hour week at 40-hours pay be included as an immediate demand in contractual negotiations with GM." This action will undoubtedly serve as the spearhead of a wave of demands throughout the UAW-CIO that negotiators go down the line for this slogan, as the only step which can lift the auto union out of its lethargy.

For almost two weeks the GM negotiators, including Walter Reuther, R. J. Thomas, President of the UAW, and other Executive Board members, have been wallowing through an interminable list of grievances, piled up over a period of months—while the main problem of insecurity and unemployment in the industry, which has caused widespread discontent among the auto workers, remains unsolved.

## Same Local Started Sit-Downs

The action of the Fisher Body local, the union that staged the first sit-down in Flint, and which has carved a memorable record of militancy for itself since the beginning of the auto union, will reverberate up and down the auto area, especially in GM.

It is an indication of great significance that the auto workers are well aware that ordinary demands no longer answer their needs. The auto workers know and are becoming more and more acquainted with the main problem. They know for example, that last year General Motors made 59% more profits than in 1938; but that employment did not rise along with production.

Auto workers know that while the corporation made \$183,000,000 in profits last year, tens of thousands were still unemployed.

They know that technological improvements every year eat into the jobs of the workers. Last year the individual worker produced an average of 24 cars, while the year before he made only 21 cars. The corporation got three more cars out of each worker's labor.

Thinking members of the union are awaking to the fact that every year new devices displace men

in the industry, and that unless the work week is shortened, no man's job is safe. Between 1925 and 1938, for example, new technological devices made it possible to make a car with 33 fewer hours of labor per unit.

Fisher Body itself today employs at least two thousand fewer men than nine or ten years ago. And yet today much more is produced in the huge South Fisher plant, biggest body plant in the world. At one time this plant made only Buick bodies. Today it makes Buick, Chevrolet, Pontiac, and Oldsmobile bodies.

In addition to displacing men, technological improvements are used by the company to create waves of chaos and uncertainty in the plants, displacing men, beginning the process of transfer and "bumping." This ties up the union apparatus with a mountain of grievances, so preoccupying many of the leaders that they do not see the main problem.

## Points the Way For All

The action of Fisher Body Local No. 581 points the way for the UAW-CIO. It serves as a call to arms for the militant union men throughout the industry.

For two years now the UAW-CIO, torn by inner strife, and bogged down by a shortsighted leadership, has fiddled around with minor problems, constantly on the defensive.

The Fisher resolution for the 30-hour week at 40-hours pay is a militant call for an offensive in auto, to lift the union from the plane of defensive retreat to a vigorous and courageous forward march toward a great advance. Once the fight is launched for the 30-hour week at 40-hours pay, the UAW-CIO will once again plow ahead, as in 1936 and 1937, and an inspired membership will fight to victory.

Nothing can revitalize the auto union so much as a struggle for the 30-hour week at 40-hours pay, which strikes at the main problem, the unemployment crisis in the industry, and the insecurity of employment which hangs as a constant threat over the head of every man in the plants.

In Flint the Buick plants have passed resolutions similar to the Fisher Body resolution, and it is expected that the next general membership meeting will go on record for the action.

The resolution is being sent to all local unions of the International.

The Fisher Body men have made their decision to fight for the 30-hour week at 40-hour pay clear. They now await action on the part of the negotiators meeting with GM, and above all they await support from their brothers in other local unions in General Motors.

GM workers: Fisher Body Local No. 581 has shown the way to a solution of your problems! Rally to their support!

## Flint Fisher Body Resolution

The Fisher Body resolution reads as follows:

WHEREAS: We have now established by overwhelming vote in GM that the CIO has the exclusive power to bargain for the employees of that corporation, and

WHEREAS: The greatest problem facing our union is the fact that thousands of auto workers are today suffering the pangs of unemployment, having been displaced by new machines and technological devices, and

WHEREAS: This growing army of unemployed stands as a threat to organized labor because of necessity they must work for scab wages or starve, and are forced to take any job at any wage by relief administrations, and

WHEREAS: Technological unemployment also threatens every man inside the plants, there being no security as long as new machines are used to displace men instead of to shorten the work day, and

WHEREAS: At the last convention of the UAW in Cleveland we adopted a program to meet this situation, the demand for the 30-hour week at 40-hours pay, which to this day remains only a phrase in our program, nothing having been done about it, and

WHEREAS: General Motors can afford to give us the 30-hour week with no reduction in pay today and not tomorrow, with all their hundreds of millions of profits pouring into the coffers of the coupon clippers, and

WHEREAS: From all indications this essential demand is being tossed into the waste basket in violation of the decision of the Cleveland convention, no plans made to put it into effect in the immediate future;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That this local demands that the 30-hour week at 40-hours pay be included as an immediate demand in contractual negotiations with GM, in addition to the necessary demands for a shop steward system, abolition of the D list, vacations with pay, seniority, etc., etc.;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That copies of this resolution be sent to Walter Reuther, all executive board members of the International, to the CIO Council in Flint, and to all local unions of the International, and that the executive board of this local publish material to educate the membership on the importance of this demand.

# Steel Workers! Fight for 6-Hour Day, 8-Hour Pay Is Main Fight

(Continued from Page 1)

"salaries"—is burning holes in their pockets. Grace of Bethlehem "earned" (stole would be a better word) \$378,698; Fairless of Carnegie, \$100,000; Weir, \$122,900 and ditto for their pals who pulled down tidy little sums that managed to keep the wolf from the door.

But the prosperity just didn't get around to the man who made it possible. You mill workers in Gary and Pittsburgh and Youngstown don't have to be told this. You know it in the kind of language no writer can ever put down on paper—the language of poverty and unemployment. While production was going full blast in November, 1939, six percent above the 1929 peak, unemployment, Phillip Murray says, was "enormous."

In Pittsburgh, he adds, "one out of every five able bodied workers was unemployed."

In Youngstown relief rolls remained at the high depression level.

The same or worse for the other steel cities.

## A Conspiracy Against the Steel Workers

The workers didn't share in the prosperity because there was no work for one-third, and only part-time work for another third. For the past ten years the steel bosses have been working up a big conspiracy against the steel workers. They are plotting to get more work out of fewer men, to bring higher profits with lower employment. To hide their dirty plot, they call it "technological improvement."

The conspiracy has already made big progress. The continuous hot strip mills have thrown over 37,000 workers on the street—for good. Within a few years another 47,000 will follow them out of the industry. With these new methods 27 automatic steel strip mills built since 1924 have a combined capacity of 15 million tons. Republic's Cleveland strip mill puts out 70,000 gross tons of steel per month and employs a maximum of 2,000 men. 128 men in automatic mills can produce the same tonnage as 4,512 men in hand mills. Five workers can now produce the same quantity of steel that six produced five years ago.

The "technological" changes have been a plague, not an improvement to the steel workers.

The steel bosses, through the American Iron and Steel Institute, are crowing over the success of their conspiracy of "technological improvement." In their journals they boast about how they eliminated 14 million dollars from the monthly pay envelopes of the steel workers from 1937 to 1939; they boast about how they raised productive efficiency by one-fifth while they fired 37,000 workers from the industry; they lick their chops over the nine percent increase in finished steel prices. The steel bosses are sailing along, planning big things, pushing us into the war so they can make tremendous profits (\$700,000,000 was their fee for patriotism in the last war) and employ less and less men.

Only one force can stop them: the organized steel workers!

## Steel Workers Know What to Do

You know what to do to fight the conspiracy of

the steel bosses and to make work for thousands of your brothers. You decided that at your convention in Pittsburgh more than two years ago. You said then: Let the steel bosses have their "technological improvement." But make them pay for it out of their fat profits. "Improvements"—Yes! But not out of the hides of the workers.

THE SIX-HOUR DAY WITH EIGHT-HOURS PAY!—that was the resolution you adopted at your convention. That is the immediate answer to the problem of unemployment in the steel industry.

Everybody knows this is the only way. Your leaders, Murray, Van Bittner and the others travel up and down the country making speeches about the "number one problem—unemployment." Murray even wrote a book advocating the six-hour day at eight hours pay.

But what have they done to carry out the mandate of that convention? What have they done to carry out the desires of thousands of workers expressed in resolutions from dozens of lodges for the six-hour day at eight-hours pay? Nothing. Nothing but talk.

They will say that nothing can be done until "Little Steel" is organized. But why is "Little Steel" unorganized?

For the same reason that you don't have the six-hour day at eight-hours pay: the leaders of your union were begging everybody to do it for them, every boss politician, Roosevelt, Governor Davey, the National Guard, the Labor Board. They forgot you, the steel workers. And when they forgot you they forgot the only force that can ever build a union under Girdler's nose or make the big boys come across with the six-hour day at eight-hours pay.

## "Little Steel" CAN Be Organized!

HOW WILL YOU EVER ORGANIZE "LITTLE STEEL"? Only when you show these workers that you mean business. Just tell these men who have a record of militancy, who have written many a heroic page of American labor history, that you are planning a fight for the six-hour day at eight-hours pay—tell them that—and not a thousand Tom Girdlers, not a hundred Chicago Massacres, will stop the organization of "Little Steel."

It's up to you—and no one else.

Girdler is hoping that you will once again turn your fate over to "friends of labor," to boss politicians, to "conferences of business, government and labor." He hopes for that, because he knows the "friends of labor" will stab you in the back, he knows he can buy up the boss politicians and stall your conferences out of business.

The steel workers back home are hoping you decide to fight. They will back you to the limit. You can depend on that.

And not only they, but the auto workers, the construction workers, all the workers of this country will back you to the limit.

As Steel goes, so go the workers of the nation.

SIX-HOUR DAY AT EIGHT-HOURS PAY is the marching slogan of American labor.

Will Steel lead the parade? It's up to you, delegates of the SWOC convention!

# "Technological Unemployment" Presses Down on Steel Workers

Technological unemployment, threatening the livelihood of every worker in steel industry, has fixed itself as the most pressing and permanent problem confronting the Steel Workers Organizing Committee. Since 1926 when the continuous hot-strip mill was first introduced, one hundred thousand employees have lost their jobs with the gradual displacement of the old hand mill for the more efficient hot-strip mill. While the steel industry as a whole has been operating at much less than 70 per cent capacity, the producers of the hot-strip mills, Mesta Machine Co. and United Engineering & Foundry Co., have been working at a full one hundred per cent capacity. At the same time hot-strip capacity since 1930 has mounted over four hundred per cent.

That the continuous hot-strip mill is "the most effective labor saving device ever produced in the steel industry," is readily seen by the tremendous reduction of man power in the manufacture of steel. Today 15 men in the hot-strip mills can produce as much as 100 in the hand mills. Formerly 15,500,000 tons production in the hand mills required 125,000 workers; now 14,000,000 tons produced in the strip-mills requires only 15,000 workers. Fully eighty-five per cent of all hand mill workers, some of the highest paid in the industry who spent years in apprenticeship and training for their skilled operation, have had their jobs pulled out from beneath them and have been thrown upon

relief and WPA rolls to eke out less than a bare existence.

Moreover, even the relatively few jobs created by the introduction of the hot-strip mills have been denied the hand mill workers on the grounds that "they have difficulty in adapting themselves to the new and more rapid production."

## Steel "Ghost Towns"

Whole towns, as though ravaged by a plague, have been devastated by the onslaught of this labor saving device. "Ghost Towns", like New Castle, Penn.; Elwood, Indiana; Apollo, Pennsylvania; Newport, Kentucky; and Follansbee, West Virginia, have sprung up—former industrial communities gutted of their central industries and existing on the grace of government relief subsidies.

With the outbreak of the Second World War last September rumors of good times swept throughout the steel area. The hope of jobs was rekindled among the unemployed; a new prosperity with the coming of war orders was anticipated. "The Big Boom" was on its way to steel. Newspapers like the Pittsburgh Press ran screaming headlines: "GHOST TOWNS IN DISTRICT STIR AS MINES OPEN," and "M IS ADDED TO 'BOO.'" Here and there mills were reopened.

## War Boom Flops

But in December these mills began closing down, and the "mill towns" collapsed with a crash.

Six months after the declaration of war steel production has subsided to a lower level than it had stood before the outbreak of hostilities.

Now that the war has spread to Scandinavia and is menacing even wider areas a new lease on life has again been taken out, and again such hope among the unemployed is doomed to disappointment. Today the strip-mill capacity exceeds 19,000,000 tons, at least one-sixth higher than the production of 1937 (16,000,000) which was a "boom year." The year 1939 saw a marked decline over the production figures of 1937, so that even a twenty per cent increase in the steel industry due to war demands would not overtax the present strip-mill capacity.

Even if extraordinary demands are placed upon the production of steel as a result of other countries, including the U.S., becoming involved in the war, and the obsolete hand mills throughout the country are reopened, these will operate only for a limited time and will close down finally. A war boom can only serve to postpone the day when every hand mill worker will find himself cast out of the industry.

## Let Bosses Pay!

Gradually the steel workers, employed and unemployed, have begun to realize what is happening, and the murmurs of discontent have been changed into a new cry: "A Six Hour Day with Eight Hour Pay!"

# Mother's Day Is May 12---What of Other 364 Days?

By ANTOINETTE F. KONIKOW, M.D.

Mother's Day comes this Sunday, May 12. What a mockery! The brain storm of those miracle men of this ailing system, the advertising specialists, who conceived it as business tonic and a rare opportunity to unload on a limitless public (everyone has a mother) tawdry and unsaleable merchandise that might otherwise remain unsold. Thus a fine and genuine emotion is degraded and distorted by contact with the world of quick sales and huge profits. Mother love is now given its market value by these worthy "sentimentalists," the manufacturers and shopkeepers, whose crabbed souls respond to only one overpowering emotion—greed for profit.

Today mother is feted with candy and flowers and gifts. Today, by order of the bosses, everyone remembers mother. Tomorrow and tomorrow, for 364 tomorrows mother continues to struggle with problems created by those very bosses and their system—poverty, unemployment, hunger, want, disease, and the scourge which often deprives her of her motherhood—war!

What does motherhood mean to the wife of a worker or middle class man today? Mother may be the wage earner, partially or totally. Motherhood means extra work and constant worry not only for the immediate present but also for the future. Mothers recall their own unhappy childhood, their overworked, embittered parents dulled and aged by lives of toil and drudgery with whom no real companionship was possible. They remember their dreams—of school, of training for useful work, of simple luxuries, of contact with an unknown world of art and music—most of which were never realized. And because they so love their children, born and unborn, women today recoil from motherhood rather than see repeated by those dear to them a miserable childhood and thwarted preparation for adult life.

Many women today are on strike against children, as their expression of protest against the conditions in which they must face motherhood and raise families. The first inquiry of every newly-married woman is how to avoid unwanted motherhood. Has human nature changed? Have women become hard and loveless and selfish? How absurd! The urge to recreate one's own, to watch the development of a human being, almost part of yourself, from a little animal that sleeps and eats to a growing, thinking adult whose progress you follow with pride and concern—that instinctive desire for progeny cannot be repressed—no! not even by the capitalist system that today deprives so many parents of their right to raise families. The dream of most young married couples is to achieve that condition of modest financial security which will make it possible for them to have a child and perhaps a whole family.

Women today are not granted (legally) the right to regulate the size and spacing of their family. Clinics and physicians in many states are not permitted to inform women about birth control. A business dealing in bootleg information, dispensing inadequate, expensive and often harmful drugs and appliances has been created because of this hypocritical and barbaric law. Women every day endanger their health, suffer pain and needless torture, rather than bear children whom they can offer nothing but love.

Today with war on the agenda, celebration of Mother's Day adds insult to hypocrisy. "Mother," the bosses say, "we appreciate you—you bear the young men we need for the army. You suffer and toil—sacrifice and plan, to produce fine healthy boys. We can use plenty of them in battle with the sons of mothers of other countries—to protect our trade and profits—that is—democracy. The thought of those mothers whose sons are killed shouldn't disturb you. They are enemies and haven't the same feelings as you have. What's that you say? Your son may be killed and the sons of other mothers who are not enemies? Yes, but then you will have the satisfaction of knowing he died a hero—and you will be rewarded with a gold medal and given an honor seat at public functions. Besides, he probably would not have had a job, and have been a bum or a crook, so perhaps it's just as well."

Mothers! The sugar-coated gifts hide the bitter pill of the boss system. Under capitalism there can be no improvement of conditions for women, mothers of families. Only in a Socialist society will mothers achieve that security which will permit them to raise children without fear for their future. But no one will give you that as a gift. You will have to struggle and fight for Socialism, you together with the workers, men and women, black and white, old and young—in this country and in others—for their cause is yours and only through the victory of the workers will mothers solve their problems. Only when all mankind raises itself from slavery and exploitation and enjoys a free and full life will women choose motherhood happily, confidently and proudly. Rearing and preparing the young for a life in a socialist society, for useful labor, for boundless achievements in science, industry and art—that will indeed make of motherhood an interesting, important and honored profession.

Boston, Mass.

Sheik Khalil Ben Ibrahim al-Rawaf of Arabia, who is visiting America to negotiate oil deals, was much embarrassed when he arrived at New York's El Morocco—and discovered the Senegambian doorman wearing a costume almost exactly like the sheik's. It surely hurts the pride of all parasites to be mistaken for a worker.

Prince Michael of Rumania contributed a month's pay as a member of the senate, \$175, to the army equipment fund. He became a senator automatically on reaching the age of 18. This is known as noblesse oblige, which is the same as sacrificing something you don't miss and thereby get the name of being one hell of a philanthropist.

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