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BLACK WORKER'S STRUGGLES IN DETROIT'S
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BLACK WORKER'S STRUGGLES IN DETROIT'S AUTO INDUSTRY, 1935-1975

By

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ABSTRACT

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By

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During the late 1960s liberation movements mounted by black workers emerged in the heart of the U.S. economy: at the point of industrial production. A segment of the black working class located at strategic points in the industrial production process came to espouse a revolutionary ideology backed by the ability through wild-cat strikes to seemingly cripple the U.S. economy. In this study I attempt to explain the emergence of this revolutionary segment of the black working class and explicate the forces which came to divide, fragment and eventually diffuse its revolutionary potential. The focus of my investigation is on the evolving role played by black labor and the struggles mounted by black workers in the automobile industry in Detroit from the late 1930s to the early 1970s.

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INTRODUCTION

During the late 1960s liberation movements mounted by black workers emerged in the heart of the U.S. economy: at the point of industrial production. A segment of the black working class located at strategic points in the industrial production process came to espouse a revolutionary ideology backed by the ability through wildcat strikes to seemingly cripple the U.S. economy. In this study I attempt to explain the emergence of this revolutionary segment of the black working class and explicate the forces which came to divide, fragment and eventually diffuse its revolutionary potential. The focus of my investigation is on the evolving role played by black labor and the struggles mounted by black workers in the automobile industry in Detroit from the late 1930s to the early 1970s. In the process I hope to shed some further light on the changing nature of the black industrial working class in the United States.

The emergence of a revolutionary vanguard of black workers is best viewed as an organic phase in the historical development of the black working class. My research has led me to conclude that the development of the black industrial working class from the Great Depression of the 1930s to the early 1970s is best

understood when it is broken down into three relatively distinct phases. Each phase comprises a chapter of the study to follow.

I have labeled the first phase in the development of black industrial labor--"the formation of the black working class: from strike breakers to union integration." This period covers the middle 1930s to the onset of World War II. It is the period of the great CIO organizing drives from 1937 to 1941 during which capitalist hegemony was forcefully challenged by workers struggling to control the labor process. In large, integrated manufacturing operations, like auto production, a relatively small group of disciplined unionists engaged in production work could cripple an entire system by seizing a strategic plant and by preventing others from engaging in production work. Workers in the plants came to recognize their power to intimidate the companies and through disciplined organization and struggle forced the companies to yield to a variety of demands.

At this historical juncture black workers had not yet attained the level of class consciousness manifested by large segments of the white industrial working class. Black workers had just recently completed the transition from a Southern agrarian to a Northern industrial economy. They were justifiably skeptical of the merits of white unionism given their long experience with blatant exclusion from the AFL trades. Moreover, black workers

tended to be hired for industrial work through the medium of influential black community leaders who served as labor brokers for white industrialists. So loyalty to black community leadership tended to translate directly into black worker loyalty to white industrial capitalists. Finally, black workers tended to be excluded from those production jobs which objectively yielded potential power to control the production process. In the automobile industry the assembly line was the strategic location for workers' struggles to control the production process but black workers tended to be excluded from the production line. Black labor was disproportionately concentrated in the foundry departments, and in menial service jobs like janitorial work. With the CIO organizing drives, black workers came to be incorporated into the institutional fabric of industrial unionism, and broke their ties of dependency to those black community leaders aligned with white industrial capitalists. In Chapter 1, the formation of the black industrial working class, and the process of the integration of black workers into the framework of industrial unionism are described.

I have labeled the second major phase in the development of Detroit's black auto workers "the struggle against racial discrimination within the framework of the United Auto Workers." During this period, which runs from World War II to the late 1960s (and which exists in the late 1960s side by side with the third phase), we

witness the emergence of black caucuses within the UAW struggling against a structure of discrimination built into the fabric of factory operations. It became increasingly clear that black workers had traded their dependency on pro-industrialist black community influentials for dependency upon white union leadership. Neither group found it propitious to seriously challenge the unique blend of exploitation and discrimination confronted by black workers in the industrial plants.

The once enlightened and progressive racial policy of the UAW-CIO crumbled in the face of decentralization of the auto industry and automation of the labor process. During the latter half of the 1940s the UAW began to lose its innovative dynamism, it became increasingly neglectful of shop grievances, and ever more narrowly wage oriented. With the 1948 productivity bargaining settlement between the UAW and General Motors--a settlement which became a model for all industrial unions--the union traded away any serious effort to control the production process and recognized in theory and fact the unchallengeable right of capitalists to control the labor process. As far as the labor process goes, the 1948 agreement institutionalized union leadership as an extension of capitalist management responsible to the present day for workers toeing the line of capitalist profit-making priorities.

As automation and decentralization went apace during the postwar period, black workers found themselves

occupying the lowest strata of the industry concentrated in the hottest, dirtiest and lowest paying jobs in the plants. That is, blacks came to occupy precisely those jobs in which shop grievances are most prevalent yet they did so at a period when the union leadership was increasingly concentrating its collective bargaining attention on wage and fringe benefit issues rather than upon the conditions in the work place. For the most part, black workers were effectively excluded from representation among the union leadership and those few blacks who successfully managed to enter the union hierarchy tended, as the price of admission, to uphold and defend prevalent union policies. On the legislative and judicial fronts--that is, far away from day-to-day plant operations--the UAW supported the programs of civil rights organizations and fair employment ideology. But the UAW never systematically devoted itself to eradicating racial discrimination in the plants or in the union hierarchy. With the merger of the CIO and the AFL in 1955, the racially enlightened policies of the once dynamic industrial unions receded into the historical record.

In the late 1950's black trade unionists increasingly challenged organized white union leadership on two fronts: with respect to racial discrimination in both the union and the plants, and with respect to UAW neglect of the pressing problem of disproportionately

high rates of black unemployment. That is, black caucuses attempted to alter the union structure in the direction of greater sensitivity to the needs of black workers. However, as I will attempt to demonstrate in Chapter II, racial discrimination was deeply rooted in the logic of capital accumulation as manifested in increasing automation and decentralization of production. The struggle within the framework of the company-union system was doomed to failure so long as it failed to challenge, in any basic way, the logic of capitalist profit-making.

By the end of the 1960s black auto workers had become concentrated in production jobs in the Detroit plants. While a majority among production workers in many plants, black workers faced spatial segregation and much poorer working conditions relative to their white counterparts and thus were far from being integrated into the mainstream of the U.S. working class. The evolving blend of class exploitation and racial discrimination confronted black auto workers with a situation of superexploitation. Black workers, concentrated in aging inner city plants, faced higher rates of speed-up and produced higher production quotas than workers in suburban and other decentralized plants. And working conditions in the older urban plants progressively deteriorated.

I have labeled the third phase in the development of the black industrial working class "revolutionary

change beyond the union structure--the League of Revolutionary Black Workers." This is the subject to be covered in Chapter III. Superexploitation underpinned the Revolutionary Union Movements in several Detroit plants in the late 1960s and the formation of militant black workers into the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. The League raised the combined issues of class exploitation and racial discrimination as manifested in the labor process and logic of capital accumulation in a fashion that challenged the legitimacy of corporation, union, and older black caucus leadership alike. Directly reminiscent of the CIO organizing drives of the late 1930s, militant black workers demonstrated their power as producers to intimidate capitalists (and now union as well!) by shutting down the assembly plants and the foundary departments. But the League went beyond the organizing ideology of the mainstream of the 1930s CIO and called for taking control over the plants, the black community, the city and state power under the banner of a revolutionary socialist program dedicated to eradicating both exploitation and discrimination. Thus there emerged upon the Detroit scene a militant cadre of black conscious and class conscious industrial workers with a program of revolutionary struggle and the ambition of becoming the working class leadership of the Black Liberation Movement.

Yet the League of Revolutionary Black Workers soon experienced internal contradictions and corresponding

internal splits resulting in a fragmentation and diffusion of its ideology and organizational capabilities. Today, black struggle for an alternative society appears to be leading in the direction of a broader based movement. The League paved as incipient step. But that movement will have to be carried out by all oppressed groups of workers.

CHAPTER I

THE FORMATION OF THE BLACK WORKING CLASS: FROM STRIKE BREAKERS TO UNION INTEGRATION

Prior to World War I, the black labor reserve in the Southern countryside existed as a potential but largely untapped industrial labor supply. After World War I, rapid industrial expansion and a labor shortage induced by the shutting off of European immigration translated into capitalist demand for black labor in the industrial centers of the North. Labor shortages in industries like steel, meat-packing and automobiles were the key stimulant to black migration in the second decade of this century. As the size of the black population in the major urban centers of the North grew, "Negro jobs" became institutionalized into identifiable sub-markets within the larger metropolitan setting. Ghetto controls served to politically and socially "set off" this segment of the proletariat now consigned to the least desirable employment.

On the eve of World War II, as defense production began to restimulate the economy after the deeply depressed conditions of the 1930s, a great expansion in the black sectors of metropolitan labor markets commenced. World War I had established a space for black

labor as unskilled workers in heavy industries. During World War II this space was enlarged to include a number of semi-skilled jobs in many industries. World War II marked the most dramatic improvement in economic status ever experienced by black people. During the era between the two world wars the national aspirations of blacks worked themselves out on the basis of their new material conditions. That is, blacks were rapidly becoming an urban proletariat. Concomitantly, the locus of institutional racism, heretofore imbedded in agrarian thralldom, now gave way to a metropolitan ghetto system.[1]

A. Composition of Black Automobile Workers in the 1940s

In 1940 the State of Michigan contained 83 percent of the black labor force in the auto industry (as constrasted with 60 percent of white auto workers).[2] In 1937 fully 99 percent of all black workers employed by the Ford Motor Company were found in the Rouge Plant in Dearborn--a southern suburb adjacent to Detroit. The bulk of the General Motors black workers were employed by the Buick plant in Flint, the Pontiac foundry in Pontiac, and the Chevrolet Grey-Iron Foundry in Saginaw. The majority of Chrysler's black workers were employed at the Dodge Main plant in Hamtramck, the site of the chief Chrysler foundry.[3]

Lloyd Bailer's seminal research during this period revealed that:

> The vast majority of the black automobile workers were employed in the foundry, paint, and maintenance departments (chiefly as janitors), or as general unskilled labor. Of these...the foundry is the most important. In fact, one can be quite certain that an automobile plant employing a sizeable portion of Negro labor has a foundry. In many large plants the foundry is known as a black department. In general, foundry occupations are the most undesirable in the industry... hot, dirty, and demand exceptional strength. The accident rate is higher in the foundry than any other departments. These conditions are not restricted to foundries in the automobile industry but are characteristic of all foundries...automobile foundries are among the safest and most modern...but... foundry work is extremely disagreeable and often dangerous.[4]

Moreover, Bailer discovered that:

> Jobs within the same classification were varied in their desirability as to skill. Outside of the coreroom nearly all foundry jobs are unpleasant, yet a substantial portion of them are semi-skilled and skilled. The same holds true for the heat-treat and sanding and paint operations. Yet most of them are semi-skilled and skilled. Black workers were found in such departments where they were confined to the most hazardous or otherwise undesirable occupations--such as jobs, like, for example, shear operator, beater, sprayman, chipper, rough-snag-grinder, and sand-blaster. Likewise, black unskilled workers filled the more undesirable jobs in that broad occupational category. In brief, blacks were not only concentrated in occupations requiring less skill but also attached to the worst jobs within each occupational classification.[5]

In addition to foundry work, black workers were widely employed as janitors, porters, laborers, cafeteria bus boys, etc. in the assembly plants. But black workers were largely barred from jobs on the assembly line.

Thus, in 1940 black workers in Chrysler Corporation tended to be confined to the traditional jobs reserved for them in the industry: the foundry, especially at the Dodge Main plant, and in painting and laboring jobs. In March, 1940, 51 percent of the approximately two thousand black workers at Chrysler were classed as unskilled (production helpers, janitors, common laborers, etc.); 30 percent as foundry workers; 5 percent as paint department workers (chiefly sanders and sprayers); and 14 percent were classed in miscellaneous occupations.[6]

At General Motors, black workers were placed on inspection, machining and assembly operations in Cadillac and Oldsmobile in Michigan as early as 1933. In 1936, for example, 30 percent of the workers employed on inspection and machining operations at the Cheverolet Gear and Axle plant in Detroit were blacks. Both Cadillac and Oldsmobile had black workers in skilled trades classifications prior to World War II and 4 percent of the Oldsmobile work force in Lansing was composed of black workers who were employed on production jobs in the 1930s. However, despite some participation in the skilled sector, black workers were overwhelmingly concentrated in the foundry department at General Motors.[7]

When Ford's great River Rouge plant in Dearborn opened in the 1920s, most black workers employed at Highland Park were moved to River Rouge. In 1937, 40 percent of the total black auto labor force worked at River Rouge and only one percent of the Ford black labor force was employed outside the River Rouge plant.[8] The Rouge operations included an engine plant, stamping and other parts plants, and an assembly plant, as well as huge blast furnaces and rolling mills (where Ford made its own steel); later a glass plant (Ford was the third largest flat glass maker in the industry); foundries; docks where Ford-owned ships unloaded coal, iron ore, and other raw materials; and at one time a cement plant, a tire plant, a lumber mill, and a paper box factory.[9]

At Ford blacks were also concentrated in the foundry, the plant departments, and in unskilled jobs at River Rouge. But black workers at Ford Motor Company were also employed in nearly all manufacturing departments as well. Blacks worked on the assembly line in large numbers and, contrary to prevailing practices, black apprentices and trade school graduates were also accepted. River Rouge had the industry's only black tool and die mechanics and the industry's largest and most significant black aggregation of part assemblers, machine and press operators. Moreover, River Rouge had more black supervisors than were found in the rest of the industry.

Nevertheless, black workers were disproportionately concentrated in the less desirable occupations and divisions. In the most disagreeable jobs the proportion of black workers was over 50 percent: in shakeout, 56.97%; in molding, 52.62%; in reels, 55.97%; in smelting, 51.86%; and in chipping, 51.06%.[10]

B The Anti-Union Alliance

When the CIO began to organize the auto industry they knew where to touch the black workers to get their attention. Writing about the black situation in the plants, the UAW stated:

> The majority of black workers were in the heaviest, dirtiest, and most dangerous jobs, often called "Negro jobs." Metal pouring and the carrying of hot metal had killed and maimed hundreds of black workers. In some jobs, like supola tending, the heat was so great it was impossible to breathe. Notwithstanding, many white employers and foremen firmly believed that black workers could stand the heat. Black workers had such jobs as the "shake out," where dust, dirt and sand was cleaned from the molded metal, and core-making, where they lived in constant danger of gas explosions, from which many had already been killed. If they survived these occupational hazards, there were occupational diseases like tuberculosis, silicosis, bronchitis, pneumonia, cynaide, heart disease and stomach ailments which greatly reduced their life-spans.[11]

These hardships, coupled with speed-up and lack of rest periods, impressed upon a segment of the black work force the need for a union with their interests at heart. A black pro-union movement began to emerge among black

foundry workers in the plants. At Dodge Main black workers organized a group calling themselves the Dodge Local Progressive Group in 1937 and took part in a 54-day strike in 1939 with white workers.[12] Black workers at Chrysler's Kercheval Avenue plant also began to show pro-union consciousness.[13]

But unionists bent on organizing black auto workers faced formidable difficulties. Auto management had cultivated a long standing alliance with influential black community figures and the full force of this alliance was wielded against the union organizing drive. By means of financial contributions and other benefits bestowed upon local black organizations, auto magnates gained their allegiance and increased black dependence upon local industry. The black church became the focal point of this support. The most sophisticated practitioner of the policy was the Ford Motor Company. Ford made financial contributions to selected black churches, and then virtually used the ministers as employment agents.[14]

Henry Ford's black employment policies grew out of requests put to him by leaders of the black community after World War I. During the 1921 depression year, black ministers appealed to Ford to give consideration to the needs of Detroit's growing and deeply troubled black population. Ford responded by agreeing to keep the percentage of black factory workers in his main facility--then Highland Park but soon to be River Rouge--roughly

proportional to the black percentage in the City of Detroit.[15] Job concessions then became a mechanism through which Ford gained considerable influence over Detroit's black community. Ford hired prospective black workers upon presentation of a written recommendation from their minister to company officials. Black ministers welcomed Ford's assistance since it increased church attendance, helped keep the church financially solvent, and strengthened their community leadership position.[16] Once having secured company approval, a minister was anxious to keep it, and willingly followed Ford's anti-union position in the pulpit, and in the political arena. Thus, for example, in 1937 a belligerent delegation of Detroit black ministers threatened to boycott the NAACP convention unless UAW-CIO speakers were removed from the program.[17]

C Blacks as Strikebreakers

As the CIO organizing drive intensified, the anti-union alliance mobilized black workers as an instrument for breaking the dynamism of the labor movement. Black workers were recruited for the express purpose of breaking strikes and black employees were urged by corporation and black community leaders alike to oppose the movement for unionization.

Thus, there were few black workers on the scene during the wave of sitdown strikes between November, 1936 and April, 1937.[18] During the Studebaker sitdown at South Bend in November, 1936, the Oldsmobile dispute in Lansing in January, 1937, and the numerous Detroit disputes (chief of which was the Chrysler sitdown), most black workers left the plants as soon as possible and remained away until settlements were reached.[19]

The most significant event of 1939 was the Chrysler strike at Dodge Main in October and November. It was an "acid test" of the unity of black and white workers as well as the few black leaders in Detroit who had sided with organized labor against the anti-union alliance. 24,000 workers struck the Dodge plant on Detroit's east side. 1,700 of them were blacks. The closing of Dodge Main brought about the suspension of operations in all Chrysler Corporation plants. On November 22, a number of black foundry workers who had returned to the main Dodge plant for their paychecks were allegedly advised by one of the plant supervisors that they would be given work if they returned in ten days. Accordingly, some 60 black workers attempted to pass the picket lines on November 24. They were met with a barriage of stones. While most succeeded in entering the foundry, they were sent home after working only a few hours.[20]

Black workers and their allies on the picket line were quick to sense the dangers inherent in this event. The Detroit Council of the National Negro Congress (NNC) accused the Chrysler Corporation of using black strike-breaking as a tool to divide the black and white workers:

> This back to work movement is being started and backed by forces whose every act and purpose is against the best interest not only of Negro workers but of all the Negro people. The only organization that is struggling to secure for the Negro workers equal opportunities in the automobile factories is the UAW-CIO....Those things will not come from those sinister elements and forces asking you as a Negro worker to forsake your white and Negro brothers who are fighting in this strike to maintain a decent standard of life for all workers.
>
> The time has come when all the world should know that there is a new Negro in America. You cannot recruit a scab army from among our people and trick them into pulling other people's chestnuts out of the fire. The Negro worker is honest and courageous and he wants and demands a fair share of the opportunities in industry. He knows that he is not the pet of employers any more than he is the pet of the union. Those forces at work to discredit Negro workers and which seek to lead him to slaughter should be removed from society.[21]

The industry's most spectacular instance of using blacks as strike breakers occurred during the Ford Rouge dispute in 1941. When the strike broke out on the night of April 1, a number of black workers remained inside the plant, chiefly in the foundry. The following day, they were joined by several hundred black day-shift employees who remained in the plant until the strike settlement. Blacks remained inspite of union pleas that they leave and

in the face of entreaties by numerous black leaders, including national officers of the NAACP and NNC.[22] At the Rouge black workers showed greater loyalty to Ford than to any other auto manufacturer. This was largely due to Ford's sizeable black employment, the superior occupational distribution of black workers at the Rouge plant, and the numerous signs of personal recognition which Henry Ford accorded to the black community. Rouge officials took steps to forestall organization of the plant and black workers were given a key role in this effort. Several months before the strike broke out it was evident that a final showdown was inevitable. The Rouge plant management began hiring an unusually large number of blacks early in 1941. Between February and April of that year several thousand blacks were hired in the apparent attempt to strengthen the anti-union forces in the plant.[23]

Black workers feared that organization of the plant would cause them to lose jobs--jobs which were denied them in other plants. And the strike-breakers allegedly were paid the regular hourly rate for time spent in the plant during the strike.[24] Ford also pressured black ministers into condemning the strike and the UAW-CIO.[25] This time, however, the strike caused a cleavage in the ranks of the ministers in the city. Most black ministers were opposed to the strike. However, Reverend Horace A. White and Reverend Charles Hill were two influential

pro-union ministers. The majority though were members of the Interdenominational Ministers Alliance which endorced Ford's opposition to the union. They had a powerful hold on the men in the plant. But they were rapidly losing it.[26]

D The Pro-Union Forces

The UAW responded to the anti-union alliance with a sustained broadside against auto company racial policies. In particular, the UAW focused on the thousands of blacks in Ford's foundry department--a department known for speed-ups, lack of safety equipment, poor ventilation, and the deaths of hundreds of black workers. It soon became apparent that if black workers were to be effectively organized, the union would have to foster its own close ties with local and national black leadership. In the National Negro Congress (NNC), the Urban League and the NAACP the UAW found the ingredients for a coalition of pro-union forces.

From its origins in 1936, the NNC had been a left-wing, worker oriented organization providing the C10 with militant support. The NNC was influenced internally by a powerful Communist element and was financially dependent upon CP dominated C10 unions.[27] The Urban League, on the other hand, was considerably more reserved. The League had been trying to convince industry to hire blacks long before organized labor came to court the black worker.

As a result, the Urban League was "management conscious." It praised the CIO's repudiation of the color line, but moderated its applause for fear of endangering the relationship it had cultivated with capitalist employers. The League's enthusiasm for the labor movement was further restrained by the conservatism of the business and professional people who dominated its leadership positions.[28]

The orientation of the NAACP differed from that of the Congress and the League. In contrast to the Congress, the NAACP did not commit its organizers to the CIO campaigns. On the other hand, the NAACP was considerably more vocally supportive of the CIO than was the Urban League. The NAACP's approach to the CIO organizing drive reflected the nature of its own activities. Seeking to publicize civil rights issues and to pursue legal cases of general significance to the black community, it propagandized for the CIO in its various house organs--the NAACP Bulletin and the NAACO Press Service. The NAACP was more enthusiastic about the labor movement than the League--indeed it proved to be one of the CIO's most vigorous advocates--because it had never been management oriented, and because its financial backing came largely from rank-and-file membership dues rather than from upper-class white philanthropy.[29]

Finally, the expanding prounion segment of the black industrial working class formed the most crucial element in the coalition. Yet this class conscious-segment of

the black working class was decidedly uncomfortable with the UAW's ties to black national leadership. What was most needed, they argued, was indigenous black working class leadership instead of a line imposed from the top down by the NAACP, NNC, and Urban League. From this group's perspective, the UAW would "have to depend less on the ready-made, bandwagon conscious Negro national and community leaders...(and) develop and put greater dependence on intelligent leadership of Negro automobile workers who, after all, really know what they want and what must be done to get it." This was, they argued, "the first requisite from the Negro side of the question."[30] This objection gave signal to the rise in Detroit of a genuine black working class leadership.[31]

From 1937 on, this working class black leadership would challenge the black half of the anti-union alliance. Self assertion spread among black rank and file workers. The International Moulders Union, which had controlled foundry workers for years, lost a black local to the UAW because its black members resented the union's deference to craft workers with unskilled labor relegated to picking up the leftovers. In May, 1937, Local 281, through the cooperation of the Subcommittee for the Organization of Negro Workers of the UAW, opened its headquarters in the middle of the black community to recruit black foundry workers.[32] Thus arose a critical and articulate segment

of the black working class who could intellectually challenge the dominant ideology of the proindustrialist community influentials. It was this small but growing group of black workers who, aided by their allies, would keep up the attack on the anti-union alliance until that entente would gradually weaken and then collapse.[33]

E Racial Policies in the Early UAW

Shortly after the strike at the Rouge plant in 1941, Ford recognized the UAW-CIO and agreed to a union shop, grievance machinery, and wage increase concessions. This event was the capstone of the union organizing drive in the auto industry and constituted a remarkable victory for UAW and its black allies. With Ford's capitulation, the ties between the black community and the UAW strengthened and, by the eve of World War II, both groups were on the verge of complete alignment.[34]

When the UAW-CIO initially complied with black leadership demands for vigorous enforcement and extension of UAW racial policies, black workers moved from support to zealous alliance with the union. In 1942, pushed by the NAACP and the Urban League, the UAW created the Committee to Abolish Racial Discrimination. Under the direction of this committee, the UAW broadened the scope of its anti-discrimination activities. In the same year, for example, the UAW intervened in Detroit's Sojourner

Truth controversy. Local whites had called for segregation of the new federal housing project. But the union demanded integration of all facilities and drew praise from black leadership.[35]

Between 1941 and 1943, a number of white wildcat strikes against black upgrading in the auto plants broke out. The UAW succeeded in quelling these disturbances and persuaded white rank and file to return to work. For example, on June 2, 1942, the entire Dodge truck plant was closed when a large segment of the white labor force struck over the transfer of black workers from another Chrysler plant. The International and local union ordered the strikers back to work. The strike was short lived.[36] Two strikes over black worker upgrading broke out at the Timken-Detroit plant in July, 1942. One strike occurred when a black helper was upgraded to the job of hammerman. But the UAW again intervened and the black worker was upgraded.[37]

During World War II black women were the very last resource to be tapped by the war industries. There was little work available to black women in the Detroit auto industry. Even the Ford Motor Company was hesitant to hire them. In June, 1942, a delegation of black workers from the Highland Park plant had a conference concerning that plant's refusal to hire black women. These workers did not go through the regular channels, and were

protesting against their own local, because neither the officials nor the membership would support their demands. In fact, many officials and a large segment of the membership were actively opposed to the employment of black women. So black workers decided that they would take the matter to the local NAACP and called a mass meeting of Detroit blacks to apply pressure on the company.[38] Less than a week later, another group of workers made a move. They represented black membership in the largest and most powerful local in the Ford establishment, Local 600 in Dearborn. Early in 1942 Ford Local 600 and various community groups began raising the issue of the Willow Run Bomber Plant's refusal to hire black women.[39] They negotiated over the matter for five months and their insurgent protest activity finally met with a measure of success. In September, 1943, the Research Department of the UAW-C10 in Detroit reported that Ford plants now had 600 black women at the Rouge, 250 at Willow Run, 125 at Lincoln, and 50 at Highland Park.[40] In sum, during World War II, a self-conscious group of black trade unionists emerged and began to move in a direction independent from mainstream UAW leadership.

Self-conscious black trade unionists tended to be aligned with the Thomas-Addes faction--the controlling group within the UAW at that time. Black leaders tended to align with the Thomas-Addes faction because it was

more sensitive to black workers' demands and more prone to take action on black issues in the shops.[41] In 1947 the Reuther forces captured leadership of the UAW and black influence within the leadership of the UAW was dealt a severe blow. Up to that point there had been black working class leadership based on the existence and development of an anchored base in the union structure. Organized blacks opposed the leadership bid of the Reuther forces, and when in power, Reuther succeeded in breaking up the black caucus.[42] According to Sheldon Tapps, a black caucus leader at that time, the victory of the Reuther caucus really meant:

> a victory of the conservatives--those who were dedicated to maintaining the status quo--those who were not prepared to make any kind of overt fight on the race question--who didn't want in their districts to alter the traditional limitation on lines of promotion, job advancement, and that sort of thing. And...the consequences of this for the Negro caucus which for over a decade had been developing a Negro leadership group was the loss of a tremendous amount of influence for the Negro Workers in the UAW...I went back into the shop after I was defeated for secretary of Local 600. I didn't go back into the plant because I wasn't offered a staff job. I was offered a staff job by Thomas and Frankenstein, but I felt that by going back into the shop I would be able to rebuild, and, somehow, with the contacts and connections I had in other unions we would be able to recover our losses....It became desirable to go back into the shop and develop your own local union base, what was more important than being on the staff was the necessity of development of the base in your own home local, securing your own power base in your local. From as far back as 1943 through 1947 many black workers would refuse

> to leave to take a staff job. They were involved in building the union in their local. They understood their strategic importance in their local union base.[43]

F Conclusion: The Early Postwar Years

When many black workers joined the UAW, they expected that the institution of seniority clauses in collective bargaining agreements would automatically ensure equal, promotional opportunities. But after the war these hopes didn't materialize although black workers succeeded in entering production work because of war heated industrial expansion. Whereas layoffs and recall were administered primarily on the basis of straight seniority, promotions depended on both seniority and skill qualifications. Although the official position of the UAW was equal seniority rights and promotion opportunities for all workers, regardless of race, color or creed, black workers were seldom employed on jobs traditionally considered "white"--for example, on the assembly line and particularly in the skilled trades. When self-conscious black trade unionists attacked the UAW on this caste-like occupational pattern, the UAW gave them vocal support. This support primarily took the form of increasing black leadership positions in the local unions. But the increase of black leadership positions in the local unions didn't signal the elimination of racial discrimination. Ultimately, black trade unionist leaders failed to secure the demands of rank and file black workers.

The increase of blacks in leadership positions during this period was a logical element in the major organizing task in which the union was engaged. To support blacks in selected leadership posts in the local unions was also a basic Communist Party technique of organization. Wherever the Communists were in control, blacks who received support for leadership posts were generally individuals who would respond to Party influence. Where Communists were not in control, they often sought to elevate to a principle the election of blacks to leadership positions, making this question an issue on which to build support among black workers. However, neither the left faction of the UAW nor the Communist Party were consistently concerned with the elimination of racial discrimination facing black rank and file workers. Rather, supporting black access to leadership positions was a pragmatic tactic to elicit black support for their organizations.

Black national organizations like the NAACP, NNC, and the Urban League were also interested in getting black leadership positions in the local unions. Thus, black trade unionists pursued their ambitions to take power in the local unions with the support of black national organizations, the left faction of the UAW-CIO, and the Communist Party. This alliance continued until 1947 when the Reuther forces took control of the board of the UAW. After Reuther took over UAW leadership, he

eliminated his opposition caucuses. The alliance between the Reuther forces and black national organizations continued, however, until the merger of the CIO and AFL in 1955.

The heart of the New Deal Democratic Party had been the CIO-UAW and the black organizations. Their common work had yielded significant gains to both, especially in terms of prestige and influence within party circles.[44] Each needed and worked with the other, extended courtesies to the other, and used its influence for the benefit of the other when needed. In national discussion the two spoke largely with one voice, and they captured concrete political rewards. However, by the late 1940s, it was apparent that the center of power was shifting. Increasingly both the CIO and black leadership began to define their interests in new and different terms.

For the CIO, merger with the AFL in 1955 became increasingly the center of attention, leading to an inevitable deemphasis of those policies, such as militancy on the race question, that had most sharply marked its differences with the AFL. The UAW alliance with black organizations like the NAACP and the Urban League began to acquire an increasingly formal and rhetorical character, without the substance of past commitment. National black leadership began to place greater emphasis on governmental and business pressure than on the support

of the CIO. Much of the real mutual support slowly eroded. By the time of the labor merger there was "little save nostalgia to put in the way of the CIO's capitulation" on the race question.[45]

Footnotes: Chapter I

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[3]Lloyd H. Bailer, "The Negro Automobile Worker," Journal of Political Economy, volume LI (October 1943), p. 417.

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CHAPTER II

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST RACIAL DISCRIMINATION WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE UAW

At the close of World War II the large auto union faced the massive auto corporation in institutionalized collective bargaining unhampered, for the first time, by circumstances of depression or war. Out of this confrontation emerged an economic settlement which provided the guiding standard for industrial unions to the present day. Proposed by General Motors president, Charles Wilson, and accepted by the United Auto Workers in 1948, the formula suggested that wage increases be tied to increases in national productivity and buttressed against inflation by a cost-of-living allowance based on increases in the federal consumer price index. In the wake of the bitter GM strike of 1946, the auto companies considered such measures essential. The COLA provision and productivity bargaining were proposed by GM as a way to avoid auto strikes in the future and stabilize its relations with the young and still militant auto union. UAW negotiators and their counterparts throughout the community of organized labor united behind the corporate rationale that labor's share should be wedded to national productivity and growth.

The 1948 settlement roughly coincided with the consolidation of Walter Reuther's control over the UAW. The Reuther forces struggled to improve auto workers lives through a strategy that emphasized that both labor and capital had a common stake in the present order. Reuther's approach was to win major concessions from management by guaranteeing them industrial stability for continued production and profits. In the 1930s and 1940s many locals remained fiercely independent, obtaining better contracts than those negotiated by the international. The consolidation of power on the international level by the forces led by Walter Reuther now put barriers in the path of worker's struggles in the shops.

The success of the Reuther strategy came to mean relatively high wages and fringe benefits for auto workers. Yet the union leadership paid a price for this strategy since it gave up any real commitment to acting upon grievances of workers on the shop floor. Working conditions eroded through continual time and motion studies and automation. Overtime became mandatory. Job safety, particularly in the older, inner city plants, deteriorated. Issues at the work place tend to challenge the right of management to control the labor process. The UAW increasingly passed over working conditions in its contracts. Instead, the union came to defend "realistic"

compromise with corporate management on an ad hoc basis. On the shop floor the burden of this settlement came to weigh most heavily on the black labor force.

The automobile industry rapidly expanded throughout the 1950s. Automation and decentralization of production were the distinguishing features of capital accumulation in the auto industry during this period. Car production in 1955 alone (9,188,574 cars and trucks) approximated total industry output during the entire decade between 1910 and 1920.[1] Workers resisted company efforts to squeeze out greater productivity through automation and reorganization of the labor process. But the UAW leadership, through the collective bargaining contract, had become a management control agent and vigorously opposed strikes and stoppages by workers. Walter Reuther had come to symbolize the integration of the labor movement into the values of the capitalist system.

During the 1950s black workers began to stream into production work. But they were employed on the lowest rungs of the industry in the hardest, dirtiest, most hazardous, and least skilled jobs--jobs which white workers often refused to take. And automation and decentralization in the industry began to reinforce and perpetuate the subordinate status of black workers in the auto plants. Automation eliminated semi-skilled and skilled jobs confining black workers to the bottom of the

industrial hierarchy in jobs with little potential for upgrading. The seniority system ensured that black workers were the first to be laid off in downturns and decentralization of the industry came to mean ever higher levels of unemployment for black workers residing in Detroit.

With the merger of the CIO and AFL in 1955, the UAW curtailed its once progressive anti-discrimination policies. Black trade unionists, who had militant experience in the CIO organizing drive in the auto industry, and strong memories of the UAW's rigorous efforts to eliminate racial discrimination, formed the Trade Union Leadership Council in 1957. They tried to challenge the Reuther leadership and redirect union policies. However, the forces fostering racial discrimination in the industry did not originate with union management but rather were deeply engrained in the postwar structure of the industry. The TULC strategy was doomed to fail and its leadership was eventually coopted by the Reuther forces.

A Decentralization in the Auto Industry

Auto assembly plants and manufacturing facilities proliferated rapidly during the years from 1945 to 1955 as motor vehicle and equipment companies invested $7,489 million in an unprecedented expansion and modernization

program.[2] Outlay for new plants and materials in 1945 totaled $262 million, followed by expenditures of $474 million in 1946, $504 million in 1947, $474 million in 1948, $349 million in 1949 and $510 million in 1950. But postwar expansion clicked into high gear in 1951 when corporations invested $851 million, backing that with expenditures of $896 million in 1952, $989 million in 1953, $1,295 million in 1954 and $1,128 million in 1955. Commitment of $1,863 million in 1956, an all-time peak, boosted the total outlay for new facilities and equipment since 1945 to nearly $10 billion.[3]

In the 10-year period following World War II, General Motors sales increased from less than $2 billion in 1946 to almost $12.5 billion in 1955. GM increased its expenditures from $1 billion at the beginning of 1946 to $4.5 billion at the end of 1955.[4] During the same 10-year period, Ford Motor Company spent $1,678 million for modernization, expansion and replacement of facilities, and recorded a $437 million profit in 1955. By then major Ford Company facilities constructed or acquired since 1946 numbered 15 manufacturing plants, 10 assembly plants, 20 parts depots, 8 engineering facilities and one office building. In addition, 23 plants were enlarged or modernized. During 1955, 7 major facilities were completed and placed in operation, including new Ford

Division assembly plants in San Jose, California, Louisville, Kentucky, and Mahwah, New Jersey; as well as Continental Division's new plant in Ecorse Township, Michigan; and Lincoln Division's new assembly unit in Novi, Michigan.[5]

Chrysler Corporation's investment for plant and modernization in 1956 was the largest in its history. Expenditure was between $150 million and $160 million. This compared with $137.5 million in 1955 and $55.7 million in 1954. Principal Chrysler construction projects in 1956 included the building of a new stamping plant at Twinsburg, Ohio, and the conversion of the Tank plant in Newark, Delaware into a Plymouth assembly plant. The corporation continued to decentralize operations and established a West Coast division in 1955. An Engine and Transmission Group was also formed, consisting of three divisions: Forge and Foundry; Axle and Transmission; and Engine. Recent plant expansions and improvements also included a body assembly and body painting facility at Chrysler Division in Detroit, a new automatic transmission plant in Kokomo, Indiana, a new Plymouth engine plant in Detroit and new paint equipment and presses for Automotive Division plants. Between January 1, 1946 and April, 1956 the corporation spent nearly $700 million on new plant and equipment.[6]

B Automation in the Auto Industry

The automobile industry typifies the dominant tendency of the capitalist mode of production--the constant drive to mechanize in order to increase the productivity of labor. Constant introduction of new technology into the assembly line has produced, decade by decade, a diminishing number of workers producing an expanding volume of output. The result has been an increasing resevoir of unemployed workers in Detroit.

In 1903, when the Ford Motor Company was founded, building automobiles was a task reserved for craftsmen who had received their training in the bicycle and carriage shops of Michigan and Ohio. Final assembly was originally a highly skilled job, performed in one spot by a number of versatile mechanics who put the car together from bare frame to finished product.[7] Then Ford reorganized the labor process so that skilled workers moved from one car to another performing the same task over and over. This task specialization alone, without the introduction of new machinery, increased production enormously.[8] The second innovation applied to the assembly line followed on the heels of the first: let the workers stay put and have the job move by them. In January, 1914, Ford introduced the first endless-chain conveyor for final assembly at his Highland Park plant.[9]

Within three months, the assembly time for the Model T had been reduced 90 percent. By 1925, the labor process was so organized as to produce almost as many cars in a single day as had been produced, early in the history of the Model T, in an entire year.[10]

As the work of craftsmen gave way to repeated, detailed operations, they began to rebel against the speed up and leave the plant.[11] Ford's response, made with great fanfare early in 1914, was the $5.oo day. This wage increase was dramatic, but as Ford later noted, the payment of five dollars for an 8 hour day was one of the finest cost cutting measures he ever made.[12]

Ford and the other auto companies engaged in repeated speed up through the conveyors until the onslaught of the great C10 organizing campaign in the 1930s. During the union organizing drive capitalist hegemony at the point of production was put to a severe test. The rate of speed on the assembly line was monitored and frequently controlled by workers. In the auto industry the assembly line was the point at which a whole plant could be shut down and production crippled. So while the new production technology robbed workers of their former skills, it also afforded them with the strategic power to struggle over control of the production process.

World War II witnessed a further innovation which completed the evolution of mass production technology in the auto industry: the development of automatic transfer

machines which integrated the various stages of production into a continuous flow of human labor. These machines handled a piece of work, put it in proper position, fastened it in place, performed an operation on it, released it, moved it on to the next stage, and received the next piece. Ford's automobile engine plant opened with this new automatic transfer machine in Dearborn in 1947. The Cleveland engine plant of the Ford Motor Company and the Plymouth engine plant in Detroit were among the first to implement the new automatic transfer machine.[13] After World War II mass production in the assembly of the automobile was greatly speeded up through supplementing conventional assembly line operations with the new automatic and semi-automatic transfer devices. The operation of these integrated assembly lines came to be called "Detroit Automation," although, like mechanization, this innovation was only another piece in the whole automation picture.[14]

Speed up in the assembly line brought the predictable response. In May, 1949, Ford workers went on strike for 24 days against the speed up. Walter Reuther succeeded in ending the stappages with an arbitration agreement identical to one offered by Ford before the strike. Shortly thereafter Reuther sought in his opening address to the UAW convention in Milwaukee to fend off anticipated attacks against his weak policy on speed up.

"We take the position we will mobilize our union to fight against speed up wherever it raises its ugly head," Reuther decried. But during August of that year, some 18,000 Chrysler workers were forced to engage in a five-day unauthorized strike against speed up and accompanying firings and disciplinary layoffs. Again Reuther managed to maneuver the workers back to work without correcting the conditions generating the strike. Similarly, a series of wildcat strikes against speed up hit General Motors plants in the same month and were also stifled by the UAW leadership.[15]

Then, in the Ford settlement on September 29, 1949, Reuther agreed to a wage package in exchange for a slightly modified version of the notorious "company security" clause. This document permitted Ford to discipline workers proved to have engaged in unauthorized strikes over speed up and other work place grievances. Thus, "by allowing the corporations to wring more output per hour from every worker, especially by speed up, the UAW leaders were able to wheedle a few secondary concessions from the employers. That was the purpose of the company security clause....Through this clause, aggressive resisters to speed up were eliminated from the plants."[16]

During the 1950s continuous automatic production methods were implemented throughout the automobile industry. An illustrative example was the High Rate

Forging machine. This technical innovation forged finished 12 pound rock cutting drills from raw steel ingots at the rate of three every minute. The High Rate Forging machine replaced several enormous steel hammers and their operators, several gear cutting milling machines and their operators, and all intermediate handling and finishing operations. In all, one man-hour of work on the new machine accomplished what formerly required 250 man-hours.[17]

When Ford's Cleveland plant commenced operation, it was estimated that 154 engine blocks an hour ran through the production line, requiring 41 workers as compared to 117 workers using the older production methods.[18] In 1957, Chrysler announced its intention to move the Plymouth body and assembly operation from Evansville, Indiana to St. Louis, Missouri. The Evansville plant employed 5,500 production workers. But the new plant in St. Louis, the Detroit Times reported on October, 1957, would employ only 3,500.[19] The Pontiac Motor division of General Motors introduced automated material handling in the foundry in 1957. The operations of molding, closing and shaking out were now performed without the manual handling of flakes.[20] In 1958, Ford unveiled its automated Lima plant. The Lima plant boasted largely automated crankshaft and piston lines and inspection was automated as well. On the crankshaft line, nine specialized machines linked by automatic transfer units replaced one big machine. But the nine machines worked without a single operator.[21]

Automation further "deskilled" workers engaged in assembly line work. Studies of final assembly line work in a major automobile company by the Technology Project of Yale University found the time cycle for jobs averaged 3 minutes. As for learning time, a few hours to a week sufficed.[22] Heretofore, assembly jobs were the most representative type of operative jobs and the assembly of industrial products has helped upgrade the skills of masses of the working population.[23] But as black workers streamed onto the assembly lines of Detroit in the 1950s they found themselves stuck on the assembly line as unskilled workers.

Automation squeezed more labor from each person during each working hour. But aging Detroit plants were not automated and workers employed in these plants found their work increasingly strenuous as their production schedules were synchronized to conform to the output of new automated plants in the suburbs. This increased tempo of work was not confined to a forty-hour work week. The companies discovered that the savings from not paying fringe benefits to additional workers made it cheaper for them to pay time-and-a-half rates for overtime to those already employed. Compulsory overtime was enforced throughout the industry during the 1950s.[24]

In 1958-59 the effects of automation and recession simultaneously hit Detroit. Unemployed Chrysler workers picketed the plants and the union headquarters to end

overtime. The company was able to end the picketing with a court injunction based on the union contract and its no-strike pledge. Workers off the payroll, some for over a year, were prohibited from picketing or interfering with production as the courts ruled that they were bound by the union contract. Once again Reuther relinquished the right of workers to refuse overtime work.[25]

The process of reorganization of production through mechanization and automation fostered numerous struggles between capital and labor at the point of production during the 1950s. Inspite of the collaborative relationship between capitalists and labor leaders, the class struggle waged by rank-and-file workers continued. Table 1 compares annual strike averages in the 1930s wave of CIO organizing and the 1950s. These data dispel the myth of the quiescence of the class struggle and the near-harmony of capital and labor during the 1950s.[26] Moreover, worker resistance to the reorganization of production is indirectly indicated by the increasing proportion of supervisors on the shop floor and by the increased disciplinary weight of the union.[27]

TABLE 1

STRIKE ACTIVITY, 1930S AND 1950S IN THE UNITED STATES

Year	Number of Strikes	Number of Strikers	Strike Man-Days
1935-39	2,867	1,130,000	16,900,000
1950-53	4,847	2,642,500	37,275,000
1953-56	4,176	2,120,000	28,050,000

Source: Art Preis, Labor's Giant Step (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972), p. 495.

C Black Workers in the 1950s

With reorganization of the working class through automation and decentralization of the auto industry in Detroit, the percentage of Detroit workers employed in plants dropped from 55 in 1950 to 44 in 1960, a loss of 97,000 auto jobs. At the same time, automation of the auto plants created new and different working conditions for the remaining workers. Jobs were combined through the use of power tools and new welding equipment. Productivity per worker rose while the number of workers declined. The easier jobs--inspection, driver, final assembly, repair--went to white workers. Black workers were left to take the jobs that whites refused to do.[28] However, with the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway, the

business community in Detroit planned to turn the city into a commercial center opening up a number of new employment positions in white collar fields. The loss of auto jobs was compensated with the expansion of service and lower-middle class positions and whites took the opportunity to leave the auto plants.

The recession which began in 1957 hit the automobile industry hard. Motor vehicle factory sales, which had soared to 9.2 million units in 1955, fell to 5.1 million in 1958. Ford employment dropped from 191,759 in 1957 to 142,076 in 1958. General Motors employment fell from 588,160 to 520,625. Chrysler, which already had a substantial number of employees on layoffs, dropped from 136,188 to 91,678.[29] In 1957, employment at four Chrysler Detroit plants stood at 45,584, including 9,242 blacks, or 20.3 percent of the workforce. In 1958, these plants employed only 22,776, of whom 3,345 or just 14.7 percent were black workers.[30] During the recession, the auto companies took the opportunity to further eliminate jobs through automation. One 1961 Senate report estimated that 160,000 unemployed workers in Detroit would never return to the plants due to automation.[31]

Black workers suffered in excess of double the rate of unemployment experienced by white workers. In 1958, Detroit unemployment was estimated at 16.7 percent of the labor force but black unemployment was double this figure.

And this experience was not confined to recessions. In August, 1959, when the economy was on the way to recovery, unemployment among white workers totaled 4.1 percent while unemployment among nonwhites stood at 10.7 percent.[33] For the black community in Detroit each recession came to mean a depression. During the recession of 1960-61 black unemployment officially stood at 39.3 percent.[34] From 1955 to 1963 many plants did not hire a single new black worker. Black workers who already had seniority in the plants found themselves downgraded as white workers kept their posts on the assembly lines.[35]

After World War II only one major automobile plant was constructed within Detroit. Old plants, like Ford's Rouge, were reduced or broken up and new plants with modernized facilities were built on a decentralized basis. Rouge was down to under 35,000 workers from a war-time peak of 100,000 workers and a peace-time high of 65,000. A series of new plants were built within a 100 mile radius of Detroit and in other parts of the country during the 1950s and 1960s.[36]

White workers tended to follow the movement of new industrial plants. When young white workers took jobs on the production lines, they usually chose to work in the newer plants in their suburbs. With plants located both in suburbs and city, the suburban dwelling whites could seek employment near their homes, the city dwelling

blacks near theirs. As inner city plants moved toward a black majority, whites increasingly no longer applied, or they did not stay long once they had been hired. Interplant labor pool arrangements offset these movements toward increasing segregation by plant somewhat; but the city plants which had reached a high percentage of blacks, continued to have a declining white ratio. Plants in the city of Detroit came to be known as "Negro plants."[37]

After the merger of the C10 and AFL, black unionists led by Horace Sheffield and Robert Battle formed the Trade Union Leadership Council (TULC) in 1957. TULC was meant to be an organizational instrument for combating industrial racism.[38] TULC became a branch of the Negro American Labor Council formed by A. Phillip Randolf in 1960. The primary goal of the Trade Union Leadership Council, an organization consisting exclusively of union members, was the elimination of all forms of industrial discrimination. It concentrated on two areas:
(1) equality of opportunity to earn a living, and
(2) equality of opportunity to learn a job or trade. The TULC openly challenged the Reuther leadership on the issue of black participation in policy-making positions and helped to elect Nelson "Jack" Edwards the first black executive board member of the UAW in 1962.[39]

Viewed with alarm by the union leadership at first, TULC eventually became part of the UAW bureaucracy, although it often took independent political approaches

in the Detroit electoral arena.[40] TULC was instrumental in getting out a large vote for liberal Jerome Cavanaugh in the 1961 Detroit mayorality race in which Cavanaugh unseated Louis Miriani, a conservative, police-oriented incumbent backed by the UAW leadership.[41] TULC had a peak membership of 9,000 and during its highpoint was consulted by the mayor, industrial executives, and leaders of various unions.[42]

As TULC developed, it came to devote an ever larger share of its attention to community problems rather than issues facing rank and file blacks on the shop floor. When it did raise shop questions, it was more concerned with the building trades and events outside of the UAW than inside the union. According to Charles Denby a sort of "Gentlemen's Agreement" was established between Walter Reuther and A. Philip Randolph. When Randolph came to Detroit to hold his Negro American Labor Council convention, he ran it like the UAW conventions: "from the top," evading shop floor questions of pressing concern to the rank and file membership. Denby records the following comment from a rank and file worker:[43]

> "After the convention, we kept pressing Randolph about the question of discrimination in the shop and he told us plainly that this was not going to be an organization to take up grievances of black workers on the shop level. All TULC was going to do, he said, was to raise the question of discrimination but writing grievances would have to be done through

> regular channels. A lot of the workers said, 'Hell, this is what we've been doing all the time and nothing has ever happened.' But, because they made a big splash in the papers, many black rank and filers came around, in the beginning."

In less than two years, the TULC began to experience sharp lossed in membership.[44]

A decade later, Robert Battle, one of the leading figures of TULC, and a vice-president of Local 600 at the Ford Rouge, would form a new nation-wide black caucus called the National Ad Hoc Committee of Concerned Negro UAW Members. In September, 1968, at a caucus meeting in Detroit, Battle would report that unless the problems of black workers were immediately solved and blacks received full equality in the union it could be anticipated that chaos would ensue. The NAHC stated that blacks constituted one-fourth of the UAW membership but had obtained only seven out of the more than one hundred policy-making and key staff positions in the union.[45] Battle's renewed declaration signified, more than anything else, that the TULC had miserably failed in its efforts to combat engrained patterns of discrimination in the plants.

Footnotes: Chapter II

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[33]U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Hearings in Detroit, 1960 (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), pp. 58-59.

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[43]Charles Denby, "Black Caucuses in the Unions," New Politics, volume VII, number 3 (Summer 1968), pp. 10-17.

CHAPTER III

REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE BEYOND THE UNION STRUCTURE: THE LEAGUE OF BLACK REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS

A Black Auto Workers in the 1960S and 1970S

In the 1950s and 1960s, due to decentralization and technological change in the auto industry, black workers in Detroit began to flow into production jobs which had been inaccessible to them in earlier decades. Today, black workers are disproportionately employed as factory operatives--semi-skilled metal handlers, assemblers, welders, production machine tool operators, and inspectors. Operatives include workers who perform rudimentary jobs on assembly lines requiring little preliminary job instruction, workers who perform assembly or machine attendant jobs that require a few weeks instruction before reasonable proficiency is obtained, and workers employed on jobs requiring several months instruction before the required performance and productivity may be expected.[1] However, black workers still remain concentrated in the lower level jobs within the operator category.

Table 2 presents the distribution of black workers as a percentage of the total labor force in the Big Three automobile companies in 1966. Table 3 presents the

TABLE 2

TOTAL AND BLACK EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATION FOR COMBINED BIG THREE AUTOMOBILE COMPANIES, 1966

		All Employees	
Occupation:	Total	Black	Black as a % of Total
Officials & Managers	74,395	903	1.2
Professionals	51,053	301	0.6
Technicians	24,499	297	1.2
Sales, Office, Clerical	93,365	3,545	3.8
Craftsmen	129,123	3,846	3.0
Operatives	515,843	104,112	20.2
Laborers	32,352	8,922	27.6
Service Workers	26,755	7,269	27.2
Total	947,385	129,195	13.6

Source: Herbert Northrup, The Negro in the Automobile Industry (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), p. 36.

TABLE 3

PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF BLACK WORKERS IN THE MOTOR VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT INDUSTRY, DETROIT SMSA, 1975

Occupation:	Black as a % of total
Professional	3.4
Officials and Managers	6.8
Sales	3.5
Clerical	13.9
Craft	10.1
Operative	39.7
Laborer	41.4
Service	38.5

Source: Employment Analysis Report Program, 1975 EEO-1 Report Summary by Industry within SMSAs, Detroit, Michigan, p. 6,231.

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distribution of black workers as a percent of the total labor force in motor vehicles and equipment in Detroit in 1975. Unfortunately, the 1966 data are not confined to Detroit area plants. However, a large share of blacks who work for the Big Three are employed in Detroit area plants. It is therefore possible to derive a rough estimate of trends in black employment in the Detroit auto industry by comparing Table 2 and 3.

In 1966, black workers were overwhelmingly concentrated among operatives, laborers, and service workers in the auto industry. In 1975, blacks in Detroit area plants comprised an even larger percentage of operatives, laborers and service workers. The rising black share in operative, laborer, and service employment reflects the rapid increase of black population in Detroit and black movement into the lowest jobs in the industry as white workers entered white collar service occupations or moved to new plants in the suburbs. Black workers also appear to have gained greater access to jobs as craftsmen as replacements for skilled whites who migrated to the suburban plants.

By 1975, over 90 percent of the black labor force in Detroit's auto industry was classified as craftsmen, operatives, and laborers. While black workers have come to play an ever more central role in the production of surplus value in the region's auto plants, they remain

concentrated in the least skilled, the hardest, the heaviest, the most dangerous, the most hazardous, the dirtiest, the hottest, the most undesirable and the most unpleasant jobs in the industry. Black workers tend to be assemblers, welders and flame-cutters, freight, stock and metal handlers. They most frequently work in the foundry, on the assembly line, in the body shop, in paint and welding departments and "in the pit."[2]

The hardest work of any of the departments is in the body shop, where the body is welded together through gas welding, grinding and arc welding operations.[3] On the other hand, the lightest work is found in the inspection and the tool crib departments. In the Detroit plants the body shops tend to be overwhelmingly black while the inspection departments and tool cribs are mostly white.[4]

Decentralization of the industry has broken up huge complex factories like the Ford Rouge plant into several plants. Each plant now tends to have its own special operation. And black workers are concentrated in particular types of plants. Table 4 and 5 reveal that in 1960 black workers were concentrated in forging, final assembly, assembly plants requiring burning and welding, engine plants, machining plants, and stamping plants. These plants tend to contain the most strenuous, the hardest, the most undesirable, the least skilled jobs in the industry. Thus, for example:

TABLE 4

PERCENTAGE OF BLACK WORKERS IN CHRYSLER DETROIT AREA PLANTS, 1960

Plant:	Kind of Operation:	Percent Black
Dodge Main	Final Assembly	45
Chrysler Jefferson	Final Assembly	22
Plymouth Assembly	Framing Body & Final Assembly	22
Dodge Forge	Forging	30
Plymouth Engine	Machining & Assembly of Engines	15
Dodge Truck	Final Assembly & Body Framing	20
Amplex	Making Powered Metal Parts	11
Auto Body Division	Tool & Die Work; Stamping	17
Imperial	Framing & Final Assembly	33
Trenton	Machining & Assembling Engines	30
Engineering	General Research Work	4
Highland Park	Manufacturing Service Parts	37
Nine Mile Press	Stamping	22
Lynch Road	Manufacturing & Assembling Parts	48
Detroit Tank	Burning, Welding, Assembly	27
Michigan Missle	Building Missles & Ground Support Units	10
MoPar	Service Parts, Packing & Shipping	12
Chelsea	Proving Grounds	1
Sterling Stamping	Stamping (founded in 1965)	26

Source: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Hearings on Detroit, 1960 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), pp. 62-63.

TABLE 5

PERCENTAGE OF BLACK WORKERS IN GENERAL MOTORS DETROIT AREA PLANTS, 1960

Plant:	Kind of Operation:	Percent Black
Cadillac	Final Assembly	25
Detroit Transmission	Manufacturing Hydramatic Transmissions	14
Detroit Diesel	Cutting and Sewing	29
Fisher Body, Livonia		0*
Fisher Body, No. 23, Detroit	Building tools, jigs, and fixtures	2
Fisher Body, No. 37, Detroit	Trying out Dies	3
Fisher Body, Fleetwood	Assembling bodies, paint spray, baking overs and installation of trim	17
Ternstedt Division		13
Chevrolet Forge	Steam hammers, Board hammers, forging presses, upset presses and heat treating	60
Chevrolet gear and axle	Machining, heat treat, and assembly	50
Chevrolet spring and bumper	Metal shearing, forming, heat treat and assembly	41
General Motors Technical Center	General Research	0

*less than 0.05%

Source: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Hearings on Detroit, 1960 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), pp. 64-66.

At Dodge Main, which is primarily a final assembly plant, black workers composed 45 percent of the work force in 1960 and 60 percent in 1970;[5]

At Chrysler Jefferson, which is a final assembly plant, black workers were 22 percent of the labor force in 1960 and 68 percent in 1970;[6]

At Dodge forge blacks composed 30 percent of the labor force in 1960;

At Plymouth engine, which consists of machining and assembling the V-8 engine, and in Plymouth assembly, which is a body framing and final assembly plant, black workers composed 14 percent and 22 percent of the labor force respectively in 1960;

At Dodge truck, which is a final assembly and body framing plant, 20 percent of the labor force was black in 1960 and 50 percent in 1974;[7]

At the Imperial plant, which does the framing and final assembly, black workers constituted 33 percent of the work force in 1960;

At Trenton engine, which machines and assembles six-and-eight-cylinder engines, black workers made up 30 percent of the labor force in 1960;

At Highland Park, which is a service parts manufacturing plant, black workers were 37 percent in 1960;

At Nine Mile Press, which is involved in stamping work only, black workers made up 22 percent of the labor force in 1960;

At Lynch Road, which consists of machining and assembling parts for rear housings, brakedrums, etc., black workers comprised 48 percent of the work force in 1960;

At Detroit tank, which is involved in the assembly of tanks requiring burning and welding of some parts and the machining of others, black workers constituted 27 percent of the labor force in 1960;

At Sterling Stamping, which consists of manufacturing hoods, frames and fenders, black workers were 30 percent of the work force in 1969;[8]

At Eldon Gear and Axle plant, Chrysler's only gear and axle plant, black workers composed 70 percent of the work force in 1969;[9]

At the Cadillac Division, which consists primarily of final assembly and includes foundry, press metal, machining, plating, and polishing operations, black workers were 25 percent of the labor force in 1960;

At Detroit Diesel, which consists of cutting and sewing various types of cloth, or leather materials, black workers comprised 29 percent of the work force in 1960;

At Chevrolet forge, which manufactures gears, steering knuckles and crankshafts, and utilizes steam hammers, board hammers, forging presses, upset presses, and heat treating, black workers comprised 60 percent of the labor force in 1960;

At Chevrolet gear and axle, which consists of manufacturing various types of finished gears and axles, machining, heat treating, and assembly, black workers were 50 percent of the work force in 1960;

At Chevrolet spring and bumper, which consists of metal shearing, forming, heat treat, and assembly, black workers were 41 percent of the labor force in 1960;

In Ford Rouge plant, which consists of 14 assembly units, a metal stamping division, a body engineering office, an engine and foundry division, an industrial and chemical products division, a sterling division, glass division and general services division, black workers constituted about 37 percent of the total work force and 46 percent in the production areas in 1966[10] and in 1974, 50 percent of the work force was black and 65 percent of the assembly unit was composed of black workers;[11]

Data are unavailable on the composition of the labor force at the Wayne (final assembly), Livonia (transmission and chassis division), and Wixom (final assembly) plants.

In conclusion, in most plants the worst jobs--foundry work, body shop, engine assembly--are predominantly occupied by black workers. Black workers are found wherever a job requires hard physical labor or is subject to noise, dirt and unbearable heat. This is also true for black women who are given many difficult jobs. At Eldon Avenue, for example, black women have been required

to lift 40 pound axles. White women, on the other hand, are usually found in the tool crib (parts department) or in the receiving and shipping departments.[12] Jobs performed by black workers also tend to be the lowest paid in the industry.

Furthermore, black workers tend to be segregated according to plant location as well as by department. In plants located in the suburbs, 20 to 30 percent of the labor force tend to be black. While in the inner city plants black workers usually comprise 60 to 70 percent of the labor force. So decentralization of the industry and housing segregation have created a spatial separation between inner city "black" plants and suburban "white" plants. A majority of the white working class now lives outside the city limits in suburbs located predominantly in the northeast and southwest sides of Detroit. Since World War II only one major automobile plant has been constructed within Detroit, whereas many have been built in the new suburbs. As noted previously, when young white workers take jobs on the production lines, they usually choose to work in the newer plants in their suburbs. And when the plants in the city move to a majority of black workers, white workers tend to leave the plants.[13]

B Superexploitation

In a capitalist system production is for profit. When automation costs prove cheaper than the purchase of labor power, corporations invest large sums of money today for greater total profits through the reduction in the work force tomorrow. When Chrysler in 1957, for example, announced its intention to move Plymouth body and assembly operations from its old plant in Evansville, Indiana, to a new plant in St. Louis, the question arose: why couldn't Chrysler stay and modernize its Evansville facilities? The answer was that it was more profitable to build a new, automated plant than to attempt to modernize the old plant. The Evansville plant employed 5,500 production workers in 1957 but the new plant in St. Louis hired only 3,500 workers.[14] But automation is impractical when human labor remains cheaper than the new technology. In Detroit, decentralization of the automobile industry has already created a permanent reserve army. And Detroit's black unemployed help capitalists to keep costs down. This fact helps to explain why old plants like Ford Rouge, Dodge main, Eldon gear and axle, and Jefferson have not been modernized.[15]

When technological changes were introduced, usually only one segment of the assembly line was automated, so that the workers on other segments had to labor more strenuously to keep up. Many of the "new" machines were

not technological advances at all, but simply updated models of tools introduced as early as the 1920s and 1930s.[16] Higher productivity at old plants in Detroit appears to have been achieved less by advanced technology and automated assembly procedures than by the old fashioned method of speed up synchronized to the pace set by automated plants in the suburbs. Speed up in the aging plants meant reducing the number of workers on the assembly line. Many black workers call this process, "Niggermation:" one black worker is hired to do the job previously done by two, three or even four white workers. In the words of Mike Hamlin:

> "What is responsible for that increased output is what we would call "niggermation." And what it means is that they will speed up on a particular job. If a guy can't make it, or refuses to work at that rate: fire him. Then they'll bring a new guy off the street and tell him the rate that they have established via the speed up is the actual rate of that job. And the union goes along with this. It has been going along with this for many years....The result is that production has been going up higher and higher on these jobs. And in certain instances we have seen situations where they have replaced three men at one time with one. It's very common for them to replace two men with one. Make one man do the work of two or three. And that's how that increase in production has come about; not through automation."[17]

In addition to "niggermation," speed up brought black workers more strenuous and more hazardous jobs. A young black auto worker relates his experiences as follows:

> "I had a key job because it can slow the line down, and they never like this because they want as much production as possible....Like I was in this plant, which was a safety hazard in the first place, and you are under the car, and what they want to do is run the car over you, while you are supposed to do it, and this way they can speed up production, and keep the car running while I worked on it, you know underneath a running car isn't the safest thing, but the man down in the pit thought this way was cheaper and more expedient and this way they wouldn't have to take time to start the cars up after the man finished his part, because sometimes the cars wouldn't start and this would cost a few minutes in time, trying to start the car again."[19]

If a black worker could not catch up with the line pace or resisted against the speed of the line, he was frequently harassed by his white foremen and could easily be replaced by a new black worker. Again, according to Mike Hamlin:

> "They...hire a lot of black people and keep them for 89 days since you are on probation 90 days, and the 89th day, you are discharged and you had to go to another plant. So this inflated the employment figures and deflated unemployment figures. In actuality, what they are doing was rotating guys from plant to plant. They fire them on various charges, trumped-up charges. At Ford Rouge they would fire 600 workers per week, I mean that is every week. And at Dodge Main they would fire 300 workers per week. And at Eldon they would fire 300 workers per week. And none of these people ever got back...they are not in the union even though they paid the initiation fees and dues for those three months."[20]

Detroit has a chronically high rate of unemployment. In 1972, for example, 10.1 percent (174,000 of 1,723,100

workers) were without jobs in the Detroit metropolitan area. 17.7 percent (115,510 of 652,600 workers) were without jobs in the city of Detroit. 35 percent (62,000 of 177,000 workers) were without jobs in Detroit's inner city. Of the estimated 62,000 unemployed inner city workers, 82 percent (51,460) were non-white.[21] With unemployment so high, black workers in Detroit remain a prime source of highly productive labor continually pressured to conform to speed up and unsafe working conditions by the readily available pool of surplus labor.

In sum, impressionistic reports suggest that in the 1960s black workers in Detroit increasingly experienced "superexploitation" as a result of: (1) spatial segregation by plant with blacks concentrated in inner city operations; (2) the existence of a large black reserve army; (3) inner city plants were less modernized but were synchronized to the operations of modernized suburban facilities and thus required greater physical exertion by inner city auto workers; (4) black political power was largely lacking in the union; and (5) there were few black supervisors or foremen in the inner city plants.

The kind of hard evidence necessary to firmly document the superexploitation of black auto workers in Detroit plants is not readily made available by the auto

companies or the UAW. The data presented in Table 6, while indirect and far from conclusive, are consistent with the superexploitation thesis.

The total work force in the automobile industry in the United States has continually decreased: from 891,200 auto workers in 1955 to 874,000 auto workers in 1972. Motor vehicles production (cars and trucks), on the other hand, progressively increases with some flucuations during recessions (i.e. 1958-59, 1961, 1967, and 1970-71). In 1957, 769,300 auto workers produced 7,205,658 vehicles. In 1962, 691,700 auto workers produced 8,189,402 vehicles. In 1966, 862,000 auto workers produced 10,363,254 vehicles. In 1973, 941,000 auto workers produced 12,886,544 vehicles. Productivity (vehicles per worker) in 1957 was 9.37; in 1962, 11.84; in 1966, 12.02; and in 1973, 13.69.

In Michigan, the total work force decreased from 467,000 in 1955 to 399,000 in 1973. In 1957, 387,700 auto workers produced 2,330,754 vehicles. In 1962, 299,200 auto workers produced 2,340,978 vehicles. In 1967, 362,000 auto workers produced 3,078,249 vehicles. In 1973, 399,000 workers produced 4,304,593 vehicles. Productivity per worker is constantly increasing during this time span: from 6.00 in 1957 to 7.80 in 1962 to 8.50 in 1967 to 10.79 in 1973.

TABLE 6

MOTOR VEHICLE AND EQUIPMENT EMPLOYMENT, VEHICLE PRODUCTION, AND PRODUCTION PER WORKER, 1957-1973, FOR THE UNITED STATES, MICHIGAN, AND THE DETROIT SMSA (IN 1000s)

	Detroit			Michigan			United States		
Year:	Employment	Vehicle Production	Productivity	Employment	Vehicle Production	Productivity	Employment	Vehicle Production	Productivity
1957	252	1,821	7.22	388	2,331	6.00	769	7,206	9.37
1958	183	1,039	4.12	289	1,429	4.95	607	5,115	8.43
1959	194	1,278	6.58	303	1,756	5.79	692	6,734	9.73
1960	198	1,588	8.02	311	2,063	6.63	724	7,894	10.90
1961	...	.....	....	...	.....	....	632	6,635	10.49
1962	177	1,664	9.40	299	2,341	7.80	691	8,189	11.84
1963	192	1,960	10.20	316	2,697	8.54	741	9,101	12.28
1964	...	.....	.....	...	.....	....	753	9,300	12.35
1965	...	.....	.....	...	.....	....	843	11,114	13.18
1966	...	.....	.....	...	.....	....	862	10,363	12.02
1967	220	2,157	9.80	362	3,078	8.50	816	8,992	11.02
1968	233	2,444	10.48	383	3,445	9.00	869	10,739	12.36
1969	242	2,464	10.18	399	3,420	8.57	909	10,183	11.20
1970	212	2,246	10.60	334	3,049	9.12	810	8,263	10.20
1971	218	2,093	9.60	352	2,820	8.01	861	10,650	12.37
1972	226	2,529	11.19	368	3,526	9.58	874	11,278	12.90
1973	250	3,085	12.34	399	4,305	10.79	941	12,887	13.69

Source: Calculated from Michigan Employment Security Commission, Detroit Area Economic Fact Book (Detroit: Michigan), various years; and Ward's Automobile Yearbook, 1955-74.

In the Detroit SMSA, the total work force decreased from 327,000 in 1955 to 250,000 in 1973. In 1957, 252,000 auto workers produced 1,821,003 vehicles. In 1962, 177,000 auto workers produced 1,663,738 vehicles. In 1967, 220,000 auto workers produced 2,156,514 vehicles. In 1973, 250,000 workers produced 3,085,436 vehicles. So again, productivity constantly increased. Productivity in 1957 was 7.22; in 1962, 9.40; in 1967, 9.80; in 1973, 12.34.

In general productivity in the Detroit SMSA is higher than in Michigan but compared with total U.S. productivity in the auto industry, it was 1.35 lower in 1973. This reflects the postwar construction of auto plants with more automated and updated facilities outside Michigan.

However, scattered data suggest that old plants in Detroit, where the work force is a majority black, may have higher productivity levels than more modern plants in which the work force is composed of a white majority. For example, in 1969, Mahwah, New Jersey's Ford assembly plant had an 80 percent white work force and the line ran at 52 units an hour. At the Ford Rouge, where the production work force was 65 percent black, the agreed upon line rate was 64. However, the Rouge line speed appears to have gone up to 76 in certain instances.[22] In 1970, the Chrysler Jefferson plant had a 60-70 percent black work force and employed a total of 6,500 workers.

Production at Chrysler Jefferson in 1970 was up 63 percent over the 1949-53 period when there were 14,500 workers in the plant. At Chrysler Jefferson line speed went as high as 65 jobs an hour and workers got different work assignments two or three times during a model year.[23] At the Dodge Main plant, the line edged up from 49 units to 58 units in 1968. In 1968-73, Dodge Main officially turned out 64 cars an hour, although workers said production often went up to 76.[24]

It appears that productivity in the old Detroit plants is higher than in the suburban plants or the plants outside Michigan where the work force is a white majority. For example, in 1957, 5,400 auto workers[25] produced 204,000 cars [26] in Mahwah, New Jersey. 1,626 auto workers[27] produced 75,800 cars[28] in Norfolk, Virginia. While 5,300 auto workers[29] produced 285,800 cars[30] in the Ford Rouge assembly plant in Dearborn. Productivity was 37.79 in Mahwah, 46.62 in Norfolk, as contrasted with 53.92 at the Ford Rouge. In 1958, 4,375 auto workers produced 132,100 cars in Mahwah and 1,487 auto workers produced 41,900 cars in Norfolk, while 4,050 auto workers produced 174,900 cars at the Ford Rouge plant. Productivity was 30.19 in Mahwah, 28.18 in Norfolk, and 43.19 in the Ford Rouge plant. The Ford Rouge had higher productivity than Mahwah or Norfolk although it was built in the 1920s and remains largely unautomated. Finally,

in 1969, 4,200 auto workers[31] produced 227,044 vehicles[32] in Mahwah, while in 1968, 7,000 auto workers[33] produced 396,570 vehicles[34] in Hamtramck, a much older plant. The productivity per worker was 54.00 in Mahwah, while the productivity in Hamtramck was 56.65.

C Workers Struggles on the Shop Floor

In the postwar era, workers saw the great industrial unions of the thirties progressively assume the role of one-party states. Seniority rules won as a protection against discriminatory firings and promotions became instruments for excluding the young and the black and barriers against semi-skilled workers working their way up to the skilled trades. The union dues check-off, once a means of organizing all the workers in a plant, became a means of removing the union from dependence on the workers. The full-time status granted union stewards and committeemen, once freed union representatives from the pressures of management; now these perquisites freed them from the pressure of the workers. The union contract and grievance procedures, once the instruments which recorded the gains of the workers, now became devices under which workers were disciplined. In short, workers saw their union progressively transformed from a body reflecting their immediate needs and interests in their workplaces to an independent power imposing discipline upon them.

The inevitable result was ever sharpening conflict between the union and the rank-and-file workers in the plants.

Workers, immersed in the cooperative labor process in the factories, formed "informal" groups and organizations which corresponded to their immediate conditions and interests. The radical reorganization of production by the auto companies over the past two decades resulted in corresponding adjustments by workers. Workers engaged in their own process of reorganization, corresponding to the capitalist reorganization of production, and searched for new forms of organization adequate to their needs. Throughout the 1960s workers attempted to regain a measure of control over various aspects of their labor process inspite of the union's no-strike clause and strict disciplinary measures. "Counter-planning on the shop floor" appeared in Detroit area plants representing an organized workers' struggle with capitalists over the planning of production. Counter-planning involved methods of shutdown, sabotage, and wildcat strikes.[35]

The wildcat strike is an act of defiance; a clearly illegal action directed at the union as well as management. It occurs when the everyday tensions of industrial conflict burst into collective struggle. Workers express their power by stopping production. Wildcats that do not develop quick, cohesive leadership are usually crushed

through the collective resources of management and the union. A calm returns until the tensions build again. A sell-out contract, deteriorating working conditions, safety hazards, the arrogrance of foremen, compulsory overtime, racist harassment, years of frustration born of hard work just to break even economically--build into collective outrage and another wildcat springs up in the midst of a usually quite ordinary worker-management confrontation.

Following the Great Rebellion in Detroit in 1967, a number of young black militants were hired into the shops to meet war-heated production demands. Workers' tensions and conflicts with management on the shop floor intensified. Workers' organization culminated in the formation of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM) in 1968. DRUM was a general response to numerous workers' struggles over the control of production and a specific response by black workers in the Hamtramck Assembly plant to organize a movement which could resist racism and oppression both on the part of the union and the company.[36] Previous black caucuses had invariably been co-opted or repressed. The company had either fired the caucus leadership or bought them off by giving them jobs as foremen or supervisors; or they became absorbed within the bureaucratic structure of the union. The militants behind DRUM interpreted this postwar history to mean that

attempting to take over the union would gain them very little. For them, the instigation of wildcat strikes by black workers was neither directed toward throwing out union leadership nor changing the union structure. Rather, the aim was revolutionary change in the ralations of production.

D The Dodge Revolutionary Movement and the Formation of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers

A wildcat strike broke out at the Dodge Main plant on May 2, 1968. The walkout by black and white workers protested gradual speed up of the assembly line and overt racism in the plant. In the aftermath of the strike, Chrysler management imposed disciplinary action on those whom they considered to be leaders of the strike action. Seven workers (five blacks and two whites) were fired. All except two, General G. Baker Jr. and Bennie Tate, both black, were eventually rehired. DRUM emerged in response to the company's onesided attack upon black workers and led a number of further wildcat strikes at Dodge Main.

Chuck Wooten, one of the nine workers who founded DRUM, described the sentiments behind the formation of DRUM as follows:

> "During the wildcat strike of May, 1968, upon coming to work...picket lines (had been) established...manned by all white workers at that time and as a result of this all the black workers received the harshest disciplinary actions. A few workers and I went across

> the street and set in a bar....It was here that we decided we could do something about organizing black workers to fight the racial discrimination inside the plant and the overall oppression of the black workers....And this was the beginning of DRUM."[37]

Mike Hamlin, one of the editors of The Inner City Voice, founded in September, 1967,[38] describes the next step:

> "It happened at a time when many of us who have had a history of radical involvement in this city for some time had just begun to develop a newspaper as a means of getting ourselves together....But we always had an understanding that what was necessary was a successful entry into the plants to organize black workers. And though we never had a successful entry into the plants with the workers and we really didn't know how to go about it, we attracted to us a group of nine workers from the plant just by virtue of us producing a newspaper and projecting certain ideas. We had certain radical ideas and a certain revolutionary line: that black workers would be the vanguard of the liberation struggle in this country. And we had a series of meetings with these workers to get to know them, for them to get to know us, and to begin to develop a common understanding on how to proceed. They came to us because of the objective conditions in that plant...that they had tried to deal with in a number of ways....These efforts had been unsuccessful....And we developed a relationship which led to the formation of DRUM. We decided to use the newsletter as a means of organizing the workers....We wrote about incidents, events, conditions of racism, brutality, and other kinds of bad working conditions, which began to build a sense of resentment among the workers and began to develop a sense of unity among them."[39]

They then began to produce a weekly newsletter called drum. The contents of the newsletter dealt with specific

cases of racism and "tomism" on the job, and stressed the necessity of united action on the part of black workers to abolish the racial aspects of exploitation and degradation in the plant. Many workers reacted to the first issue of drum favorably.[40] Corporate management and union leadership, on the other hand, reacted with predictable hostility. Douglas Fraser, then Director of the UAW Chrysler Division, and the current head of the UAW, had this to say about DRUM:

> "Not every picket line is a Union picket line....It is important for you to know and understand that these picket lines are not UAW picket lines. Legal picket lines of the UAW can be established only after strikeable grievances have gone through the grievance procedure. A democratic vote must be taken in which all members of the local are able to participate. To put it mildly, DRUM leaflets are extremist hate sheets. The object is to pit white workers against black workers and even black against black."[41]

Nonetheless, members of DRUM working in the plant defied company and union, proselytized and recruited black workers on the job. The strength and influence of DRUM grew.[42] About six weeks after DRUM's formation, a group of militant workers wanted to engage in concrete action against Chrysler and the UAW. DRUM decided to test it's strength. They called for a week boycott of two bars outside the gate that were patronized by a large number of black workers. The bars didn't hire blacks, and practised racism in other more subtle ways. Picket lines

were formed and DRUM received widespread co-operation from the black rank and file.[43] Solid support for this action led DRUM to engage in a further test of its strength. During the coming week most workers were due to be temporarily laid off due to the changeover to the production of "69" models. There was also an approaching bill-out date at which time a certain number of units had to be produced. DRUM decided to shut down the plant just before the bill-out time and set back the schedule of the changeover period.

DRUM backed its call for strike action with a list of issues dealing with the conditions at the Hamtramck assembly plant (where about 60 percent of the work force was black):

1. 95% of all foremen in the plant are white.
2. 99% of all the general foremen are white.
3. 100% of all plant intendents are white.
4. 90% of all skilled tradesmen are white.
5. 90% of all apprentices are white.
6. Seniority is also a racist concept, since black workers were systematically denied employment for years at this plant.
7. All of the easier jobs are held by whites.
8. Whenever whites are on harder jobs they have helpers.
9. When black workers miss a day from work they are required to bring two doctors' excuses as to why they missed work.[44]

DRUM demanded that black workers cease paying union dues and that these funds be redirected to the black community to aid in developing self-determination. They also demanded equal pay for black Chrysler employees in South Africa.[45]

On July 7, 1968, DRUM held a rally in the parking lot across from the factory. Various groups from the black community were present. The rally culminated in a march to UAW Local 3's offices where an executive committee meeting was in progress. A general meeting in the auditorium was demanded and held to the satisfaction of no one. DRUM decided that the wildcat strike should be held the next day. DRUM and supporting groups arrived at the plant gates at 5:00 a.m. to be present when workers began arriving for the 6:00 a.m. shift. Picket lines, manned entirely by students, intellectuals, and community people, were set up. No workers were on the picket line. White workers were allowed to enter the factory without interference. Only black workers were stopped. No force was applied. Verbal persuasion was sufficient to keep an estimated 70 percent of the black workers out of the plant. The wildcat lasted for three days. Nineteen hundred cars failed to come off the line. Production was crippled. No one was fired. The strike was a success.[46]

The Chrysler wildcat gave birth to two new offspring: the Ford Revolutionary Union Movement (FRUM) and the Eldon Avenue Revolutionary Union Movement (ELRUM).[47] Each began

their own newsletters. Eldon Avenue was Chrysler's only gear and axle plant. It was an old plant with poor working conditions. Sixty percent of Eldon's workers were black. Although Local 691 had a black steward and black committeemen, the union local was controlled by Southern white and Polish workers. A safety work stoppage erupted at Eldon in response to the death of Gary Thompson, a young black worker who was crushed to death while driving a defective fork lift.[48]

Prior to this tragic occurence, the Eldon Safety Committee--a loose coalition of insurgent work groups and several discharged union officials--had been putting out leaflets and papers exposing the hazardous conditions at Eldon.[49] The Safety Committee responded to Thompson's death with a safety work stoppage, refusing to work until the plant was cleaned up and the deadly work conditions corrected. Chrysler responded with a call to the Detroit Police Department for special patrols by the Tactical Mobile Unit.[50] UAW Local 691 issued no response at all to the work stoppage. Chrysler then discharged three members of ELRUM for an alleged violation of the "no strike" clause in the collective bargaining agreement between Chrysler and the UAW.[51]

An important wildcat strike took place at Eldon on January 7, 1969, in response to an incident a week earlier. ELRUM had led 300 workers in a demonstration at the UAW

Local 961 hall. A meeting resulted that lasted sufficiently long that the workers on the afternoon shift missed their starting time. When they returned to work the next day, 66 of the 300 were disciplined immediately and more were punished later. Punishments ranged from five days to a month off without pay. The wildcat strike was a protest against this punishment. The Eldon Avenue strike was both more and less successful than DRUM's earlier Hamtramck Assembly wildcat. A higher proportion of black workers participated. Production was totally shut down because blacks comprised a larger portion of the labor force at Eldon than at Dodge Main. However, 26 workers were fired as a result of the strike. They lost their jobs despite the fact that, once again, picket lines were manned by "outside" supporters--not by Eldon workers.[52]

A wildcat strike over safety conditions broke out at Chrysler Sterling Stamping plant on April 2, 1969. Workers had been ordered to clear out 12 feet of scrap metal which had piled up due to a broken conveyor belt. The metal was razor sharp, and with the floor slippery from spilled oil, the job was a dangerous one. The Sterling Stamping plant was added to the Chrysler empire in 1965. Employing over 3,500 production and skilled workers, the 80 million dollar plant sprawls over a half mile of land in the white working class suburb of Sterling Heights. The Sterling plant was critical to the auto parts supply of the four

major Chrysler assembly plants in Detroit: Lynch Road, Hamtramck, Warren Truck and Jefferson. Although blacks comprised 30 percent of the Sterling work force, there were no black stewards or committeemen.[53] This time picket lines were manned by white workers, about 75 SDS members from the University of Michigan, and the National Organizing Committee. Black workers at Sterling were not associated with the Revolutionary Union Movement. The National Organizing Committee called for RUM support for their action,[54] but support was not forthcoming for this white-led strike. Leaders of the black insurgents argued that, while white workers disliked Chrysler Corporation, few supported the concept that they should control the company. Predominantly white-led strikes remained at the level of trade union consciousness. The issues of safety conditions and firings were treated as demands unrelated to other struggles in the auto plants.[55]

In September, 1969, DRUM entered union electoral politics running Ron March for a vacant position on the local union executive board. March made it clear that he was not following the usual course of union caucuses. There was no pretense that a revolutionary black trustee would effect any fundamental change in the union. The election brought forth harrassment of black people in the plant and DRUM people in particular by union officials and the police and city administration of Hamtramck.

March got the largest vote in the election but had to compete in a runoff against a white candidate who had the backing of the union machine. March lost in the runoff, partially as a consequence of the built-in conservatism of the union election machinery. For a number of years retired union members were added to the voting membership of the union. As a result, retired Polish workers were brought in to vote against the young black workers. However, the election further publicized DRUM proposals throughout the local union.[56]

As revolutionary union movements began to spring up at other factories in Detroit and elsewhere in the nation, it became increasingly clear that a central organization was needed to give direction to the separate entities. The League of Revolutionary Black Workers was formed in March, 1969, and the Inner City Voice became its official organ.[57] With the development of the League, organizational activities expanded both within and beyond the auto industry. JARUM (Jefferson Assembly Revolutionary Union Movement), MARUM (Mack Avenue plant), CADRUM (Cadillac Fleetwood factory), MERUM (Mound Road Engine plant) and CRUM (Chevrolet Revolutionary Union Movement) entered the scene. Beyond the auto industry appeared the Hospital Revolutionary Union Movement, the Newspaper Revolutionary Union Movement, and the United Parcel Revolutionary Union Movement.[58] The League influenced the Worker's Voice

Committee which was established in 1970 at the International Melrose Park Harvester plant in Chicago.[59] And as far away as Mahwah, New Jersey, the United Black Brothers at Mahwah Ford plant was influenced by the League. In Cambridge, Massachussetts, the Polaroid Workers Revolutionary Union Movement was formed.[60]

Emphasizing organizing in the factories as a means of generating motion in the community, the League associated with the Black Panthers and the Black High School Association. The League utilized the Wayne State University newspaper, The South End, and instituted a banner line reading, "One class conscious worker is worth 100 students," when John Watson took the position of editor of the newspaper. The League also made a film, "Finally Got the News," as a means of mass organizing.[61] White radical organizations like Ad Hoc, People Against Racism, the Detroit Organizing Committee, and the Motor City Labor League, also began to work with the League on various projects.[62]

E The League's Ideology and Strategy

The League's ideology was based upon an historical analysis of black labor in the context of class and race struggle in the United States. From the League's perspective, American slavery was more than a mere economic category. Slavery transformed the social

relations between people in American society from relations between classes into relations between races. For racial slavery represents a transformation of slavery itself, since it converts slaves from a class of slaves into a race of slaves. American society is transformed from a class society into a race society. Racism is born.[63]

In the United States the enslavement of the Negro people becomes the basis of a system of privilege and freedom for the white race. Racism represents the division of the laboring population into two racial strata appear to be inherently unequal. The white strata becomes a privileged labor segment at the expense of the black strata. And white labor now appears to be superior to black labor.[64] White supremacy--white "skin privilege"--is premised upon the oppression of blacks as a people. White freedom is premised upon the denial of freedom to peoples of African heritage.

White skin privilege becomes the focal point of the analysis of the evolution of labor in the United States by the League. For white skin privilege distorts the development of the working class and class struggle by giving both a racial form. Racist containment of black labor leaves wage labor to whites, as a white skin privilege, as free labor, not slave labor. The working class becomes identified with white labor and the slave class and pariah caste become identified with black labor.

White skin privilege becomes a raison d'etre of white labor. In sum: (1) slavery is a set of economic relations but it is also a set of social relations; (2) the limitation of slave status to black Africans transformed class into race; (3) workers were divided between free whites and unfree blacks; (4) white workers were exploited but they still had white skin privilege; (5) whites were free and could become citizens.[65]

Neither white wage labor nor black labor becomes fully proletarianized. The struggle of thw white working class is not simply class struggle, but appears as a contradictory mix of "semi-class" and "outright race struggle." On the one hand, white workers are impelled to struggle against capital. On the other hand, white workers are impelled to struggle against black workers. Thus white workers hold strikes, struggle for shorter hours of labor, organize unions, advocate civil rights for workers, and so on. But on the other hand, white workers strike against the presence of black workers on the job, exclude blacks from their unions, participate in barbarous race riots against black people, and supported racist codes that restricted civil rights for blacks.[66]

When black workers entered Northern industry, they entered on the lowest rung of the industrial ladder, and that is essentially where they remained. Black labor became: (1) the lowest paid sector of the working class;

(2) forced into the jobs in the labor market that were least desirable except when needed to suppress the wages of whites; (3) subjected to the most hazardous working conditions, higher mortality rates and high rates of industrial disease; (4) subjected to discrimination in job placement and job upgrading; (5) subjected to harsh regimentation and discipline on the job; and (6) in a position of having little or no power in their unions.[67]

Organized labor kept blacks on the lowest rung and created prejudice instead of breaking it down. Sperio and Harris' comments on the AFL's exclusion of blacks captures the League's argument as well:

> "By refusing to accept apprentices from a class of workers that social tradition stamped as inferior, or by withholding membership from reputable craftsmen of this class, the union accomplished two things: it protected its good name, and it eliminated a whole class of future competitions. While race prejudice is a very fundamental fact in the exclusion of the Negro, the desire to restrict competition so as to safeguard job monopoly and control wages is inextricably interwoven with it."[68]

The C10 was also guilty of racism but moderated it during the emergence and growth of the industrial labor movement in order to capture black class allegiance.

From the League's perspective:

> "The labor movement as represented by United Mine Workers, Steel workers, UAW, AFL-C10, etc., are all the antithesis of the freedom of black people, in particular, and the world in general. For the most part, at this stage, white labor must be viewed as an enemy because of the position it holds in working hand in glove with imperialism."[69]

And to the League, the principal theme of the U.S. labor history was one of organized labor taking advantage of black labor for the benefit of whites and ultimately betraying the black working class. The deep racial divisions within the U.S. working class led the League to adopt the position of Revolutionary Nationalism:[70]

> "We fully understand, after five centuries under this fiendish system the heinous savages that it serves, namely the white racist owners and operators of the means of destruction. We further understand that there have been previous attempts by our people in this country to throw off this degrading yoke of oppression, which have ended in failure. Throughout our history, black workers, first as slaves and later as pseudo freedmen, have been in the vanguard of potentially successful revolutionary struggles in all-black movements as well as in integrated efforts. As examples of these we cite: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the beautiful Haitian Revolution; the slave revolts led by Nat Turner, Demark Vesey, Gabriel Prosser; the Populist movement and the labor movement in the 'thirties in the United States. Common to all these movements were two things: their failure and the reason they failed. These movements failed because they were betrayed from within, or, in the case of the integrated movements, by white leadership exploiting the racist nature of the white workers they led. We, of course, must avoid that pitfall and purge our ranks of any traitors and lackeys that may succeed in penetrating this organization. At this point we loudly proclaim that we have learned our lesson from history and we shall not fail. So it is that we who are the hope of black people and all oppressed people everywhere dedicate ourselves to the cause of black liberation to build the world anew realizing that only a struggle led by black workers can triumph over our powerful reactionary enemy."[70]

But the League was careful to distinguish Revolutionary Black Nationalism from "Bourgeois Reformism and Bourgeois Nationalism":

> "Revolutionary Black Nationalism snatches the African-American from the puerile stage of Elizabethan drama, restores his sense of balance and direction in the universe, and sends crashing down to earth the clay idol of (Negro/American) emotional duality which has plagued the broad trend of black ideology from slavery to the present. From the activist wing of Bourgeois Reformism it takes the tactic of mass confrontation, struggles on all fronts, and integrates it into the existing order; from Bourgeois Nationalism comes the idea of the necessity for the development of national (revolutionary) culture and of both self-determination and self-reliance, as well as the black world view which sees the struggle of African-Americans as inseparable from the struggles of all other peoples of color around the globe. The Revolutionary Nationalist views the concept of black nationhood not as a sacred unquestionable end in itself, but as a concrete (necessity for) the dignity and full flowering of every individual of African descent."[71]

Moreover, the League viewed it's Revolutionary Nationalism as consistent with an explicit Marxist-Leninist ideology:

> "We take a Marxist-Leninist position. The question of black people in the United States is a caste and class problem. Black men are exploited as a function of the capitalist system as a whole by white capital. Racism is a tool which the man uses to carry out his exploitation. And we are no more for integrated capitalism than segregated capitalism. Neither are we in favor of a separate state, based on the same class lines as in this society. We are against a separate state in which a black capitalist class exploits a black proletariat. We are opposed also to all sorts of haphazard analysis which doesn't tell us what to do with U.S. capitalism and imperialism."[72]

and,

> "Basically, we have organized an all black revolutionary union movement, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, because of the fact that the working class is already divided between the races, and because it is necessary for black workers to be able to act independently of white workers. We have learned historically that in too many instances white workers have been willing to sell us out because of their own racist misunderstandings of the dynamics of struggle."[73]

The League believed that once revolutionary development emerged within the white proletariat, and as white workers began to move to overthrow racism, capitalism, and imperialism, then principled alliances with white workers were possible. They called for such alliances and coalitions in their program but they emphasized that they would enter coalitions with whites only "upon principled grounds."[74] Too frequently, however, skin privilege rendered white workers blind to the pressing problems of racial discrimination in the shops, and white radical organizations failed to take up racial issues. As Jim Jacobs put the matter:

> "Unfortunately few of the radicals in the Detroit shops have confronted the white supremacy question in their organizing. This is not because they deny its existence. Rather, they argue that black-white unity can only be achieved by focusing on issues which affect both races. They believe that by emphasizing issues that affect all workers, white workers will learn in the process of struggle to deal with their special privileges. This view holds that the development of socialist, anti-privilegist consciousness will

> emerge out of a united struggle against a common enemy. The United Caucus in the UAW is a national opposition to Reuther growing out of revolt over wages in the skilled trades. The United Caucus concerns itself with wages, working conditions and democratic procedures. However, it has rarely emphasized the particular issues affecting certain minority groups within the UAW, such as blacks and women."[75]

The League's statement of it's general policy was formulated in "Here is Where We are Coming From" in the November-December 1970 issue of the Inner City Voice and is presented below.

"The League of Revolutionary Black Workers is dedicated to waging a relentless struggle against racism, capitalism, and imperialism. We are struggling for the liberation of Black people in the confines of the United States as well as to play a major revolutionary role in the liberation of all oppressed people in the world. In U.S. society, a small class owns the basic means of production. There aren't any black people in this class, nor are the masses; however, they are not in the same position as blacks. The racist subordination of black people and black workers creates a privileged status for white people and white workers. While the imperialist oppression and exploitation of the world creates a privileged status for the people and workers of the U.S., the white labor movement has failed to deal with the worsening conditions of black worker problems such as less job security, speed-up, less pay, bad health (silicosis,

in particular), the worst kind of jobs, and in most cases, exclusion from skilled trades....The United States society is racist, capitalist and imperialist by nature. It is agressively expansive, exploitative and oppressive.....

The oppressive, imperialist nature of U.S. society is evidenced at home in the suppression of the black liberation struggle, workers' struggles, and anti-war struggles, in an increasingly militaristic fashion. One of the essential domestic props of U.S. imperialism is the white aristocracy which shares in the spoils of the plunder of the domestic subordination of black workers.... The League of Revolutionary Black Workers emerged specifically out of the failure of the white labor movement to address itself to the racist work conditions and to the general inhumane conditions of black people. Our strength comes from the historical and heroic struggles of our people. Our inspiration comes from the revolutionary upsurges of the international struggles, and our convictions are guided by the principles of Marxism-Leninism.

The League sees its goals as being three-fold: liberation in America, leading workers' struggles, and aiding in the struggle against imperialism. These efforts must be guided by the principles of Marxism-Leninism and must be led by a black Marxist-Leninist political party.

The League's program for building a black Marxist-Leninist party is as follows:

1. Organizing of black workers on the broadest possible scale into the League and its component parts.

2. Politicizing and educating the masses of black people to the nature of racism, capitalism, and imperialism, to further outline the solution to those problems in League programs and documents.

3. Supporting the efforts of our people to develop a broad economic base within the community to aid the revolutionary struggle.

4. Developing a broad based self-defense organization in the community.

5. Carrying on unceasing struggles on behalf of black workers and the total community.

6. Forming principled alliances and coalitions, on the broadest possible basis, with other oppressed minorities, organizations, movements, and forces, black or white, which struggle against the evil of racism, capitalism and imperialism. Our short-range objective is to secure power with the control of the means of production in the hands of the workers under the leadership of the most advanced section of the working class, the black working class vanguard. Our long range objective is to create a society free of race, sex, class, and national oppression, founded on the humanitarian principle of from each

according to his ability, to each according to his needs."[76]

The League placed it's greatest emphasis on organizing black workers at the point of production in the factories. According to John Watson,

> "Our analysis tells us that the basic power of black people lies at the point of production, that the basic power we have is the power as workers, as black workers, we have historically been and now (are) an essential element in the American (economy)....Without black workers slaving on the assembly lines in automobile plants in the city of Detroit, the automobile companies would not be able to produce cars in the first place, therefore, wouldn't be able to make tremendous profits which they have been making. Therefore, we feel that the best way to organize them is in the factories in which they are working. We feel that black workers, especially, have the power to completely close down the American economic system. In order to implement that power, we have to become organized. In one factory you have 10,000 people who are faced with the same system from the same bastards everyday, eight hours a day, ten hours a day, six or seven days a week. When you go out into the community, the interests of the people, let's say a particular neighborhood, more than likely are going to be much more greatly dispersed than the interests of the workers are....Therefore, just in terms of expediency there are greater possibilities with organization of the plant....When you close down a large automobile plant, you automatically can mobilize the people in the streets, 5,000 or 10,000 people at a single blow. Whereas when you attempt to organize the community especially if you go from house to house, or block to block, it is much more difficult to gather that many of the people at the same time."[77]

The Midwest is the industrial heartland of America. Over forty percent of the people in this area work in the basic manufacturing industries--auto, steel, machine products, rubber, electric--which are the source of America's wealth. The rise or fall of automobile sales and production is a most influential factor in the vitality of the U.S. economy. It has been calculated, for example, that for every $1 billion reduction in auto production (250,000 cars), 22,900 auto workers and 34,000 workers in related industries would be laid off. This includes 4,600 iron and steel industry workers, 4,420 wholesale and retail dealers, 4,170 fabricated metal products workers, 2,630 non-electrical machinery workers, 2,200 business and advertising workers, 2,050 transport and warehouse workers, 1,000 textile industry workers, 1,060 auto repair service workers, 760 glass workers, as well as others in mining, construction, paper, printing and publishing, chemicals and paints, leather, wood, instruments, communications, finance, insurance, hotels, and real estate. In all, a $1 billion loss in auto sales equals the loss of an estimated 57,000 jobs.[78]

Therefore, to seize control of the automobile industry in Detroit, the League reasoned, was to seize control of the political economy of the Midwest; and to seize control over the Midwest was to seize control over the political economy of the United States. So organizing

factory workers in the auto plants was the foundation of the League's revolutionary strategy.

The League's factory oriented organizing strategy represented a self-conscious change of direction from black organizing activities of the past. According to the League, during the past twenty years, the black liberation movement was shaped by the outlook of its middle-class leadership. Black leaders aligned themselves with white liberal organizations. Many reform groups and civil rights organizations failed to address the institutional foundations of the political economy of black poverty. The benefits resulting from the Civil Rights Movement tended to accrue to the black middle class. In the fields of education, employment, and business, the black bourgeoisie made limited gains since the expansion of black middle class groups was the unwritten policy of the white ruling class. However, the black masses, predominantly workers, were largely left out of this progress. Since the black reserve army lacked an objective basis of power, black workers must be organized through their roles as producers.

Through organizing workers in strategic industries, the League planned to create the foundation for a black revolutionary party. The central theoretical concern of the League was recognition of the black working class as the vanguard of the social revolution:

> "Owing to national oppression (principally through institutionalized racism as the dominant form of production relations) of black people in the U.S., the black proletariat is forced to take on the most dangerous, the most difficult--yet absolutely necessary--productive work in the plants, the most undesirable and strenuous jobs which exist inside the U.S. today. The demands which it poses: the elimination of economic exploitation (hence of capitalism) and of institutionalized racism (which thoroughly pervades the plant, not to mention North American society in general) and which allows capitalism to maintain itself, are more basic to the dismantling of the U.S. capitalist society than those of the white production worker, who up to now has been able to defend his white-skin privilege. That is why we say that any socialist revolution which is to be successful must take the class stand of the vanguard class of this revolution: the black proletariat."[79]

The League, however, didn't oppose community organizing efforts. On the contrary, community organizing was viewed as a necessary and complementary strategy directed toward taking political power in the city:

> "...we feel that in conjunction with the organization of workers in plants you automatically have the development of community organization and community support. After all, workers are not people who live in factories 24 hours a day. They all go home and live somewhere in the community. We have found that it is almost an inevitable and simultaneous development that as factory workers begin to get organized, support elements within the community also organized. We feel that it is necessary to have broad community support in order to be able to effectively organize within the plant and effectively close down significant sectors of the economy. Therefore, we have an overall analysis which sees the point of production as the major and primary sector of the society which has to be organized in conjunction with that development."[80]

The need for community organizing emerged from the League's experiences on the picket lines during strikes:

> "It happened that in that particular strike twenty-six workers were discharges....So we tried to do what we could to support them in terms of raising funds and we tried to arrange jobs for them....But that strike taught us a lot. We knew at that point that what we had to do was to begin to organize workers in more plants and begin to organize the black community to relate to the struggle in the plants, in the city, in the state, and eventually around the country, that led to the formation of the League. Now the reason that was necessary was it became clear that no one group of workers in a single plant can win a struggle for control of a plant, even a struggle for justice in a plant, in an isolated situation. The only way that these struggles can be won is through the support from workers in other plants. And through support of the black community too. So we decided after the Eldon situation to set about organizing toward that end."[81]

And community organizing was central to the League's long range goal--control of the black community:

> "Detroit is a city with a history. The black community of Detroit has a history of very sophisticated political awareness. It has also a number of opportunitists, a number of incompetents, a number of people who have attempted to do things that projected unrealistic solutions....So we determined that the struggle of workers and the struggle of our people in the community, as community people, were necessary and that they should go hand in hand. We felt that the people in the plants, when they were involved in intense struggle, needed support from black people from the community. And community people should be prepared to come out there, and support them, to try to deal with the repression and other things that were going to happen to us. We decided that the struggles in the community, the struggles over the schools and

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> police brutality and all of the other issues, housing and so forth, which affect workers should be supported by workers. And we do that. We support them. We are part of those struggles."[82]

Coordination between the League, the Panthers, and the black high school movement was a step forward in organizing a city-wide black movement, with power at the point of production. The League continued to expand its base units as hospital and newspaper unions were formed. In addition, the League moved to develop revolutionary union movements in the steel industry and caucuses in several cities across the nation. There appeared to be a real potential for organizational success wherever a sizable concentration of black workers was located in a metropolitan center possessing heavy industry.

F The League Splits

Three of the seven members of the League's executive board resigned on June 12, 1971. The public announcement of their resignation was withheld until after the national convention of the Black Workers' Congress in August, 1971.[83] The split revealed that two rival groups of black Marxist-Leninists were attempting to organize black workers: The League of Revolutionary Black Workers and the Black Workers' Congress. The split encompassed a number of points of contention including: national

consciousness, principled cooperation with white radicals, political education, and whether the struggle should be narrowly defined as against racism and capitalism or more broadly defined to include sexism and imperialism.

The three League members who resigned from the executive board--Ken Cockrel, Mike Hamlin, and John Watson--stated that the League always comprised a coalition of forces representing three tendencies, each of which had different ideological lines and correspondingly divergent social practices. They labeled these factions: "Proletarian Revolutionaries"; "Petty Bourgeois Opportunists"; and "Backward Reactionary-Nationalist Lumpen-Proletarians". Ken Cockrel, Mike Hamlin and John Watson represented the Black Workers' Congress which took the position of the "Proletarian Revolutionaries". They saw their political position as reflecting a Marxist-Leninist view of the United States and the world:

> "We saw the fundamental contradiction in the world and the U.S. as existing between capital and labor, nonetheless recognizing that the color-caste nature of U.S. society gives a national character to the oppression of blacks within this society. Consequently, we feel that of all the forces in the U.S. proletariat, the black working class constitutes, by dint of its peculiarly acute oppression, the objective vanguard of the proletarian-led struggle to defeat imperialism and build socialism as a necessary step in creating a new world free of imperialist aggression and the degradation of the masses that accompanies the maintenance of the imperialist system."[84]

They asserted that the "Petty Bourgeois Opportunists" voiced the same ideology but failed to act in a manner consistent with it. They also charged that their own work had been actively hindered by the activities of the League's nationalist members. They argued that the internal contradictions within the League made it impossible to maintain any semblance of "democratic centralism". Violations of League rules rarely met with disciplinary actions. Political education was severely hampered. Concrete achievements were impeded. They reached the conclusion that the League had to be superceded by another organization:

> "As a result of the inability of the League to solve its internal contradictions, at a time when black workers across the country were increasingly engaging in militant action against imperialism at the point of production, the left forces in the League were compelled by historical necessity to try and assist in building, with other proletarian forces around the country, an organizational form to unite such forces and carry the struggle to a higher stage. The new organizational form is the Black Workers' Congress. Initially, it was projected that the League, by dint of its experience, would be a key foundation stone in the new form."[86]

The League's response to these resignations and its own ultimate expulsion from the Black Workers' Congress was represented in a series of documents put together by John Williams, Rufus Barker, and Clint Marbury.[86] They saw the League membership as comprising five groups. The largest contained workers whose prime motivation for

participation was national consciousness and opposition to racial discrimination and exploitation. This was summed up as, "The overriding and binding factor of our group was getting the honkies off our backs". The second group was composed of community people who provided the League with resources based on ties to particular League members. But community people lacked an articulated political direction and were inconsistent in their support. The third group comprised "unemployed and fugitive elements". They were provided for by the League and exchanged allegiance and limited labor for the League's support. The fourth group contained students. The students were also primarily motivated by national consciousness. The fifth group encompassed the black Marxist-Leninists.

Continual strife among these elements produced constant meetings to resolve conflicts. The cadre that remained with the League after the split described the problem as follows:

> "The major and fundamental problem in the leadership of the Marxist-Leninist group was the national question. This was the problem that had not been discussed. Some of us saw the form that black people were taking obviously led to the recognition of independent nationhood. We also recognized this as a necessary struggle and that capitalism et. al. must be liquidated in order to achieve this. The other sector viewed the black struggle as a present form becoming subsumed at a later stage in a multi-racial party ruling America. At one

> point this faction saw the multi-racial party subsequent to the dictatorship of the black proletariat ruling America until whites proved themselves by their practice and entered the multi-racial party. However, this position has been voted out in favor of the involvement of third world peoples, poor whites, and blacks making up the multi-racial party in America. This faction also saw that nationalism was in essence reactionary."[87]

Those placing primary emphasis on class analysis were attacked for diffusing the struggle. They were charged with wishing "to elevate the problems of women on a par with capitalism by calling it sexism." The Congress was seen as an attack on nationalism and the color-caste form of struggle. The call for a struggle against imperialism was seen as relegating struggle around the concrete conditions faced by blacks in the U.S. to secondary importance.

The resignation by Cockrel, Hamlin and Watson appear to have been welcomed by the League as a means of strengthening and unifying its ideological position. A line was adopted stressing the organization of black workers around the issue of national consciousness, a black vanguard leading a socialist revolution to be followed by establishment of a separate black socialist state, and a party in which the leadership is elected by the mass membership.

Although many League activists followed Cockrel, Hamlin and Watson into the Congress, most of the League's members and sympathizers were unprepared for a split

among the top leadership. By the first of the year, those who remained in the League were making plants to affiliate what was left of the organization with a group called the Communist League.[88] The Communist League was a small California based organization which espoused a rigid Marxist line emphasizing heavy reading and memorization of the works of Mao and Stalin. Intense self-criticism sessions and study groups became prerequisites for continuing membership. Most of the students dropped away, and many individuals became inactive. The Communist League's strict organization, self-discipline, and stress on Marxist ideology represented a specific set of solutions to some of the problems which had plagued the earlier League. Yet the political line of the Communist League differed little from the Black Workers' Congress. The Communist League advocated a new multinational communist party based on Marxism-Leninism. The organization accepted whites and all third world peoples as members. And members of the Communist League were visible in the summer of 1973 during a series of wildcat strikes which swept the Detroit auto plants. Each of the three Chrysler factories to suffer major wildcats were the sites of former RUM units.[89]

Ken Cockrel and his associates in Detroit had by now arrived at the conclusion that the politics of both the Black Workers' Congress and the Communist League involved

"playing in the same sandbox". Both the BWC and the CL were organizational retreats to old forms which had failed in the past and would fail in the future. Cockrel believed that rigid cadre groups dealing with ideological subtleties were not essential to making a bid for power either within the factories or outside. He advocated building mass movements around immediate pressing social issues. By the autumn of 1972, one of Cockrel's law partners had won a judgeship in Detroit's criminal court system, and Cockrel had begun to seriously consider running for Mayor of Detroit--the nation's fifth largest city.[90]

Wildcat strikes swept the auto plants in Detroit in the summer of 1973, and Jefferson Assembly, Chrysler Forge, and Mack Stamping were shut down. The first wildcat occurred at Jefferson Assembly, where 90 percent of the workers in the metal shop were black. The poor working conditions in the metal shop were aggravated by the behavior of a white supervisor charged as an outright racist by black workers. A petition calling for his removal was signed by 214 of the 300 workers in the shop. The plant management and the union disregarded the workers' petition. On July 24, two black workers took direct action. They climbed into the electric-power control cage and pushed a button halting the assembly line at the start of the first shift. Ignoring the union

hierarchy, they negotiated with the company directly from the cage. They said that they would continue the occupation until the white supervisor was removed and they wanted an unconditional amnesty. Workers clustered outside the cage with chains in case anyone should try to remove them by force. Black, white, and Arab workers brought food or stood guard. Many came from other departments to demonstrate their support.[91]

A few weeks later, on August 28, an even more serious wildcat took place at Chrysler Forge. The plant employed 1,100 workers in the making of crankshafts, pinions, and torsion bars. A week before the strike, two workers were crippled by accidents. One had an arm torn off, the second had a finger crushed. Over half of the Chrysler Forge workers had been working a nearly steady seven day week for the past six months. The immediate impetus to the strike was the firing of sixteen workers who had been vocal in exposing health and safety violations. The leadership of the strike was primarily white, but leaflets from the People's Tribune, the organ of the Communist League, were handed out the day of the shutdown. One of the wildcat leaders was a former member of DRUM and a current member of the Communist League. The strike at Forge lasted six days.[92]

The day after Forge went back into production, Chrysler was hit at its Mack Stamping plant with another work stoppage. A white member of the Progressive Labor

Party, who had been fired for agitation to improve safety and health conditions the day before, returned to the line at the Mack plant for his regular shift and sat down on the conveyor belt. When the plant protection people came to remove him, he struck a guard with a metal pipe. The plant shut down, as 200 workers in his department sat down with him while he read announcements to the press which emphasized the demands of the Workers' Action Movement, a front organized by his party.[93]

Yet another strike took place in June, 1974, at the Dodge Truck plant located in Warren.[94] In recent years all the auto makers, but especially Chrysler, have become heavily dependent upon truck production for profits. The increase in truck sales expanded plant operations over the past several years. Although Dodge Truck is located in the south end of suburban, all-white Warren, the plant is accessible to Detroit. Roughly 45-50 percent of the work force is black with another 5-10 percent Arab. In addition, the work force is about 20 percent women, mostly black.[95]

On Friday, May 31st, about 50 to 75 workers from the metal shop decided to stay out "sick" as a protest against ratification of the 1973 contract negotiations between Chrysler and the UAW.[96] This action triggered the initial firing of four workers, including the chief steward, a member of the Revolutionary Union. Then most workers on

the second shift in the metal shop walked out and production came to a halt. This is not unusual in the auto plants. When a steward is fired, a traditional response is "no union representation, no work." What was unusual in this case was that workers kept the plant shut down for three and one-half days and through their participation at meetings and on the picket lines, the wildcat turned into a mass action. The wildcat had the mass support of workers because of their outrage at the conditions inside the plant.

The dismissal of the chief steward sparked the strike but it was not the major issue perpetuating the wildcat. Grievances about the lack of gloves, the unsafe conditions in the body shop and trim lines, the backlog of unresolved union grievances and the firings by management, spilled out into the street.[97] Picket lines were manned by workers from the metal shop, but they were joined by many workers--men and women, black and white--from departments all over the plant. Hundreds of workers from Dodge Truck and other plants around the city stood on the opposite side of the street expressing solidarity with the strike. They held large, militant mass meetings which denounced the corporation and the union "misleaders."[98]

The Communist League's position on the Dodge Truck wildcat was one of "watching and studying the situation." Prior to the strike the CL had contended itself with

passing out a "big leaflet" called: "Better to die on your feet, than to live on your knees," as well as several issues of a newsletter called drum.[99] Inaction in practice now flowed from the political line of the CL (CL became the Communist Labor Party in 1974):

> "The CLP does not claim to lead the working class at this time, although through its Party press--The People's Tribune, Tribune Popular and Western Worker--and active party organizations throughout the country it does influence the broad movement of the workers. Our goal is to create the type of Party which will lead the working class."[100]

During the Dodge Truck wildcat, the Black Workers' Congress did not attempt to give political leadership to the whole strike, but instead concentrated on doing work with Dodge Truck workers it had contact with. In effect, the BWC separated the task of building the party from the task of developing the revolutionary activity of the working class, thereby failing to help give a planned, conscious character to the spontaneous movement of the workers.

The BWC summarized its position in its newspaper, The Communist:

> "The lessons of this strike are particularly important in as much as the working class movement is beginning to assure mass production in the form of strikes, spontaneous outbreaks against police violence, and militant protest against the steady attacks on the living standards of the people. The role of the communists and advanced workers in leading this upsurge, is organically bound up with the key task which must be performed at this stage of the class struggle--the building of a genuine Communist Party."[101]

In May, 1975, the BWC changed its name to the Revolutionary Workers' Congress and also changed its newspaper from The Communist to Movin' On. The Revolutionary Workers' Congress explained the change in name in the first issue of Movin' On:

> "The BWC was an all black organization striving for Marxism-Leninism-Maoism thought. Our political focus was directed solely towards the struggle of the Afro-American people. This had to do, on the one hand, with our lack of understanding of the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism, and on the other, to the development, as an organization, which grew out of the spontaneous struggles of the masses of people. Over the years we have, through study and practice, come to see the incorrectness of this position....Our development is a reflection of the growing understanding within our movement that within the U.S. the proletariat consists of Afro-American, Asian, Puerto-Rican, Chicano, Arab, and white workers.... The unity can only be built by putting proletarian ideology in the forefront, building a multi-national Communist Party to lead the revolutionary struggle of the masses and by fighting for the right of self-determination for oppressed nations."[102]

G Conclusion

In the aftermath of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, wildcat strikes and other forms of "counter-planning on the shop floor" continue in the Detroit auto plants. However, the mass strikes led by the League in the late 1960s have not reappeared. The rank and file black workers who vigorously responded to the League's call are less visibly active at the present time. But the material conditions facing black auto workers have not improved and continue to provide an ever present "latent" stimulus to militant mass struggle over the issues born of class exploitation and racial oppression in the auto industry.

Super exploitation underpinned the Revolutionary Union Movements in several Detroit plants in the late 1960s and the formation of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. The League raised the combined issues of class exploitation and racial discrimination in a fashion that challenged the legitimacy of corporation, union, and older black caucus leadership alike. Yet the League was unable to forge a synthesis between two conflicting ideologies and lines of political struggle: Marxist-Leninism committed to an integrated radical working class alliance and Black Nationalism which is fundamentally a separatist strategy for black political-economic development. The internal contradiction which split the League

has yet to be transcended at the level of theory or practice in the United States.

However, at a deeper level, the split in the League of Revolutionary Black Workers may be viewed as a necessary step in the further development of the black working class. From the vantage point of concrete workers' struggles and developing consciousness, the spontaneous movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s as manifested in wildcat strikes and picket lines in the Detroit plants represent movement beyond a narrow brand of black nationalism. Militant black workers fought not only against superexploitation in the plants but raised the issues to the level of the legitimacy of capitalist principles for organizing this society. Thus, militant black workers began to relay the foundations for class unity among all workers and this is the true historical meaning of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers.

James Boggs has suggested that:

> "Historically, workers move ahead by the new. That is, they bypass existing organizations and form new ones uncorrupted by past habits and customs."[103]

In the 1960s and the early 1970s, black workers advanced the level of consciousness in the labor movement and criticized the reformism prevalent within much of the Afro-American peoples' struggle. Today they are percolating new forms of organization for the struggles to come.

Footnotes: Chapter III

[1]Herbert Northrup, The Negro in the Automobile Industry (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), p. 5.

[2]Calculated from Table 2 in U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, PC(2)-7C, Occupation and Industry (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971).

[3]Lee Walker, "Racism and Speed up in the Auto Plants," Political Affairs, (June, 1973), p. 41.

[4]Ibid., pp. 41-43.

[5]Thomas Brooks, "DRUM Beats in Detroit," Dissent (January-February, 1970), p. 17.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Guardian, August 28, 1974, p. 7.

[8]Jim Jacobs, in The Movement (June 1969), p. 13.

[9]Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, Detroit: I Do Mind Dying (New York: St. Martins Press, 1975), p. 102.

[10]Herbert Northrup, The Negro in the Automobile Industry, op. cit., p. 45.

[11]The Militant, February 22, 1974.

[12]Jim Jacobs, in The Movement (June 1969), p. 13.

[13]Jim Jacobs, "Black Workers Set the Pace," The Movement (April 1969), p. 4.

[14]Report by Walter P. Reuther, submitted to the Seventeenth Constitutional Convention, UAW, convened in Atlantic City, New Jersey, October 9-16, 1959, pp. 243-244.

[15]Mike Hamlin, "Our Thing is DRUM," Leviathan (June 1970), p. 36.

[16]Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, Detroit: I Do Mind Dying, op. cit., p. 106.

[17]John Watson, "To the Point of Production," The Movement (July 1969), p. 14.

[18]Mike Hamlin, "Our Thing is DRUM," op. cit., p. 36.

[19]Rae Johnson, "Black Worker Raps," The Inner City Voice (April, 1972), p. 3.

[20]Mike Hamlin, "Our Thing is DRUM," op. cit., p. 7.

[21]Richard Child Hill, "Left with the Democrats? The Rise and Demise of a Full Employment Bill," forthcoming in The Union of Radical Political Economics, The Economic Crisis of Monopoly Capitalism, second edition.

[22]Mike Hamlin, "Our Thing is DRUM," op. cit., p. 6.

[23]Thomas Brooks, "DRUM Beats in Detroit," op. cit., p. 18.

[24]Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, Detroit: I Do Mind Dying, op. cit., p. 124.

[25]Cited in Herbert Northrup, The Negro in the Automobile Industry, op. cit., p. 24.

[26]Wards 1958 Automotive Yearbook, p. 57.

[27]Herbert Northrup, The Negro in the Automobile Industry, op. cit., p. 24.

[28]Wards 1958 Automotive Yearbook, p. 57.

[29]Herbert Northrup, The Negro in the Automobile Industry, op. cit., p. 24.

[30]Wards 1958 Automotive Yearbook, p. 57.

[31]The Movement (August 1969), p. 9.

[32]Wards 1970 Automotive Yearbook, p. 41.

[33]Martin Glaberman, in the Guardian, November 13, 1968.

[34]Wards 1969 Automotive Yearbook, p. 44.

[35]Bill Watson, "Counterplanning on the Shop Floor," Radical America, volume V, (May-June 1971), pp. 77-85.

[36]John Watson, "To the Point of Production," op. cit., p. 14.

[37]Chuck Wooten, "Why I Joined DRUM," Guardian, March 8, 1969.

[38]John Watson, "Black Editor: An Interview," Radical America, volume II, number 4 (July-August, 1968), pp. 30-38.

[39]Mike Hamlin, "Our Thing is DRUM," op. cit., p. 36.

[40]John Bracy, Jr., "At the Point of Production," Radical America, (March-April, 1971), p. 65.

[41]Jim Jacobs, "Black Workers Set the Pace," op. cit., p. 5.

[42]John Bracy, Jr., "At the Point of Production," op. cit., p. 65.

[43]Ibid.

[44]Ibid., p. 66.

[45]James A Geschwender, "Black Marxist-Leninist Worker Movements," unpublished paper, Department of Sociology, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1973, p. 9.

[46]Ibid., pp. 9-10.

[47]John Watson, "At the Point of Production," op. cit., p. 14.

[48]Jim Jacobs, "Black Workers Set the Pace," op. cit., pp. 4-5.

[49]John Bracy, Jr., "At the Point of Production," op. cit., p. 76.

[50]James A. Geschwender, "Black Marxist-Leninist Worker Movements," op. cit., p. 10.

[51]Jim Jacobs in The Movement (April, 1969).

[52]James Geschwender, "Black Marxist-Leninist Worker Movements," op. cit., pp. 10-11.

[53]Jim Jacobs, "Wildcat!", The Movement (July 1969).

[54]John Watson in The Movement (July 1969), pp. 15-16.

[55]Jim Jacobs in The Movement (June 1969).

[56]Martin Glaberman in the Guardian, November 13, 1968.

[57]John Watson, "Black Editor: An Interview," op. cit., pp. 30-38.

[58]John Watson in The Movement (July 1969).

[59]Revolutionary Workers' Congress, Movin' On (May 1975).

[60]The Inner City Voice (February 1971), p. 3.

[61]Ibid; "Finally Got the News," film made in October 1970.

[62]Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, Detroit: I Do Mind Dying, op. cit., pp. 129-157.

[63]The Inner City Voice (November-December, 1970).

[64]Ibid.

[65]Ibid.

[66]Ibid.

[67]Ibid.

[68]Sterling Spero and Abram L. Harris, The Black Worker (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), p. 56.

[69]The Inner City Voice (February 1971), p. 10.

[70]Constitution of DRUM, 1968.

[71]Ernie Mkalimoto, Revolutionary Nationalism and Class Struggle (Detroit: Black Star Publishing pamphlet, 1970), as cited in Eric Perkins, "The League of Revolutionary Black Workers and the Coming of Revolution," Radical America (March-April, 1971), p. 55.

[72]John Watson, "Black Editor: An Interview," op. cit., p. 37.

[73]John Watson, "To the Point of Production," op. cit., p. 15.

[74]John Watson in the Liberated Guardian (May 1971), p. 12.

[75]Jim Jacobs, in The Movement (April 1969), p. 5.

[76]The Inner City Voice (November-December, 1970), pp. 10-13.

[77]John Watson, "To the Point of Production," op. cit., p. 15.

[78]"The Automobile Industry and Its Impact Upon the Nation's Economy," New York Times, December 8, 1974.

[79]Ernie Mkalimoto as quoted in Eric Perkins, "The League of Revolutionary Black Workers and the Coming of Revolution," op. cit., p. 54.

[80]John Watson, "To the Point of Production," op. cit., p. 15.

[81]Mike Hamlin, "Our Thing is DRUM," op. cit., pp. 7-8.

[82]Ibid., pp. 9-10.

[83]Black Workers' Congress, Siege (September 1971).

[84]James Geschwender, "Black Marxist-Leninist Worker Movements," op. cit., pp. 38-39.

[85]Ibid., pp. 40-41.

[86]Ibid., p. 42.

[87]Ibid., pp. 43-44.

[88]Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, Detroit: I Do Mind Dying, op. cit., p. 164.

[89]Ibid., pp. 178-179.

[90]Ibid., p. 181.

[91]Ibid., p. 227.

[92]Ibid., p. 227.

[93]Ibid., p. 230.

[94]Guardian, August 28, 1974, p. 7.

[95]Black Workers' Congress, The Communist, volume I, number 2 (September 1974), p. 3.

[96]Ibid.

[97]Guardian, August 28, 1974, p. 7.

[98]Black Workers' Congress, The Communist (September 1974), p. 7.

[99]Ibid.

[100]The Communist Labor Party, Jobs, Peace, Equality (Chicago Illinois: Workers Press, 1976), p. 13.

[101]Black Workers' Congress, The Communist (September 1974), p. 7.

[102]Revolutionary Workers' Congress, Movin' On (May 1975).

[103]James Boggs, The American Revolution (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1963), p. 32.

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