

# DETROIT REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT RECORDS

BOX 2 OF 16

FOLDER 33

JORDAN SIMS DISMISSAL  
UNSIGNED STATEMENTS

Friday night, May 1, near the end of the second shift, Chrysler's Eldon Avenue Gear & Axle Plant was shut down by a wildcat walkout, the plant's second in two weeks. This time the shop walked out because of management reprisals against the stewards and union officials who led the first wildcat. ~~on April 16.~~

Friday, April 16, the plant was shut down half-way through the second shift by a walkout protesting Chrysler's firing of a worker who got involved in an argument with his foreman, and the company's refusal to take any action whatsoever against the supervisor. The foreman had threatened the employee with a pinion gear, allegedly because the worker had his hand in his pocket, and he thought the employee was going to pull a knife.

By the following Monday the plant was working again, based on management's promises that the fired worker would be reinstated to his job and the foreman would be taken out of the plant. In addition, Chrysler promised no reprisals would be taken against the stewards who had walked the shop out until the U.A.W. convention was finished, and the issue had been thoroughly negotiated.

It was soon apparent Chrysler had no intention of living up to its promises. The fired worker was brought back on the job and made whole, reportedly at the insistence of Chrysler headquarters in Highland Park, but the company tried to shove the foreman down the union's throat. Monday night management attempted to put the foreman back in his original department by keeping him in the front office for the first few hours of the shift, hoping to bring him back to his department after the workers had settled down on their jobs. But the word was spread through the plant, people were waiting, and the company sent the supervisor home. Tuesday morning

management tried to put him in another department on another shift. However, the workers were ready and when he appeared in the department people there left their jobs and stood in the aisles until he was taken out of the area. He spent the rest of the shift standing by himself in a storage area of the plant where no foreman is needed. Since then he has disappeared from the plant; no one knows, or particularly cares, whether he quit or was transferred by Chrysler.

A week later, Monday, April 27, a strike vote was called by the union, and the workers voted 92.8% in favor of a strike. Negotiations continued on other issues, but no mention was made of any reprisals against the stewards who had led the walkout until the early afternoon of Friday, May 1.

The company suddenly called the union hall and requested an immediate meeting with the plant bargaining committee. No reason was given, and apparently Chrysler knew most of the bargaining committee was involved in another meeting elsewhere. At the meeting a company official said only that "Action will be taken." He wouldn't say what action, or against whom, or when it would happen, only that "action would be taken." *And he maintained until the meeting ended at 5:30.* Apparently this was Chrysler's way of keeping its promise to negotiate the issue of reprisals against the stewards who led the walkout.

While this conference was taking place the second shift stewards were being followed throughout the plant by supervisors hoping to catch them in some violation of company rules. At about 10:00 that night the stewards and a union trustee were told to get their coats and report to the Labor Relations office. There they were confronted by the Labor Relations Director who read a foreman's report naming them as "leaders and instigators of an unauthorized

work stoppage" and fired them. An attempt was made to walk the stewards out the front door of the plant so they couldn't get back in the factory and lead another walkout. But someone shouted "Let's get out there and walk 'em out" and they shouldered ~~the~~ past the Plant Protection guards and spread out into the plant calling for people to leave their jobs and go home. By 12:30 the plant was again shut down. Meanwhile, the company was firing other stewards and union officials from other ~~shift~~ shifts by telegram and telephone until a total of 13 had been ~~fired~~ discharged.

At this ~~point~~ point Chrysler's position was essentially this: it had tacitly admitted the original walkout was justified by reinstating the fired employee and (apparently) transferring the foreman; nevertheless it was punishing the stewards for taking effective action to right an obvious wrong.

Management refused to negotiate anything while the plant was shut down, and the union refused to send its members back to work until all the discharged stewards were reinstated. The plant remained closed over the weekend, but by the third shift Monday, May 4, workers were returning to work at the request of the union. Over the weekend Chrysler obtained a preliminary injunction against all the discharged stewards and the union from Judge Joseph Sullivan of the Wayne County Circuit Court enjoining them from turning the union membership away from the plant gates. In its demand for an injunction the company claimed irreparable damage would result from the work stoppage because it would have to shut down all production of its smaller models by May 5 and of all its cars by May 8, unless it had the rear axles produced by the Eldon Avenue Gear and Axle plant. Late Monday afternoon Judge Canham of the Circuit Court upheld the injunction, ordering the union to

tell its members to return to work and threatening bench warrants and arrest for contempt of court if it did not comply. The outcome is the plant is working again, and the union and management will begin negotiating the firing of the stewards.

The question now is what will happen to the stewards. The six second shift stewards have the reputation of being the most aggressive and militant stewards in the plant. Shutting the plant down is the union's only hammer; going back to work while the issue is negotiated takes it away. Perhaps the prediction of the Eldon Wildcat, an independent workers ~~publi~~ newspaper, will come true: "But most wildcats turn out to be no more than a way of blowing off steam. Usually everybody goes back in a day or two with nothing ~~gained~~ changed except a few good men aren't around anymore."

## Statement of Fact

In regards to the discharge of Brother Jordon U. Sims, committee Chairman for his alleged leadership role in the work stoppage of May 1, 1970, we, the undersigned agree that these are true statements of fact.

Afternoon shift, Friday, May 1, 1970. A special meeting of our Bargaining Committee or most of them, were called into an emergency meeting with top people of local management, Anderson, Hafner, and Polsgrove. After the meeting opened, it was revealed in the discussion that the meeting was called to discuss proposed disciplinary steps to be taken by local management against local union leadership that were supposed to have caused and led the work stoppage of April 16, 1970. It was also stated at this time by the Company Reps that the Union was not there to bargain on said disciplinary actions contemplated but only to hear or be notified as to what steps were to be taken and to acknowledge and accept at this time. Any discussions or bargaining that the Union may feel is required could be arranged for a later date at the convenience of both parties and at that time and at that time only would management consider going into depth discussion on the proposed disciplinary actions they were considering on this date, May 1, 1970. At this point, all hell broke loose and continued for an extended period of time with no resolution of the differences effected nor any pertinent information from the company as to who was to be disciplined and for how long. This stalemate persisted despite President Richardson and the Committee's attempt to defray any action on the part of either party until the following Monday, May 4, 1970, when the Union would be prepared to deal with a problem of such magnitude that was presented on such short notice and at that time, the Company could take any steps it deemed necessary in fulfilling it's obligations.

Because of the arbitrary attitude exhibited by local management, the President, on behalf of the entire committee present, issued the ultimatum to the Company present, that if management refused his fair offer to bargain reasonably on the issues at hand, refused to grant the reasonable time for notification and preparation as requested, and insisted in going ahead with the arbitrary discharge or discharges of leadership or members of our local union, their plant would be shut down and management would have no one to blame but themselves! The meeting was adjourned.

All afternoon leadership not present were ordered cleared from the plant by Bro. Richardson to C. Polsgrove and V. Anderson for Union business and they met in a special meeting at our hall. The instructions given them by Bro. Richardson and the bargaining Committee was that if any one is fired for April 16, 1970, the plant was to be shut down. The plant went down that night, May 11, 1970. Twelve (12) Union Reps were fired!

It is our contention that Brother Sims was doing his share to carry out the program as advocated by our leadership in this situation and that it would be unjust and untrue to even insinuate that anyone individual did more or less than their fair share or best to carry out our local union program in this matter.

Sincerely,