

# DETROIT REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT RECORDS

BOX 5 OF 16

FOLDER 13

CHRYSLER MACK ONE PLANT  
SAFETY FLYER

# Mack Safety Protest

THE WORKERS' SIDE OF THE STORY

Television, the newspapers, Chrysler Corporation and our union officials have all been telling the public that all the trouble at the Mack Avenue plant was caused by a handful of outside "trouble-makers." We want to set the record straight.

## MACK PLANT UNSAFE

At Mack we have been suffering from unsafe and unhealthy working conditions. At least once or twice a month somebody loses a finger or a hand in a press. (We have often asked the company for exact figures, but they have always refused to release this information to the workers.) Oil drips from the presses all over your clothes. Most of the time the floors are oily and slippery. You have to work surrounded by scrap and slugs on which you can slip and fall and which can cut you.

When it rains outside, it pours inside and you have to work in and walk through puddles everywhere. Stock boxes clog the aisles causing traffic hazards with the hi-los, most of which have faulty brakes. Stacks of steel fall all the time.

When it's hot outside, it's sizzling inside -- particularly in the welding areas where you have to wear heavy protective clothing. The welding fumes are dangerous to health, as are the fumes from the gas hi-los. Welders are always being burned and scarred by the sparks. It is these kinds of conditions and not a handful of "trouble-makers" that caused the "trouble" at Mack.

## WORKER ACTION TAKEN

Workers in the Mack plant have been protesting these problems for a long time. Last fall a diesetter got his head cut in half when slugs jammed up the bolster plate on a press. Other diesetters said that this was a problem they had been complaining about for some time.

At the Local 212 union meeting after the accident some of us from the plant put forward a motion that our local set up a safety committee to investigate health and safety problems, to keep the membership informed about their rights, and to take action to correct the hazardous conditions. *This motion was ruled out of order because we were told that a union safety committee already existed.* To this day we have seen *no evidence that this committee has done a single thing.*

Since then Mack workers have been regularly putting out a publication in the plant on their own called the *Mack Safety Watchdog*, focusing on health and safety problems in the plant, exposing conditions, giving information and informing workers of their rights. This has helped make more people aware of the problems and has led to a very few small improvements.

## CONDITIONS WORSEN

But for the most part things are getting worse. There is no effective program to prevent accidents. Foremen encourage unsafe practices in order to get out more production. Workers are forced to go along by means of threats, bribes, and habit. Whenever a worker refuses to place his hands under a die area or to operate an unsafe press, the foreman puts a probationary employee on the job who cannot refuse. The same thing happens when there is an unbalanced load of steel that could fall and crush you at any moment. When we refuse to do an unsafe job, a worker with even less experience is put in our place.

Time and again workers don't stand up for their rights, even when they are jeopardizing their lives and limbs, because they are afraid of getting fired. The stewards usually don't help because they, too, are afraid of getting fired. Most stewards won't even write grievances. When one press room steward, Malcomb Woods, started backing up his people, he was fired and is still out on the streets even though this happened over two months ago.

Time and again workers have come to union officials and asked for help with our problems. All we ever hear in return is that we should go back to work and let the officials take care of things. People have been getting fired; conditions have been getting worse -- and nobody feels they have anywhere to turn for help. This is what caused the situation at Mack and not a few outside "trouble-makers."

## REAL ISSUES CLOUDED

*The press, the company and the union officials are all trying to cover up the real issues by saying the whole thing was caused by a small outside group called WAM.* The union officials put out a leaflet saying ten "trouble-makers" were causing the whole thing.

Why, then, did it take a thousand union officials from all over the Detroit area to open up the plant? If it was just ten trouble-makers, why was it necessary for the union officials to threaten and beat up any worker who wanted to keep the strike going? Why were so many workers fired?

*Let no one be fooled.* Mack workers who participated in and supported the protest did so because of the conditions in the plant. It was not WAM or any other organization that caused the struggle, but rather the anger of Mack workers at our unsafe and inhuman working conditions.

The press claimed that three Mack workers and seven others planned the whole thing in advance. No matter what anybody says, the hundreds of workers who participated in the struggle did not do so because of anybody's plan. It is an insult to our intelligence to claim otherwise. We do not expect many Mack workers who know our conditions to fall for this.

We know why our enemies try to say the whole thing was caused by a few "trouble-makers." They do this to discredit us. They are trying to hide the fact that it was a genuine workers' protest against the unbearable conditions in the plant.

### UAW OFFICIALS TO BLAME

If any single group must be blamed for our problems at Mack, it is the top UAW officials. We pay ten dollars a month dues; and for it we get no representation in the plant, no protection. We must risk our lives and limbs every time we punch in to work and we have no effective union in the plant that provides any degree of protection or leadership.

The very first time the UAW has come across with a massive show of strength in years was last week when they mobilized a thousand goons on each shift from all over the Detroit area --

not to fight the company, but to break the Mack strike and intimidate the workers. Like we said before, they would not have needed such a show of force -- except that they knew that the sympathy of the overwhelming majority of Mack workers was with the strike! And now UAW officials have stated that they will mobilize their goons again to break any other unofficial strike or workers' action in any auto plant.

### SUPPORT YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

About 60 Mack workers have been fired so far. We call on our Brothers and Sisters at Mack and throughout the UAW to support us in getting our jobs back. There was a strike to correct the conditions and to win the jobs back that was crushed -- not by the police, not by Chrysler, but by the UAW officials. The UAW does not belong to the top officials. It belongs to the entire membership. We must unite and force our union to solve these problems and get everyone's job back, by whatever means necessary.

*We have to take the union away from these company-minded officials and return it to the rank and file membership so that it can become a fighting organization for us instead of against us!*

### CHRYSLER IS TARGET

Chrysler has just been chosen by the UAW as the 1973 strike target. After all the talk by UAW officials about harmony between the union and the companies, it looks like there will be a strike after all. Is it because our union officials have finally got the message about how bad things are? Is it because they are finally ready to lead a fight to improve our conditions, our wages, our lives?

The UAW officials are looking worse and worse in the eyes of the rank and file. These officials know that if they want to hold on to their jobs, they will have to convince the membership that they are something more than a pro-company goon squad. This is the pressure on the UAW officials to call a strike. This is the pressure on them to try to win at least a few small concessions.

But if the membership wants any progress toward a decent contract, we will have to be on our toes and let the UAW officials know that we will turn down any contract that doesn't meet our needs in the areas of safety, working conditions, wages, job security, discrimination, and so forth. *In particular, the UAW membership should let the officials know that no contract will be approved until the workers are rehired who took action to bring public attention to our unbearable working conditions in the plants.*

Unity of auto workers can win us a decent contract and can win the reinstatement of those who were willing to risk their jobs for the betterment of all.

CONCERNED MACK AVE. WORKERS

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