

DETROIT REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT RECORDS

BOX 5 OF 16

FOLDER 23

WORKMENS COMPENSATION
JOHNSON CASE 1973 NEWS
RELEASES CLIPPINGS

The working people of the City of Detroit recently enjoyed
a particularly sweet victory,

~~NEWS RELEASE~~

The recent decision of the Workmen's Compensation Bureau awarding Workmen's Compensation benefits to James Johnson, Jr., has again focused attention on Chrysler's Corporation's troubled and turbulent Eldon Avenue Gear and Axle plant. Hearing Referee John Conley held that the racist practices of Chrysler management along with the dangerous and unsafe working conditions in the Eldon plant drove James Johnson to the insane act of shooting and killing ~~three other employees.~~ ^{2 foremen and a jobsetter.}

~~It is important to understand that~~ The James Johnson incident did not arise out of a vacuum, but instead was connected and related to a series of strikes and protests of the same racism and unsafe working conditions that broke James Johnson, Jr.. A number of workers were fired from Eldon in April and May 1970 in a series of wildcat strikes and six of them- Fred Holsey, Jordan Sims, John Taylor, James Edwards, Robert McKee and Alonzo Chandler- were never reinstated to their jobs. Subsequent events have vindicated the actions of the discharged workers, and on Thursday, March 15, 1973, UAW President Leonard Woodcock will be given a written request that the reinstatement of Sims, Taylor, Edwards, McKee and Chandler be an important demand in the Union's 1973 contract negotiations with Chrysler Corporation. The request will be presented by some of the fired employees and a representative group of UAW members.

Against

The same foreman who fired Johnson after his vacation frequently called him "boy" and "nigger." This same foreman bypassed Johnson, in June, 1970, for promotion for openly racist reasons, a fact that Chrysler did not even attempt to rebut.

The case on behalf of Johnson was tried by Ronald Glotta and Michael Adelman of Detroit. Upon learning of the decision they stated:

"This landmark decision is a direct indictment of the racism and inhumane working conditions at Chrysler. Chrysler pulled the trigger which resulted in Johnson's insanity and the death of three fellow employees."

The attorneys added:

"Blue Collar Blues only begins to betray the harsh and unsafe conditions which exist in the automobile plants today. Johnson was a good worker; he needed his job. But, the conditions at Eldon wore him down and drove him mad."

The reaction to the Johnson decision has followed political lines. The UAW has been conspicuously silent. The Detroit daily newspapers have issued long editorials in an attempt to protect Chrysler. The daily newspapers have placed extraordinary pressure on the Appeal Board to reverse the Johnson decision, which is clearly supported by precedent in Michigan.

Meanwhile, it is hoped that the Johnson case will become the spearhead for a new effort to improve working conditions not only in the Eldon Plant but in all plants in the United States. In connection with this effort, a number of workers who were fired from Eldon in January of 1969 and April and May, 1970, because they protested the very conditions which lead to Johnson's breakdown, are seeking reinstatement to their jobs. These workers, Fred Holsey, Jordan Sims, John Taylor, James Edward, Robert Magee and Alonzo Chandler, were fired from Eldon in a series of wildcat strikes and never reinstated to their jobs. Subsequent events have indicated their actions.

The group will present the following facts concerning events at Eldon plant in support of their position that their actions, for which they were fired, have been vindicated and justified:

1) A May 26, 1970 inspection of the plant by UAW Safety Director Lloyd Utter who stated in his report "complete neglect of stated maintenance procedures in this plant. The equipment is being operated in an inexcusably dangerous condition."

2) August, 1970 a Local contract was negotiated by the Union and Chrysler in which the Corporation stated "We are aware of a number of safety and housekeeping items needing attention and some major items are set out in this exhibit." The agreement contained 167 items promised to be rectified by October 1970.

3) A November 12, 1970 report by Lloyd Utter, UAW Safety Director indicating no correction of money of the items in the Local Agreement and which concluded "There seems to be no concern about housekeeping in this plant and the safety program reflects this lack of concern".

4) A September 1970 decision of NLRB Director Jerome Brooks who investigated the firings of Taylor, Chandler, McKee and Edwards and stated in part that "investigation disclosed that safety conditions were not of maximal quality".

5) A January, 1971 inspection of the Eldon plant by the Bureau of Safety and Regulation, Michigan Department of Labor, which revealed hundreds of violations of the State's safety code.

6) Enactment of the Federal Occupational Health and Safety Act which reflected increasing national concern with the thousands of workers killed on the job each year, and the millions of others who suffer disabling injuries while working.

7) The November 1971 civil rights decisions of Judge W. Philip Colista in the Fred Holsey case. Judge Colista held that Holsey's discharge was a racist act by Chrysler Corporation and he also stated in the decision that "safety conditions at the Eldon plant were abominable".

8) The above mentioned Workmen's Compensation decision in the James Johnson case in which the referee specifically held that racism and unsafe working conditions were responsible for Johnson's killing of three other employees.

9) A March 8, 1973 lead editorial of the Detroit News which stated "it is also true that racial conditions at the Chrysler plant were probably not ideal".

Fred Holsey, Jordan Sims, John Taylor, James Edwards, Alonzo Chandler and Robert McKee point to all these creditable and verified statements and ask "why were we fired? And why have we not been given our jobs back?"

These are the questions that will be put to Leonard Woodcock on Thursday at and it is hoped his response will be positive.

The attorneys who represented James Johnson before the Bureau of Workmen's Compensation, Ronald Glotta and Michael Adelman, will be on hand to represent the workers calling for this action.

"This landmark decision is a direct indictment of the racism and inhumane working conditions at Chrysler. Chrysler pulled the trigger which resulted in Johnson's insanity and the death of three fellow employees."

The attorneys added:

"The term 'Blue Collar Blues' only begins to portray the harsh and unsafe conditions which exist in the automobile plants today. Johnson was a good worker, he needed his job. But, the conditions at Eldon wore him down and drove him mad."

The workmen's compensation decision shifts the burden of economic responsibility from the taxpayers of Michigan, who have been paying for Johnson's incarceration and treatment, to the real culprit, Chrysler Corporation.

NEWS CONFERENCE

March 6, 1973

1:30 p.m.

GLOTTA, ADELMAN & DINGES

1529 Broadway, 4th Floor

Detroit, Michigan 48226

Contact for more information: 964-1190

NEWS RELEASE

March 6, 1973 - In a 28 page Opinion, Referee John J. Conley of the Michigan Bureau of Workmen's Compensation ordered that Chrysler Corporation pay workmen's compensation benefits to James Johnson, Jr., dating back to July 16, 1970.

On July 15, 1970, Johnson, who was employed by Chrysler at its Eldon Ave. Gear and Axle Plant, shot and killed two foremen and a fellow employee. Johnson was subsequently found not guilty by Reason of Insanity.

Johnson was represented by the law offices of GLOTTA, ADELMAN & DINGES in his attempt to get workmen's compensation benefits.

The workmen's compensation decision holds that the psychotic episode which led to the shootings was caused by the job conditions, racism, and inhumane bureaucracy prevalent at the Eldon Chrysler Plant. Chrysler failed to rebut any of Johnson's testimony concerning harassment of him by Chrysler representatives, including racial slurs, discriminatory job assignments, and unsafe working conditions.

In addition to paying Johnson \$75.00 per week from July 16, 1970, until further order of the Bureau of Workmen's Compensation, Referee Conley ordered Chrysler to furnish Johnson with psychiatric treatment, including counseling and group therapy.

The case on behalf of Johnson was tried by Ronald Glotta and Michael Adelman. Upon learning of the decision; they stated:

JAMES JOHNSON, JR., WINS WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION CASE

The working people of the City of Detroit recently enjoyed a particularly sweet victory. In a twenty-eight page, landmark opinion, Referee John J. Conley of the Michigan Bureau of Workmen's Compensation ordered that Chrysler Corporation pay workmen's compensation benefits to James Johnson, Jr., dating back to July 16, 1970, and pay for all psychiatric care of James Johnson.

On July 15, 1970, Johnson, who was employed by Chrysler at its Eldon Ave. Gear and Axle plant in Detroit, shot and killed two foremen and a fellow employee. Johnson was subsequently found not guilty by reason of insanity. Conley held that the racist and inhumane practices of Chrysler management, along with the dangerous and unsafe working conditions in the Eldon plant, drove James Johnson to the insane act of shooting and killing three other employees. In addition to paying Johnson \$75.00 per week from July 16, 1970, until further order of the Bureau of Workmen's Compensation, Referee Conley ordered Chrysler to furnish Johnson with psychiatric treatment, including counseling and group therapy.

The James Johnson incident did not arise out of a vacuum, but instead was connected and related to a series of strikes and protests of the same racist, inhumane and unsafe working conditions that have occurred not only at the Eldon plant but in almost every other automobile manufacturing plant in

the United States. Six months after the Johnson incident, a member of plant management at Eldon admitted that the production level at that plant was "beyond its physical capacity." In a related case, Judge Philip Colista of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission described safety conditions at Eldon as "abominable."

In June, 1970, Johnson took an authorized vacation. When he returned to work, he discovered that he was fired for taking that same vacation. He was eventually reinstated, although the experience filled Johnson with a great deal of insecurity.

The same foreman who fired Johnson after his vacation frequently called him "boy" and "nigger." This same foreman bypassed Johnson, in June, 1970, for promotion for openly racist reasons, a fact that Chrysler did not even attempt to rebut.

The case on behalf of Johnson was tried by Ronald Glotta and Michael Adelman of Detroit. Upon learning of the decision they stated:

"This landmark decision is a direct indictment of the racism and inhumane working conditions at Chrysler. Chrysler pulled the trigger which resulted in Johnson's insanity and the death of three fellow employees."

The attorneys added:

"Blue Collar Blues only begins to betray the harsh and unsafe conditions which exist in the automobile plants today. Johnson was a good worker; he needed his job. But, the conditions at Eldon wore him down and drove him mad."

The reaction to the Johnson decision has followed political lines. The UAW has been conspicuously silent. The Detroit daily newspapers have issued long editorials in an attempt to protect Chrysler. The daily newspapers have placed extraordinary pressure

on the Appeal Board to reverse the Johnson decision, which is clearly supported by precedent in Michigan.

Meanwhile, the Johnson case will become the spearhead for a new effort to improve working conditions not only in the Eldon Plant but in all plants in the Detroit area. In connection with this effort, a number of workers who were fired from Eldon in January of 1969 and April and May, 1970, because they protested the dangerous working conditions which lead to Johnson's breakdown, are seeking reinstatement to their jobs. These workers, Fred Holsey, Jordan Sims, John Taylor, James Edward, Robert MaKee and Alonzo Chandler, were fired from Eldon in a series of wildcat strikes and never reinstated to their jobs. Subsequent events have vindicated their actions.

As a result of the Johnson decision, the discharged Eldon workers, as well as their supporters, are pushing UAW President Leonard Woodcock, to include in the Union's 1973 contract demands a demand that not only these but every UAW worker who has been discharged for protesting these conditions be reinstated to his or her job. They also are asking that the language of Section 502 of the National Labor Relations Act, protecting the rights of workers to withhold services because of abnormally dangerous working conditions, be included as a demand for all UAW contracts.

The Johnson victory is an important victory for all people who are in struggle against the exploitive and oppressive working conditions perpetuated by the corporations today in the United States. This victory can become even more meaningful if it is

seen as the result of a united effort by many people and used to launch an even greater effort to fight the racist and unsafe working conditions which drove James Johnson to the insane act of shooting and killing three other employees.

As a result of the Johnson decision, the discharged Eldon workers, as well as their supporters, are pushing UAW President Leonard Woodcock, to include in the Union's 1973 contract demands a request that not only these but every UAW worker who has been discharged for protesting these conditions be reinstated to his or her job. They also are asking that the language of Section 502 of the National Labor Relations Act, protecting the right of workers to withhold services because of abnormally dangerous working conditions, be included as a demand for all UAW contracts.

The Johnson victory is an important victory for all people who are in struggle against the exploitive and oppressive working conditions perpetuated by the corporations today in the United States. This victory can become even more meaningful if it is seen as the result of a united effort by many people and used to launch an even greater effort to fight the very conditions which drove James Johnson to the insane act of shooting and killing three other employees

James Johnson, Jr., wins Workmen's Compensation Case

In a twenty-eight page, landmark opinion, Referee John J. Conley of the Michigan Bureau of Workmen's Compensation ordered that Chrysler Corporation pay workmen's compensation benefits to James Johnson, Jr., dating back to July 16, 1970 *and pay for all psychiatric care of James Johnson.* On July 18, 1970, Johnson, who was employed by Chrysler at its Eldon Ave. Gear and Axle plant in Detroit, shot and killed two foreman and a fellow employee. Johnson was subsequently found not guilty by reason of insanity. Conley held that the racist and inhumane practices of Chrysler management, along with the dangerous and unsafe working conditions in the Eldon plant, drove James Johnson to the insane act of shooting and killing three other employees. In addition to paying Johnson \$75.00 per week from July 16, 1970, until further order of the Bureau of Workmen's Compensation, Referee Conley ordered Chrysler to furnish Johnson with psychiatric treatment, including counseling and group therapy.

The James Johnson incident did not arise out of a vacuum, but instead was connected and related to a series of strikes and protests of the same racist, inhumane and unsafe working conditions that have occurred not only at the Eldon plant but in almost every other automobile manufacturing plant in the United States. Six months after the Johnson incident, a member of plant management at Eldon admitted that the production level at that plant was "beyond its physical capacity." In a related case, Judge Philip Colista of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission described safety conditions at Eldon as "abominable."

In June, 1970, Johnson took an authorized vacation. When he returned to work, he discovered that he was fired for taking that same vacation. He was eventually reinstated, although the experience filled Johnson with a great deal of insecurity.

James Johnson, Jr., wins Workmen's Compensation Case

In a twenty-eight page, landmark opinion, Referee John J. Conley of the Michigan Bureau of Workmen's Compensation ordered that Chrysler Corporation pay workmen's compensation benefits to James Johnson, Jr., dating back to July 16, 1970 *and pay for all psychiatric care of James Johnson.* On July 15, 1970, Johnson, who was employed by Chrysler at its Eldon Ave. Gear and Axle plant in Detroit, shot and killed two foreman and a fellow employee. Johnson was subsequently found not guilty by reason of insanity. Conley held that the racist and inhumane practices of Chrysler management, along with the dangerous and unsafe working conditions in the Eldon plant, drove James Johnson to the insane act of shooting and killing three other employees. In addition to paying Johnson \$75.00 per week from July 16, 1970, until further order of the Bureau of Workmen's Compensation, Referee Conley ordered Chrysler to furnish Johnson with psychiatric treatment, including counseling and group therapy.

The James Johnson incident did not arise out of a vacuum, but instead was connected and related to a series of strikes and protests of the same racist, inhumane and unsafe working conditions that have occurred not only at the Eldon plant but in almost every other automobile manufacturing plant in the United States. Six months after the Johnson incident, a member of plant management at Eldon admitted that the production level at that plant was "beyond its physical capacity." In a related case, Judge Philip Colista of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission described safety conditions at Eldon as "abominable."

In June, 1970, Johnson took an authorized vacation. When he returned to work, he discovered that he was fired for taking that same vacation. He was eventually reinstated, although the experience filled Johnson with a great deal of insecurity.

As a result of the Johnson decision, the discharged Eldon workers, as well as their supporters, are pushing UAW President Leonard Woodcock, to include in the Union's 1973 contract demands a request that not only these but every UAW worker who has been discharged for protesting these conditions be reinstated to his or her job. They also are asking that the language of Section 502 of the National Labor Relations Act, protecting the right of workers to withhold services because of abnormally dangerous working conditions, be included as a demand for all UAW contracts.

The Johnson victory is an important victory for all people who are in struggle against the exploitive and oppressive working conditions perpetuated by the corporations today in the United States. This victory can become even more meaningful if it is seen as the result of a united effort by many people and used to launch an even greater effort to fight the very conditions which drove James Johnson to the insane act of shooting and killing three other employees

some of the fired employees and a representative group of UAW members.

The group will present the following facts concerning events at Eldon plant in support of their position that their actions, for which they were fired, have been vindicated and justified:

1) A May 26, 1970 inspection of the plant by UAW Safety Director Lloyd Utter who stated in his report "complete neglect of stated maintenance procedures in this plant. The equipment is being operated in an inexcusably dangerous condition."

2) August, 1970 a Local contract was negotiated by the Union and Chrysler in which the Corporation stated " We are aware of a number of safety and housekeeping items needing attention and some major items are set out in this exhibit." The agreement contained 167 items promised to be rectified by October 1970.

3) A November 12, 1970 report by Lloyd Utter, UAW Safety Director indicating no correction of many of the items in the Local Agreement and which concluded "There seems to be no concern about housekeeping in this plant and the safety program reflects this lack of concern".

4) A September 1970 decision of NLRB Director Jerome Brooks who investigated the firings of Taylor, Chandler, McKee and Edwards and stated in part that "investigation disclosed that safety conditions were not of maximal quality".

5) A January, 1971 inspection of the Eldon plant by the Bureau of Safety and Regulation, Michigan Department of Labor, which revealed hundreds of violations of the State's safety code.

6) Enactment of the Federal Occupational Health and Safety Act which reflected increasing national concern with the thousands of workers killed on the job each year, and the millions of others who suffer disabling injuries while working.

7) The November 1971 civil rights decisions of Judge W. Philip Colista in the Fred Holsey case. Judge Colista held that Holsey's discharge was a racist act by Chrysler Corporation and he also stated in the decision that "safety conditons at the Eldon plant were abominable".

8) The above mentioned Workmen's Compensation decision in the James Johnson case in which the referee specifically held that racism and unsafe working conditions were responsible for Johnson's killing of three other employees.

9) A March 8, 1973 lead editorial of the Detroit News which stated "it, is also true that racial conditons at the Chrysler plant were probably not ideal".

Fred Holsey, Jordan Sims, John Taylor, James Edwards, Alonzo Chandler and Robert McKee point to all these creditable and verified statements and ask "why were we fired? And why have we not been given our jobs back?"

These are the questions that will be put to Leonard Woodcock on Thursday at 10:00 a.m. and it is hoped his response will be positive.

We are not the only workers who, in positions of local leadership, have fought against inhumane working conditions and found ourselves on the streets. The James Johnson case vindicates all local workers who have fought against the conditions that drove James Johnson to shoot and kill three Chrysler employees. We call for the reinstatement of all local leaders, whether in the Big 3 or other UAW plants, who have waged this battle.

We demand that the following language from Sec. 502 of the National Labor Relations Act be included in all UAW contracts:

"... nor shall the quitting of labor by an employee or employees in good faith because of abnormally dangerous conditions for work at the place of employment of such employee or employees be deemed a strike..."

The attorneys who represented James Johnson before the Bureau of Workmen's Compensation, Ronald Glotta and Michael Adelman, will be on hand to represent the workers calling for this action.