

# Wartime Strikes

Martin Glaberman



The struggle against the no-strike clause  
in the UAW during World War II

"Through the use of government investigations of wartime strikes, the recollections of many union activists, union proceedings, and the press of the epoch, he has recreated both the nature of shop floor controversies and group rivalries which produced the strikes and the political history of the conflict within the union over the consummation of the pledge. His insights are greatly augmented by his own personal experience. His assessment of the various political groups involved is remarkably objective and even self-critical for a participant."

David Montgomery

"...will prove to be the definitive study of wildcat strikes in auto."

Frank Marquart





Shift change at the Ford Rouge plant. (Ford Archives)

# **WARTIME STRIKES**

**The Struggle Against the No-Strike Pledge  
In the UAW During World War II**

**Martin Glaberman**

**bewick/ed  
Detroit, Michigan  
1980**

To  
Jessie

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by

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starting wildcat strike, 1943.  
Detroit News photo.

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# FOREWORD

Two objectives are intended in this study of strikes in the American auto industry during World War II. The first is to present the history of the struggle against the no-strike pledge in the United Auto Workers of America (UAW) and the organization of the Rank and File Caucus. This is a history which has considerable significance in understanding the American labor movement and the American working class, and it has not yet been recorded.

The second is an analysis of the question of working class consciousness in the light of this experience. The study of the wildcat strikes during World War II provides a valuable and distinct angle of vision from which to examine a question that has concerned labor scholars, Marxists and labor activists for as long as people have been concerned with the nature of the working class. What is the nature of working class consciousness and how does it relate to the question of whether the working class has the capacity to transform modern society?

The record of strikes during the second World War, which saw more strikes than at any other time in the history of the American working class, and a referendum of the membership of the United Auto Workers Union on the subject of a pledge not to strike, provide a unique opportunity to compare and to contrast working class activity with working class statements of belief. The events described tend to contradict the received wisdom of both social scientists and political activists.

Hopefully, this study will be useful to all who are interested in the American working class.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have received various kinds of assistance and encouragement in the preparation of this study. I am deeply appreciative of the support and encouragement of Robb Burlage and Leonard Rodberg of the Union Graduate School and the

Public Resource Center. I am grateful to George P. Rawick, Staughton Lynd, Frank Marquart, David Montgomery and Ken Lawrence for comments, criticism and advice.

The staff of the Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs of Wayne State University were more than courteous and cooperative — their assistance was invaluable.

Archival research, however, is not without its hurdles and barriers. Frank Marquart, for many years a labor educator of note and the author of *An Auto Worker's Journal*, wrote to me after reading the draft of this book: "You were luckier than I was — you were allowed access to the UAW oral histories. I was denied that privilege on the ground that I am not an accredited scholar. . . . I could have added another meaty chapter to my book if I had been allowed to pore through some of those oral histories, especially those that were recorded by people from Locals for which I worked. Such is life. . . ." (Letter of August 9, 1976.) The restrictions on access to the oral histories were established by an academic committee separate from the staff of the Wayne State University Archives and these restrictions have since been relaxed. However, the problem remains. Donors, academics and others often restrict access to archival records. That union and labor records should not be available, not just to scholars, but to any working man or woman seems to me to be an inversion of the purpose and meaning of labor archives.

I am also appreciative of the assistance of the staff of the library of the John F. Kennedy Institute of American Studies of the Free University of Berlin.

In a broader perspective, I owe to C. L. R. James much of the political views and methodology which inform this study. To comrades and colleagues in the struggle in the UAW, to Johnny Zupan, Jack Palmer, Jessie Glaberman, Morgan Goodson and others whom I would only embarrass by naming, I owe what I have learned about the working class and the labor movement.

# 1

## TAKING THE PLEDGE

In mid-June of 1941 a strike was called at the Philadelphia plant of Phillie Cigars (America's 5¢ Cigar). It was organized by a CIO union to gain recognition and improved conditions for the cigar workers. These were mostly women, working for less than \$12 a week, in a plant where heat and humidity were kept artificially high to protect the tobacco leaf and where rest periods were supposed to be used to clean the machines of tobacco scraps. The union organizer had come down from New York. He was sympathetic to the policies of the Communist Party.

On June 22, 1941 the German army crossed the border into the Soviet Union, ending the period of the Hitler-Stalin pact. The following day the union organizer called off the strike. The women, who had felt close to victory, continued picketing for the remainder of the day, knowing that without the support of the union their cause was lost. Many of them cried as they picketed. It was years before the workers in that plant would have anything to do with a union again.<sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of December in 1941, a strike was begun at the Spring Perch Company in Lackawanna, N.Y., a manufacturer of springs for Army trucks and tractors. On December 7, 1941 Japanese forces attacked Pearl Harbor. On the following day the strike was called off "in view of the grave and serious change in the international situation."<sup>2</sup> Strikes were also called off at a shell loading plant in Ravenna, Ohio,<sup>3</sup> and at an ordnance plant in Morgantown, W.Va.<sup>4</sup>

In this way did two wings of the American labor movement react to military invasions. The reaction, however, was far from representative of what workers did on those occasions. More and larger strikes continued than were called off.

One strike call for a national strike of welders by an independent union, called off on December 7, was renewed on December 8.<sup>5</sup> The most disciplined and consistent response came from the top leadership of organized labor.

Almost all elements in the labor movement rushed to pledge support for the war and to pledge labor peace. Perhaps the most hysterical response came from the New Jersey State CIO, a body with substantial Communist influence, which was meeting in convention at the time of Pearl Harbor. "The convention pledged 'every needed sacrifice of our labor, our fortunes and our lives to defeat this new menace to our national security.'

"Wild excitement pervaded the hall, and the 579 delegates were on their feet stamping and screaming, as the resolution hastily drawn by the resolutions committee was adopted without a dissenting vote."<sup>6</sup> The convention also attacked John L. Lewis as "subversive of the national security of our country."<sup>7</sup> Presumably this was for the successful 1941 mine strike which gained union security in the captive mines owned by the steel and railroad companies and for Lewis' refusal to give uncritical support to the Roosevelt administration's moves toward war.

Most of the labor leadership reacted quickly, but more moderately, to the new situation created on December 7, 1941. William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), called a meeting of the AFL Executive Council for December 9 to deal with the situation. In the meantime he said, "Labor knows its duty. It will do its duty, and more. No new laws are necessary to prevent strikes. Labor will see to that. American workers will now produce as the workers of no other country have ever produced."<sup>8</sup>

In a radio speech on December 8, Philip Murray, president of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), said that CIO members "were ready and eager to do their utmost to defend our country against the outrageous aggression of Japanese imperialism, and to secure the final defeat of the forces of Hitler." He was, however, careful to note that "they of course expect reciprocity, and that no selfish advantage will be taken of the sacrifices they are prepared to make."<sup>9</sup>

It should be noted at this point that the somewhat greater concern for the rights of their members evidenced in

the CIO statement offering the sacrifices of the workers proved to be purely verbal. In the event, it was the AFL which clung a bit more tenaciously to traditional union rights such as overtime pay.

John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers (at that time a member of the CIO), joined the chorus with a statement supporting the government and the war effort.

The International Executive Board of the United Automobile Workers (CIO) was meeting in New York City during these first days of war. It passed a resolution, made public by the president of the union, R. J. Thomas, which pledged support of the government and assured uninterrupted production.<sup>10</sup>

On December 11, 1941, President Roosevelt called for a meeting of twenty-four representatives of labor and industry to reach agreement on a war labor policy that would "prevent the interruption of production by labor disputes during the period of the war."<sup>11</sup> In advance of this meeting, the AFL Executive Council on December 15 unanimously voted a no-strike policy in war industries.<sup>12</sup> On the following day, the *N.Y. Times* reported, 100 leaders of AFL unions extended that policy to their entire 5 million membership.<sup>13</sup>

The meetings of the labor and management representatives (separately, at the start) began on December 17.<sup>14</sup> Out of these meetings came an unconditional no-strike pledge from organized labor and a no-lockout pledge from management. The meetings, however, foundered on the refusal of the management representatives to accept any kind of union security. The unions, on the other hand, could not afford to give up some form of union security going into a period when they were likely to win very little for their memberships.<sup>15</sup> Roosevelt, although disappointed at the failure to agree, simply accepted those points on which there had been agreement and dismissed the conference. He rejected "industry's demand that the closed shop be ruled out as an arbitrable question." The President codified the conclusions of the conference as follows:

"1. There shall be no strikes or lockouts.

"2. All disputes shall be settled by peaceful means.

"3. The President shall set up a proper War Labor Board to handle these disputes."<sup>16</sup>

The leaders of labor rushed to accept the President's decision and agreed to serve on the War Labor Board, a board that recreated the National Defense Labor Board with equal representation for labor, management and a mythical public (that is to say, the government). This was rather a precipitous retreat, despite the modest victory on union security,\* since it was only at the beginning of December 1941 that Murray of the CIO and the Steelworkers and Kennedy of the Miners had destroyed the old tri-partite National Defense Labor Board by confirming their resignations and refusals to serve as a result of the board's rejection of union security for the UMW in the captive mine strike.<sup>17</sup> The miners, in other words, had won union security by destroying the board.

One of the interesting aspects of the adoption of the no-strike pledge was that no union bothered to consult its membership in advance, and very few bothered to consult

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\*The victory was for the unions but not necessarily for working people.

"By and large, the maintenance of a stable union membership makes for the maintenance of responsible union leadership and responsible union discipline, makes for keeping faithfully the terms of the contract, and provides a stable basis for union-management cooperation for more efficient production. If union leadership is responsible and cooperative, then irresponsible and uncooperative members cannot escape discipline by getting out of the union and thus disrupt relations and hamper production. . . .

"The time, thought, and energy given in tense struggles for the organization, maintenance of membership, and collection of dues, necessary and educationally valuable as they are, should as fairly and wisely as possible now be concentrated on winning the war." Public member Frank P. Graham in Republic Steel Corporation, etc., 1 *War Lab. Rep.* 325, 340-41, July 16, 1942. Quoted in Seidman, see note 15, page 101.

Naturally, there is not a word in all this about making union leaders more responsible to their members or about subjecting union bureaucrats to the discipline of their members. These views, which are virtually universally held among union officials, government officials, labor relations people and most corporate executives, are eloquent testimony to the fact that union members are assumed to be more radical than union leaders. These views make no sense on any other assumption.

afterward.

One of the unions that did consult its membership, although a more accurate description of the process would be to sell its membership, was the UAW. At a meeting of the UAW Executive Board in Cleveland on March 28, 1942, the UAW leaders displayed hardly any confidence in the patriotism and willingness to sacrifice of the auto workers.

President Thomas recommended to the Board the unanimous adoption of this program of the CIO — the giving up of double time for Sundays and holidays as such and that we, however, still insist upon time and one-half for work over 8 hours a day and 40 hours a week.

Secretary Addes pointed out to the Board that the CIO's position was not totally favorable and acceptable to the rank and file. Perhaps because the rank and file did not understand the position of the CIO. Secretary Addes then read to the Board the program that the Defense Employment Committee of the UAW-CIO was advocating. . . . [The "Victory Through Equality of Sacrifice" program.]

Secretary Addes explained that in substance this program of the UAW-CIO's Defense Employment Committee was similar to that of the CIO. The rank and file does not seriously realize or appreciate the grave predicament of our country and, therefore, is not prepared to forfeit its overtime provisions. The Defense Employment Committee does not intend to publicize this program. It merely asks the Board to support it and that a letter of explanation of our position on this question of premium pay for overtime be directed to Donald M. Nelson under the signature of President Thomas.

Secretary Addes also stated to the Board that the Defense Employment Committee proposed calling a national conference of representatives of all our locals to explain this program to our people and obtain their support — That we must give up overtime for Sundays, Saturdays and Holidays as such — That we insist government take steps to prevent inflation which is caused by the rise in the cost of living — That industry's profits be limited — And that in the end if Labor is to sacrifice so must industry. . . .

Secretary Addes reiterated, that the program would not be publicized nor would it be sent out to the locals. The committee is of the opinion that at the National

Conference called to discuss this matter the program be then distributed. Should the Board agree the conference could be called for April 7 and 8 and representation allotted on the basis of per capita tax payment. Further, that the representatives, because of the brevity of time, be *selected* and not *elected* and such representatives be chosen from the bargaining committees and executive officers wherever possible.<sup>18</sup>

The appropriate motions were made (mostly by Addes), supported (mostly by Walter Reuther), and routinely carried. It should be noted that the minutes of the UAW Executive Board are not secret (although they are not widely circulated) and that the formulations used in reporting discussions are often self-serving. In any case, the Board decided to combat the lack of understanding of the membership by refusing to permit them to elect the delegates to the special conference and by refusing to permit either the members or the delegates to study in advance the program that was to be presented to the conference. It might very well be that the tactics used by the leadership in preparing for the April conference were recognition that the ranks of the UAW were aware of the unilateral concessions being made by the leaders of the UAW (and of the CIO and AFL generally) and of growing resistance and growing militancy in the rank and file.<sup>19</sup>

John McGill, a delegate from the Flint, Mich., Buick local, recalled that

There was much opposition to [the Equality of Sacrifice program] at that time. In fact, we thought we had it beat at one time and we adjourned for lunch and the heads got together and came back and shot the big guns off in the afternoon and undid everything that we did before noon. . . . They finally put it to a vote in the afternoon and we lost out. I was one of the opposition to the Equality of Sacrifice program. . . . George Addes<sup>20</sup> . . . [came] to me and asked me not to speak against it and I refused. I told him that if I could get the floor, I was certainly going to represent the local union that sent me down here and that was for the purpose of defeating the Equality of Sacrifice program because we figured that there would be no such thing as equality of sacrifice. We just did not believe that.

The only ones that were going to sacrifice would be the workers themselves and the coupon clippers would soon get their take even during wartime. . . . That was our first no-strike pledge. It was not written into the contracts at that time,<sup>21</sup> but I predicted and a lot of other guys predicted at that time that anytime we ever gave up our right to strike, it would eventually be written into our contracts and the GM contract bears that out. . . . The only effective weapon the worker has and we gave it away.<sup>22</sup>

The tactics used at the conference by the leadership included the implication that giving up premium pay for Saturdays and Sundays was conditional on acceptance of the whole program. The Equality of Sacrifice program included a prohibition of war profits, a \$25,000 ceiling on salaries, control of inflation, rationing of necessities, and so on. Just before the vote a letter that President Roosevelt had sent to the conference was read a second time and then Richard Frankensteen, a Vice President of the UAW, shouted at the delegates, "Are you going to tell the President of the United States to go to hell?"<sup>23</sup> The program giving up overtime pay was adopted, with 150 delegates voting in the opposition.

Relinquishing premium pay ultimately proved an embarrassment to the UAW and the CIO. The AFL was not quite as generous and, as a result, in attempts to organize the aircraft industry, the UAW was having difficulty, losing elections to the AFL International Association of Machinists. The difficulties faced by CIO unions, attempting to organize plants against their AFL rivals, ultimately forced on Philip Murray, President of the CIO, the humiliation of having to demand that the government enforce a general ban on premium pay for Saturdays and Sundays, to equalize the situation. Nelson Lichtenstein notes:

A 1942 contest between the UAW and the International Association of Machinists provides a graphic example of this wartime phenomenon. Under the prodding of Walter Reuther and Richard Frankensteen and at the request of the government, the UAW agreed to relinquish certain types of overtime pay in the interests of a general "Victory Through Equality of Sacrifice" program. UAW organizers thought this plan would help organize new war workers through its patriotic appeal. For example they

told Southern California aircraft workers: "The best way (you) can speed up war production, and contribute even more to the war effort, is to join the CIO, which has made this business of winning the war its main objective."

In contrast the machinists' union emphasized wages and hours and the maintenance of overtime pay standards. The IAM attacked the UAW: "Can the CIO's masterminds tell you why they know what's good for the worker better than he knows himself? . . . the CIO sacrifices workers' pay, workers' overtime as the CIO's contribution to the war effort. Big of them, huh?" In a series of 1942 NLRB elections the IAM decisively defeated the UAW on this issue. UAW and CIO leaders who had pitched their election campaigns on an exclusively patriotic level were stunned. In defeat they quickly appealed to the WLB and to the Administration, not to restore overtime pay, but to force the IAM and the rest of the AFL to give it up as well. This FDR soon did by issuing a special executive order on this problem.<sup>24</sup>

It all pointed up the stupidity of one of the arguments of the union leaders in this, as well as the giving up of the right to strike: the government will move against labor in wartime and legally restrict our overtime benefits and our right to strike. To prevent this, the remarkable strategy of surrendering these rights voluntarily was put forward.

This seeming contradiction between the supposedly conservative AFL versus the supposedly militant CIO exposes one facet of what has come to be called "social unionism." The concerns of union leaders (especially such as Walter P. Reuther) who went beyond the traditional bread and butter unionism of the AFL to deal with general social questions have often been misunderstood as a sign of greater militancy. More often, it was simply a tendency to move the labor movement in the direction of incorporation into the structure of the "welfare state." Social unionism represented the demands of the state for the social control of the workers at least as much as it represented the generalized interests of the membership of the unions.

The adoption of the no-strike pledge by the leaders of the major unions seems like a sharper turn in labor policy than it is in reality. The outbreak of war, the public demands of government officials for labor peace, the statements and



**Wartime leaders of the UAW: President R. J. Thomas, Secretary-Treasurer George Addes, Vice Presidents Walter Reuther and Richard T. Frankensteen. (Wayne State University Labor Archives)**

resolutions of labor leaders, the fact that major strikes for union recognition were still taking place, all combine to exaggerate the degree of change involved in the no-strike policy.

The conflict between militant unionists and UAW leaders seeking to limit the independent activity of the membership dates back to the organizing days of the union. Leaders were unhappy when they had to follow the time-table of spontaneous strikes, set by workers who may not even have been members of the union, rather than their own carefully laid plans. The conflict remained after the first contracts were signed. The contracts were brief and the grievance procedures were only sketchily outlined. The initiative in many cases remained with the workers on the shop floor. Departmental wildcats in which all the workers joined with the steward in bargaining on a grievance were both common and effective.<sup>25</sup> The first major step to restrict the right of workers to strike came at General Motors. The leaders of the UAW, including Walter Reuther, Wyndham Mortimer and Homer Martin, reached an understanding with GM on the disciplining of wildcat strikers.<sup>26</sup> The effect of the agreement was to make it easier for the company to fire strikers and to erode the power of workers on the shop floor.

The union moved in two ways to inhibit the right to strike. In the union constitution the right to authorize strikes was ultimately vested in the International Executive Board. Even a legal vote to strike by the membership of a local union was no longer enough. If approval of the Executive Board was not forthcoming, any strike would be wildcat, or illegal. In addition, no-strike clauses were incorporated into contracts with the corporations which prohibited most strikes during the life of the contract.

Article 24 of the 1941 UAW Constitution deals with strikes. The significant sections of that article are as follows:

*Section 2.* If the Local Union involved is unable to reach an agreement with the employer without strike action, the Recording Secretary of the Local Union shall prepare a full statement of the matters in controversy and forward the same to the Regional Director and International President. The Regional Director or his assigned representative in conjunction with the Local Union Committee shall attempt to effect a settlement. Upon failure

to effect a settlement he shall send the International President his recommendation of approval or disapproval of a strike. Upon receipt of the statement of matters in controversy from the Regional Director, the International President shall prepare and forward a copy thereof to each member of the International Executive Board together with a request for their vote upon the question of approving a strike of those involved to enforce their decision in relation thereto. Upon receipt of the vote of the members of the International Executive Board, the International President shall forthwith notify in writing the Regional Director and the Local Union of the decision of the International Executive Board.

*Section 3.* In case of an emergency where delay would seriously jeopardize the welfare of those involved, the International President, after consultation with the other International Officer, may approve a strike pending the submission to, and securing the approval of, the International Executive Board, provided such authorization shall be in writing.

*Section 4.* Before a strike shall be called off, a special meeting of the Local Union shall be called for that purpose, and it shall require a majority vote by secret ballot of all members present to decide the question either way. Wherever the International Executive Board decides that it is unwise to longer continue an existing strike, it will order all members of Local Unions who have ceased work in connection therewith to resume work and thereupon and thereafter all assistance from the International Union shall cease.

Any Local Union engaging in a strike which is called in violation of this Constitution and without authorization of the International President and/or the International Executive Board shall have no claim for financial or organizational assistance from the International Union or any affiliated Local Union.

The International President, with the approval of the International Executive Board shall be empowered to revoke the charter of any Local Union engaging in such unauthorized strike action, thereby annulling all privileges, powers and rights of such Local Union under this Constitution.

The following is an example of the no-strike clause taken from the wartime UAW contract with the Packard

Motor Car Co. It is representative of most such clauses, being rather simpler and briefer than they have since become.

*Article XIII — General*

The Union will not cause or permit its members to cause, nor will any member of the union take part in any strike, either sit-down, stay-in, or any other kind of strike or other interference, or any other stoppage, total or partial, of any of the company operations.

It must be noted that this clause at Packard was more wish than fact. It was widely ignored by Packard workers during the war years. But it did embody the purpose of the union leadership, a purpose they shared with management. In larger corporations, where an umpire was provided under the contract, the strike prohibition was extended absolutely to all subjects on which the umpire was entitled to rule.\*

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\*“Strikes and Stoppages

- “(1) It is the intent of the parties to this Agreement that the procedures herein shall serve as a means for peaceable settlement of all disputes that may arise between them.
- “(2) During the life of this Agreement, the Union will not cause or permit its members to cause, nor will any member of the Union take part in, any sit-down, stay-in or slow-down, in any plant of the Corporation, or any curtailment of work or restriction of production of the Corporation. The Union will not cause or permit its members to cause nor will any member of the Union take part in any strike or stoppage of any of the Corporation’s operations or picket any of the Corporation’s plants or premises until all the bargaining procedure as outlined in this Agreement has been exhausted, and in no case on which the Umpire shall have ruled, and in no other case on which the Umpire is not empowered to rule until after negotiations have continued for at least five days at the third step of the Grievance Procedure and not even then unless sanctioned by the International Union, United Automobile Workers of America, C.I.O. In case a strike or stoppage of production shall occur, the Corporation has the option of cancelling the Agreement at any time between the tenth day after the strike occurs and the day of its settlement. The Corporation reserves the right to discipline any employee taking part in any violation of this Section of the Agreement.
- “(3) The Union has requested this National Agreement in place of

Control of wildcat strikes had been a continuing problem before the outbreak of war. A discussion at a special meeting of the UAW International Executive Board in Detroit on February 7, 1941 is indicative:

The next issue discussed by President Thomas was the various unauthorized strikes or so-called departmental sit-downs which were taking place in a number of the plants. He then related to the Board his recent experience in the Briggs plant at which time one of the Chief Steward [sic] openly flaunted the fact that he just closed his department, without first consulting his superior officers or the International. In view of this instance and similar other minor occurrences Pres. Thomas informed the Board that a letter was issued from his Office stating very definitely that the International would not support nor partake in any future unauthorized strikes. To date, President Thomas was happy to report that apparently the letter had some affect [sic] since no such trouble has been encountered in the plant.

(Considerable discussion followed as to what policy the International Union should adopt in such instances and it was the consensus of opinion that the International had been too lenient and should in the future assume a firm stand on these matters.)<sup>27</sup>

This discussion might support the suspicions that the leaders of the UAW welcomed government pressure on workers to back up their own attempts to maintain labor peace, despite their public opposition to government restrictions on labor. Interesting also in the above minutes is the phrase "superior officers," which suggests a hierarchy in which power starts at the top and diffuses downward.

In addition to their own bureaucratic need to control their members, the actions of CIO leaders were also governed

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independent agreements for each bargaining unit covered hereby. Accordingly an authorized strike in one bargaining unit under this Agreement which results in an interruption of the flow of material or services to operations in any other bargaining unit under this Agreement, will be considered an authorized strike in any such affected bargaining unit."

UAW-GM Contract, June 24, 1940, pages 36-7

by their desire to be incorporated into the state machine.<sup>28</sup> Although this was presented as a desire to achieve labor representation in the government and on government boards, it quickly developed into government representation in the labor movement rather than the reverse. The leader in this tendency was Sidney Hillman of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, a CIO union. With the Roosevelt administration moving rapidly toward war, the President, on May 28, 1940, established a National Defense Advisory Commission. On this commission was Sidney Hillman, "who was to be in charge of labor under the defense program."<sup>29</sup> Hillman's role was indicated by a remark of Roosevelt's at a conference with the NDAC members at the White House: "Sidney, I expect you to keep labor in step."<sup>30</sup> Hillman functioned, at this stage, primarily as a fireman putting down the strikes, wildcat and otherwise, that interfered with the defense program in 1940 and 1941.<sup>31</sup> He became, simply, Roosevelt's representative in the labor movement.<sup>32</sup>

Other CIO leaders, including the officers of the UAW, followed suit as quickly as they were permitted. For example, at a meeting in Boston in November 1942, the UAW International Executive Board voted unanimously to present a three-point program to the coming CIO convention. "Labor organizations should place greater emphasis on participation in the national war problem than on organizing efforts, the UAW declared."<sup>33</sup>

They would appear to their own members, not as leaders who had been elected to represent the interests of their members, but as politicians whose function it had become to get their members to sacrifice for the war effort. They viewed themselves as patriots first and unionists second. In contrast, with very few exceptions, business leaders never permitted patriotism to interfere with profits. The rush of the UAW and CIO officials to be absorbed into the wartime government bureaucracy was in partial contrast to the leaders of the AFL. AFL bureaucrats, in many ways more conservative than the CIO, nevertheless had an older tradition of avoidance of politics and governmental interference. In their simple business unionism way, they at times refrained from making concessions (such as on the premium pay issue) which seemed to benefit corporate profitability more than the war effort. It is

not that they did not participate on government boards and play the role of government bureaucrats. It is that they were a bit more backward about it. Perhaps they were helped in this by the dictatorial nature of most AFL union constitutions and the fact that they needed less help from the government to control their own membership.<sup>34</sup>

A significant exception during this period was John L. Lewis who, before Pearl Harbor, had forced the CIO representatives to withdraw from the National Defense Mediation Board and successfully defied the board to win union security for the miners' union in the captive mines.

# 2

## CHANGES IN THE LABOR FORCE

The war and the war economy brought about significant changes in the structure and composition of the American working class in general and auto workers in particular. It would be useful to examine how the changes in composition influenced the militancy or lack of it of auto workers or, more generally, how these changes affected the consciousness of workers. Precise determinations cannot be made. The figures on changes in working class composition are not overly precise, the categories used in government statistics are not always the most useful ones, and different sets of figures often present related or overlapping categories rather than identical categories. For example, population figures may be available for selected metropolitan areas and not for others. Figures for employment in particular industries would not necessarily coincide with membership in the UAW. In addition to statistical problems, there are the limitations that are inherent in analytical and theoretical determinations.

Nevertheless, with the understanding that what is being discussed is tendencies and trends rather than precise determinations, an examination of work force changes is worthwhile.

There was a complex movement of working people in the United States as a result of the war. The first significant change in the auto work force was substantial unemployment during the period of changeover from peacetime to war production.<sup>1</sup> In the winter of 1942 and early spring, thousands of auto workers paid in unemployment for the refusal of the auto corporations to adjust their production earlier on any basis other than profitability.<sup>2</sup>

The second significant change was the withdrawal of

young men for military service, a process which began before the outbreak of war when the draft was instituted as part of the government's movement toward war. Almost 30% of the Detroit metropolitan area male work force of March 1940 entered military service.<sup>3</sup> This, of course, is not the same as the auto industry work force where, because of deferments for necessary war production, the proportion of draftees is likely to have been smaller.

And then there was a substantial total addition to the auto industry work force brought about both by shifts in employment within the work force in existing areas of residence and employment and by substantial movement from one region of the country to another. Generally speaking, what was involved was the significant addition to the auto work force of women, southern whites, and southern blacks. However, additions to the work force were not limited to these groups and, even in these categories, there were substantial differences from plant to plant and from city to city.

There were increases in women's employment in all categories except for domestic work.<sup>4</sup> By far the most significant increase was in "operatives," that is, factory work, followed by clerical and related occupations. (See Table 1.) Especially interesting, however, is the movement from one occupation to another. In the Detroit-Willow Run area, most women who worked in the auto industry during the war had worked before the war in other types of occupations. "It is clear that the influx of women into the war industries was largely the transfer of positions, rather than the entrance of a new female labor supply."<sup>5</sup> More details on this transfer of positions for the Detroit-Willow Run area are presented in Tables 2-5.

"The U.A.W., representing workers in the auto and aircraft plants, was an important union for women during the war years. Its membership of between 300,000 and 400,000 women represented approximately one third of the total U.A.W. membership during World War II, and the U.A.W. rivaled the United Electrical Workers as the union with the greatest female membership."<sup>6</sup>

It is clear that the picture of housewives rushing to become Rosie the Riveter and rushing back to the home at the end of the war is inaccurate. Most of the women working in

TABLE 1. Comparison of Women's Employment in 1940 and March 1944, by Major Occupation Groups

Occupation group	Employed women in March 1944 (in thousands)	Net changes since 1940		Percentage distribution	
		Number (in thousands)	Percent	1940	March '44
ALL OCCUPATIONS <sup>1</sup>	16,480	+5,340	+48.0	100.0	100.9 <sup>2</sup>
Professional and semi-professional	1,490	+20	+1.2	13.2	9.0
Proprietors, managers, and officials	650	+230	+53.3	3.8	3.9
Clerical and kindred	4,380	+2,010	+84.5	21.3	26.6
Sales	1,240	+460	+58.4	7.0	7.0
Craftsmen, foremen, operatives, and laborers, except farm	4,920	+2,670	+118.7	20.2	29.0
Domestic service	1,570	-400	-20.4	17.7	9.0
Other services	1,650	+390	+30.9	11.3	10.9
Farm workers	560	+90	+18.6	4.2	3.4

1. Figures used for 1940 comprise the employed and also those seeking work who were experienced in the occupation.

2. Total exceeds details, since those in occupations not classifiable are not shown separately.

Source: "Changes in Women's Employment During the War," *Monthly Labor Review*, Nov. 1944, page 1030.

TABLE 2. Number of women employed in 1940 and 1944-45 and percent of increase in Detroit-Willow Run area

Number of employed women		Percent increase 1940 to 1944-45
1940	1944-45	
182,300	387,000	112

Source: "Women Workers in Ten War Production Areas and Their Postwar Employment Plans," U.S. Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau, Bulletin No. 209, Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946, page 29.

TABLE 3. Employment status the week before Pearl Harbor of women employed in 1944-45 in Detroit-Willow Run area

Percentage of wartime-employed women with specified types of employment status the week before Pearl Harbor

Total	<u>In the labor force</u>		<u>Not in the labor force</u>	
	Employed	Unemployed and seeking work	Engaged in own housework	In school
100	51	3	28	18

Source: *Ibid.*

TABLE 4. Length of work experience before 1944-45 of women employed in the war period, Detroit-Willow Run area, by percentages

Total	10 years and over	5, less than 10	3, less than 5	2, less than 3	1, less than 2	less than 1
100	22	17	15	11	14	21

Source: *Ibid.*, page 30.

TABLE 5. Number and proportion of women employed in 1944-45 in Detroit-Willow Run area who were in-migrants

Total number employed	<u>In-migrants</u>	
	number	percent of total
387,000	53,000	14

Source: *Ibid.*

war plants had had earlier experience. Some of those who were new to the labor force (many of those who had previously been students) were also oriented toward paid employment, independent of the war. Many of the women who are counted as housewives before wartime employment are also likely to have been excluded from the labor force for lack of reasonably well-paid employment, rather than their personal desires. In terms of behavior in the factories and on the job, what is indicated is that women were an experienced work force, that is, experienced in terms of relations with bosses and with fellow employees, although the particular traditions and practices of the auto industry may have been new.

This was even more true of black women, a larger proportion of whom were in paid employment both before and during the war. "Nearly 1 in 3 Negro women were employed in 1940, in contrast to 1 in 5 white women. By 1944 the proportion of employed Negro women increased to 2 in 5, while the employed white women increased to almost 1 in 3."<sup>7</sup> However, the improvement in employment did not mean that black women had proportional access to the better-paying jobs of the war industries. More often they replaced white women who had moved from service trades into industry.

Most dominant changes in Negro employment during the 4 years were a marked movement from the farms to the factories, especially to those making war munitions, and a substantial amount of upgrading, but there was little change in the proportions occupied in unskilled jobs.

Slightly over 7 in every 10 employed Negro women were in some service activity in April 1940. The great majority of these (918,000) were domestic employees. After 4 years there was only a slight decrease in the proportion in the services, though a significant internal shift had taken place. While the proportion of domestic employment showed a marked decrease, those occupied in such personal services as beautician, cook, waitress, etc., showed a corresponding increase. The actual number of Negro domestic workers increased slightly between 1940 and 1944, the number in these occupations rising by about 50,000, but this addition was not sufficient to offset the decline of 400,000 among white domestic

employees.<sup>8</sup>

In the auto industry, employment of black women was spotty. In most plants, even those that employed women during the war, they were entirely excluded. In most plants where black women were hired, they were not hired until late in 1942, after the March on Washington movement had forced federal executive action to open defense plants to black workers.

The figures alone, obviously, do not give any indication of the impact of substantial female employment on the activities and consciousness of the working class. Unfortunately, although there has been an increase in interest in working class women during the war years on the part of people in the women's movement, this interest has not yet gone beyond the reporting of what happened to women or what was done to them. What women themselves did, how they acted on the shop floor, has yet to be recorded to any significant degree.

It is possible to piece together certain indications of women's activity. Some auto plants had employed many women before the war. Plants making small parts (AC Spark Plug and Ternstedt Divisions of General Motors, for example) and the cut and sew departments of body plants had employed women before the war. During the war, the proportion of women in any plant varied considerably — the industry-wide average was rarely an indication of the reality in any one plant. It is likely that women functioned differently in situations where they were a small minority (and, generally speaking, dependent on the good will of the male workers), where they were a large minority, and where they were a majority. Both management and union spokesmen used the presence of women as excuse to explain alleged inefficiency — basing themselves on the mythology that working women during the war were essentially middle class housewives who had no industrial discipline.<sup>9</sup> Unions complained that women did not participate in union activities in any great numbers.<sup>10</sup>

It is difficult to judge the extent of women's participation in union activities at this distance. But several things should be noted. The participation of men in union meetings was declining during this same period.<sup>11</sup> (Union leaders



Lunch facilities at a Ford plant, cause of at least one wildcat strike. (Ford Archives)

tended to charge in both cases that the cause was that these were new members who did not understand the union and its struggles from the organizing days. Union leaders are still making these charges today.) There was, among both men and women, more participation in union activity on the shop floor than at the union hall. But shop floor activity (other than steward elections and dues collections) are informal activities which tend to be invisible to bureaucrats. More important for our purposes is the impossibility of equating union activity with militancy, radicalism or political consciousness. There are signs (although these are, admittedly, inadequate) of considerable self-organization, militancy and class struggle in the auto plants during the war years.

One indication of an unwillingness on the part of women workers to subordinate themselves to the demands of management is the practice of organizing production around the need for free time. How widespread it was cannot be measured, but it appears fairly frequently in the recollections of women workers and in the complaints of management. One example is from the Dodge plant in Hamtramck during the war years. The women in a particular department, like most workers working six and seven days, found ways to accomplish the shopping which their work made impossible. They all chipped in to do the work of the restroom matron while she went downtown during working hours with a long shopping list and did the shopping for the whole department.<sup>12</sup> In other cases, it was in-plant services that were involved, hair-cutting and the like, performed by women who had the required skills for women who did not have the time to go to beauty parlors or seamstresses, etc. This was a form of, and extension of, what was generally known as "government work." "Government work," a term which became very general during the years of World War II, was the workers' term for private work. That is, it was work done on company time, with company materials, on company equipment or machines, for the personal use of the worker. (The term seems to me also to embody a rather sophisticated, if cynical, view of the corrupt nature of government contracts.) It involved, whether done by men or women, concealing the work from supervision and, often, a cooperative organization of the required work to make the illegal work possible. It should

be noted in passing that these forms of shop-floor organization and cooperation reflected both the degree of control won by workers just a few years previously in the massive struggles to organize the auto industry and the additional power that workers felt as a result of the labor shortage and the war needs of the government.

There is no evidence available that women refused to take strike action when their fellow workers went on strike. (There is one exception to this: strikes directed against the employment or upgrading of women.) There is also no evidence available that women were more prone to strike action than auto workers generally. There is, however, evidence that some strikes were initiated by women. One such incident is described by Sam Sage, an official of the Wayne County CIO Council, who spent much of his time during the war years attempting to prevent and to break wildcat strikes. He does not indicate the plant involved but he notes that, "On the three-shift operation this caused the second shift, that is the afternoon shift, to get off around 1:30 in the morning. One wildcat that I know of started over the fact that they were getting off at 1:30 and the beer gardens closed at 2:30. They did not get a chance to get to the beer gardens. These were women!"<sup>13</sup>

One of the plants with an extremely high incidence of strikes was Briggs, where, during the war, about 60% of the work force was women.<sup>14</sup> Another example was a wildcat "at the Ford Willow Run plant when women workers refused to wear a company-prescribed suit, 'a blue cover-all thing with three buttons on the back with a drop seat.' When the company began disciplining women who showed up without the suit, the rest of the women struck, and that, apparently, was the end of the suit."<sup>15</sup>

A final determination of the role of women in the wildcat strikes in the auto industry during World War II is not possible at this point. It seems, however, possible to say tentatively that the presence of large numbers of women workers did not significantly alter the level of militancy of the auto workers, either positively or negatively.

A large proportion of auto workers in Michigan and in other parts of the country were migrants from other geographic areas. There seems to have been no uniformity in the

proportions of migrants from certain areas who entered the work force in the north and west. Table 6 indicates the net migration into Michigan by color.

TABLE 6. Estimated net migration by color into Michigan: 1940-50.

White		Nonwhite	
Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent
+146,000	+2.9	+189,000	+87.4

Source: Henry S. Shryrock, Jr., *Population Mobility Within the United States*, Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1964, page 110.

These figures indicate a trend but, since they include over four post-war years during which there may very well have been a much larger black than white migration into Michigan, the trend is not as great as indicated. Table 7 indicates the areas of the country from which white migrants to two Michigan auto centers came. Los Angeles is added by way of comparison.

In the Detroit area, almost one third of the white in-migrants were southerners. The largest single group of in-migrants came from the nearby mid-western industrial states. The proportion of black in-migrants from the south, for which I have no figures, must have been considerably larger since it is not likely that a considerable number of blacks came to Detroit from the northeast or the midwest. However, it is evident that different metropolitan areas showed different migration patterns. Only 16.2% of white in-migrants to Muskegon were from the south, while over three quarters came from the midwest. Centers like Flint, Pontiac, Lansing, etc., had their own patterns. More white southerners came to the towns of the Saginaw valley of east central Michigan than came to western Michigan. Relatively few blacks entered the Muskegon area. More entered the Pontiac-Flint-Bay City area, but fewer, proportionately, than came to the Detroit area.

The areas from which auto workers came do not tell all of the story. Many southerners, black and white, came from agriculture. (See Tables 9, 10, 11 for black employment

TABLE 7. Of Total Influx at Each Center, Percent from Each Section

Centers	Total White Influx	New Eng.	Mid. Atl.	E.N. Cent.	W.N. Cent.	S. Atl.	E.S. Cent.	W.S. Cent.	Moun- tain	Paci- fic	Totals
Detroit- Willow Run	207,240	1.5	13.0	44.4	7.8	6.5	20.5	4.3	0.6	1.3	100.0
Muskegon	19,028	0.3	1.5	76.6	4.4	2.2	7.7	6.3	0.3	0.7	100.0
Los Angeles	758,681	1.9	7.8	15.0	20.6	2.6	2.0	20.0	13.6	16.5	100.0

Source: Lowell Juilliard Carr and James Edson Stermer, *Willow Run: A Study of Industrialization and Cultural Inadequacy*, New York: Harper, 1952, page 359. (See next page for composition of geographic sections.)

TABLE 8. Employment Increase, 1940-44

Area	1940	1944	Increase	Increase over 1940	% of all increase
Detroit-Willow Run	432,000	750,000	318,000	76.3	28.5
Los Angeles	205,000	683,000	478,000	33.1	42.8

Source: *Ibid.*, page 362.

**TABLE 7 Supplement. Composition of Geographic Sections**

<b>New England</b>	<b>Middle Atlantic</b>	<b>East North Central</b>
Maine	New York	Ohio Michigan
New Hampshire	New Jersey	Indiana Wisconsin
Vermont	Pennsylvania	Illinois
Massachusetts		
Rhode Island	<b>South Atlantic</b>	<b>Mountain</b>
Connecticut	Delaware	Montana
	Maryland	Idaho
<b>West North Central</b>	District of Columbia	Wyoming
Minnesota	Virginia	Colorado
Iowa	West Virginia	New Mexico
Missouri	North Carolina	Arizona
North Dakota	South Carolina	Utah
South Dakota	Georgia	Nevada
Nebraska	Florida	
Kansas		
<b>East South Central</b>	<b>West South Central</b>	<b>Pacific</b>
Kentucky	Arkansas	Washington
Tennessee	Louisiana	Oregon
Alabama	Oklahoma	California
Mississippi	Texas	

changes.) But many also came from mining, service trades, lumbering, construction, and so on, with previous experience on hourly rated jobs. One difference between black workers and white workers was that blacks did not gain substantial entry into defense production work until late in 1942. It is probably also true that although both black and white southerners migrated in very different proportions to different war production centers, in the case of whites the difference was more likely to be the workers' choice while in the case of blacks it was more likely to be the result of employers' hiring patterns and union attitudes.

Southern whites, some with union experience, most with none, tended, in my recollection, to be among the most militant workers in the auto industry.\* A number of factors

\*“. . . southern workers were among the most militant, even those who were intensely racist. A southern's idea of the way to settle a quarrel is

TABLE 9. Percentage Distribution of Employed Negroes by Occupation and Sex, April 1940 and April 1944

Occupation	Negro Males			Negro Females		
	April	April	Changes	April	April	Changes
	1940	1944	1940-44	1940	1944	1940-44
Farm workers	41.2	28.0	-13.2	16.0	8.1	- 7.9
Farmers, farm managers	21.3	14.3	- 7.0	3.0	2.9	- .1
Farm laborers	19.9	13.7	- 6.2	13.0	5.2	- 7.8
Industrial workers	17.0	29.7	+ 12.7	6.5	18.0	+ 11.5
Craftsmen, foremen	4.4	7.3	+ 2.9	.2	.7	+ .5
Operatives	12.6	22.4	+ 9.8	6.3	17.3	+ 11.0
Laborers	21.4	20.3	- 1.1	.8	2.0	+ 1.2
Service Workers	15.3	15.1	- .2	70.3	62.5	- 7.8
Domestic service	2.9	1.6	- 1.3	59.9	44.6	-15.3
Protective service	.5	.3	- .2	.....	.....	.....
Personal and other services	11.9	13.2	+ 1.3	10.4	17.9	+ 7.5
Clerical and sales people	2.0	3.0	+ 1.0	1.4	3.9	+ 2.5
Clerical	1.2	2.4	+ 1.2	.9	3.2	+ 2.3
Sales	.8	.6	- .2	.5	.7	+ .2
Proprietors, managers & professional workers	3.1	3.9	+ .8	5.0	5.5	+ .5
Professional, semiprofessional	1.8	1.7	- .1	4.3	4.0	- .3
Proprietors, managers, officials	1.3	2.2	+ .9	.7	1.5	+ .8
TOTAL EMPLOYED NEGROES	100.0	100.0		100.0	100.0	

Source: "War and Post-War Trends in Employment of Negroes," *Monthly Labor Review*, January 1945, page 2.

**TABLE 10. Incidence of Negroes among Total Employed Workers in Specified Occupational Groups, April 1940 and April 1944**

Occupational group	Negro males as percent of total males in occupation		Negro females as percent of total females in occupation	
	<u>April 1940</u>	<u>April 1944</u>	<u>April 1940</u>	<u>April 1944</u>
All employed persons	8.6	9.8	13.8	12.9
Professional, semiprofessional workers	2.8	3.3	4.5	5.7
Proprietors, managers, officials	1.1	2.1	2.6	4.8
Clerical workers	1.6	3.5	0.7	1.6
Sales people	1.1	1.5	1.2	1.1
Craftsmen, foremen	2.6	3.6	2.2	5.2
Operatives	5.9	10.1	4.7	8.3
Domestic service workers	60.2	75.2	46.6	60.9
Protective service workers	2.4	1.7	3.8	....
Personal and other service workers	22.8	31.4	12.7	24.0
Farmers, farm managers	12.4	11.0	30.4	23.8
Farm laborers	21.0	21.1	62.0	21.4
Laborers (excluding farm)	21.0	27.6	13.2	35.6

Source: *Ibid*, page 3.

TABLE 11. Percentage Distribution of Employed Negroes, by Industry and Sex, April 1940 and April 1944

Industry	Negro males			Negro females		
	April 1940	April 1944	Changes 1940-44	April 1940	April 1944	Changes 1940-44
Agriculture	42.0	20.9	-12.1	16.1	8.1	- 8.0
Forestry and fishing	.8	.5	- .3	....	....	....
Mining	1.8	4.2	+ 2.4	....	....	....
Construction	4.9	3.7	- 1.2	.1	....	- .1
Manufacturing	16.2	23.9	+ 7.7	3.2	13.4	+ 10.2
Metals, chemicals, rubber	5.5	13.1	+ 7.6	.2	7.3	+ 7.1
Food, clothing, textiles, leather	2.8	4.7	+ 1.9	1.8	3.9	+ 2.1
All other manufacturing	7.9	6.1	- 1.8	1.2	2.2	+ 1.0
Transportation, communication, public utilities	6.8	10.1	+ 3.3	.2	1.1	+ .9
Trade	9.9	10.9	+ 1.0	4.0	10.5	+ 6.5
Finance, insurance, real estate*	1.9	1.6	- .3	.8	1.3	+ .5
Business and repair services, including auto	1.7	1.5	- .2	.1	.1	....
Domestic and personal service	8.4	6.1	- 2.3	68.6	54.4	-14.2
Amusement, recreation	1.0	.4	- .6	.3	.4	+ .1
Professional services	2.9	3.2	+ .3	6.1	7.5	+ 1.4
Government	1.7	4.0	+ 2.3	.5	3.2	+ 2.7
All employed Negroes	100.0	100.0	....	100.0	100.0	....

Source: *Ibid*, page 4.

\*That is, janitors.

were at work. One element was the individualistic mythology of the south. Southern whites tended much less than any other workers to permit themselves to be pushed around. Their resistance was often individual, but individual resistance in a factory is not the same as individual resistance in other kinds of situations. It is visible to the group. It provides example or encouragement (or discouragement). It often, without this being planned by the participant, becomes the basis for a collective action, as when a worker shoves a foreman, is then disciplined, and a wildcat strike takes place to protest the discipline.

Another factor was the availability of work. Often enough a white worker could quit his job, or be fired, and be back at work at another plant the same day. (This was easier when the worker was fired. If he quit, he could have problems with federal manpower regulations which forbid workers from simply changing jobs at will.)

There was also the element, for many southern whites, of lack of union experience. As with women, while union leaders and management complained that this led to inefficiency and indiscipline,<sup>16</sup> it nevertheless tended toward greater militancy. This provides something of a contradiction to be examined later: the southern whites were probably the most patriotic members of the working class; yet they were probably the least subject to the discipline of war work. Generally speaking, I believe the presence of large numbers of southern white workers in the auto labor force contributed to wildcat strikes, resistance to work discipline and general militancy.

Black workers were in a very different position than white workers, northern or southern. Except for a few companies (Ford and Briggs were the largest examples), black workers were not permitted on production jobs until after the threatened March on Washington forced federal government intervention. Even after black workers entered auto production in significant numbers, there were still limits in upgrading, in the separation of production jobs by departments, and in relative exclusion from certain corporations

\*(continued) to take a squirrel rifle off the wall and 'shoot it out.' When I was with Dodge local the biggest hell raisers were southerns." Frank Marquart, in letter of Nov. 29, 1975, in possession of author.

and certain plants. As a result, black workers did not have the same easy access to new jobs when old jobs were lost. A consequence of this was that black workers were less likely to initiate wildcat strikes than white workers. Wildcat strikes *were* initiated by black workers, especially when the rights of black workers were involved. A major example is a strike by black workers at Dodge to protest the refusal of the Chrysler Corporation to permit black workers to transfer to a new plant on the same basis as whites. And black workers participated in wildcat strikes that took place in the plants in which they worked. (Obviously, with the exception of strikes directed against black workers.) But the militancy of black workers tended to be expressed in other ways than that of white workers. Blacks tended more to be concerned about building up the protection of seniority and less able to use individual resistance. Blacks functioned in the UAW to build up strength, very often in hidden, informal organizations, in ways which had been perfected while living in a hostile white society in the south. Partly because of black pressure and partly because of union policy at the local level, union election slates began to ritualize the role of black members so that certain posts (usually vice-president or secretary) were consistently filled by black candidates. Many of the later higher and secondary black union leaders of the UAW came from this wartime network of experienced black union activists, a large proportion of them from Ford plants.

The presence of large numbers of black workers in the auto plants during the war may very well have acted as a brake on wildcat strikes. But it did not at all act as a brake on the development of radical ideas and opposition to the war. It was a fairly common expression of black workers that they had Hitler and Tojo to thank for their better-paying jobs in industry. Patriotism was of much less significance among black auto workers.

Included among the wartime auto workers was also an indeterminate (although relatively small) number of people who did not bring with them a working class experience. There were middle class and lower middle class men and women, small business people of various types, and a small assortment of unusual and exceptional types brought into the plants by the exigencies of the war — especially, in the

case of men, the desire to avoid the draft.

One such unusual type played a modest role in the struggle over the no-strike pledge. His name was Carl Bolton and he worked at the Ford Highland Park plant (Local 400 of the UAW). It was generally known in the plant that Bolton's pre-war occupation had something to do with the "rackets." That is, he was a small-time crook or con-man or some such character. He went to work in the plant to keep out of the army. He was very bright and very vocal. He quickly became aware of the fact that one way of getting off production was to become active in the union. At this point in the auto industry, it was easier for someone new to the industry to win union office than to get on the supervision track. Bolton succeeded, relatively quickly, in winning union office and was a member of the local executive board and a delegate to the 1944 convention of the union.

It was always intriguing to me that in the years that Bolton functioned as a member of Local 400 there was never the slightest suspicion of any illegal or shady behavior directed at him. He seemed to keep his nose entirely clean in the shop and in the union. In addition, although it is very unlikely that he had any strong or principled political or union beliefs, he was, in the union politics of the time, a left-wing militant. He consistently opposed the no-strike pledge. He frequently encouraged radical left-wing groups, especially the Trotskyists, to write his electoral programs for him. The only conceivable explanation for this was simply his shrewd judgment of the kind of program that would make him attractive to rank-and-file workers. I am sure he would have become a pro-no-strike pledge conservative unionist with equal ease if he thought the road to union office led in that direction. In a small way the experience of Carl Bolton tends to disprove the claims of both management and union officials that American workers were basically patriotic and were misled by agitators running for office. If middle level union officials seemed like militant agitators, it was, often enough, the result of opportunism rather than principle. That is, it was a response to, not a cause of, worker radicalism.<sup>17</sup>

Any conclusions we might draw about the effect of changes in the labor force on wildcat strikes and the no-strike pledge must be tentative. Fundamental aspects of this

question will be considered later on. Much of this depends on the meaning of such ambiguous words as "militancy" and "radicalism." Stan Weir charges that "the rank-and-file groupings that had built the CIO in each workplace had been atomized" in the years from 1940 to 1946.<sup>18</sup> "The coming of war did not strike dumb the people who built the new unionism of the '30's, but it did remove them from the work places and the social combinations inside the shops that were the basis of the organizing drives. Also, it geometrically accelerated the bureaucratization of their unions. They thereby lost a major facility through which they could assimilate their experience with change and in which they had previously been able to bank growing class consciousness."<sup>19</sup> There is no evidence whatever for the "atomization" of the workers who had helped organize the UAW. Some went into the armed forces. Some went into the bureaucracy and helped consolidate it. Too many of the names that appeared during the organizing days, however, reappeared in the wartime wildcats for Weir's thesis to be acceptable.

But more important than the role of the early militants is the estimate of the role of the union. With the rapid bureaucratization of the union during the war years, the relative freedom of the newer workers from the traditions of the union left them free to work out their own forms of militancy and radicalism. But, generally speaking, the difference between the newer and older workers was not that great. Ford had been organized in the spring of 1941, some eight months or so before Pearl Harbor. General Motors had been organized in 1937. What had preceded the wartime period was a mere four years of continuing organizing activity. What happened during the war years, as we shall see, was the rapid bureaucratization of the top, while local union officers, generally speaking, retained close ties to the rank and file. When some of the early militants were railroaded into the army because they were active in the struggle against the no-strike pledge, they retained the support of their fellow union members, no matter how new or old these were.\*

\*Emil Mazey of Briggs and Marlon Butler of Buick are two of the better known examples. "So much did his fellow workers support Emil that they elected him to become East Side Regional Director when he was still in the army on a Pacific base. Only later did Emil learn he had been elected." Letter from Frank Marquart, Nov. 29, 1975, in possession of author.

# 3

## WILDCAT STRIKES

During the first months of American participation in the war there were relatively few strikes. This seems not to have been solely a response to the war and the no-strike pledge. The number of strikes had dropped considerably before Pearl Harbor. 1941 had been a peak year of strikes (see Table 12). But most of the strikes had been concentrated in the first six months of the year. There were major strikes at Allis Chalmers in January and International Harvester in February. On March 19 Roosevelt created the National Defense Mediation Board with considerable powers to attempt to restrain the interference of workers with defense production. In April, however, came the successful strike to organize Ford. In June the federal government intervened directly (with the collaboration of the UAW leaders) to break a strike at North American Aviation in California with the use of military force. (This was the last major strike before the German invasion of Russia and the last one in which local leaders sympathetic to Communist Party policies were involved.)

Strikes declined during the rest of the year. A major exception, however, was the strike of coal miners in the captive mines owned by the steel companies to win the union shop. The National Defense Mediation Board refused to grant the union shop, with the public, industry and AFL<sup>1</sup> representatives voting against the miners. The two CIO representatives voted against the decision. John L. Lewis was able to force them to resign from the board, although CIO leaders had attacked the miners for daring to strike despite the needs of national defense. The CIO representatives were Thomas Kennedy, an official of the UMW directly responsible to Lewis, and Philip Murray, head of the Steelworkers but a former

**TABLE 12. Strikes and Lockouts in the United States**

Year	No. of strikes	No. of workers involved	No. of man-days idle	Percent of total employed
1916	3,789	1,559,917	....	8.4
1917	4,450	1,227,254	....	6.3
1918	3,353	1,239,989	....	6.2
1919	3,630	4,160,348	....	20.8
1920	3,411	1,463,054	....	7.2
1921	2,385	1,099,247	....	6.4
1922	1,112	1,612,562	....	8.7
1923	1,553	756,584	....	3.5
1924	1,249	654,641	....	3.1
1925	1,301	428,416	....	2.0
1926	1,035	329,592	....	1.5
1927	707	329,939	26,218,628	1.4
1928	604	314,210	12,631,863	1.3
1929	921	288,572	5,351,540	1.2
1930	637	182,975	3,316,808	.8
1931	810	341,817	6,893,244	1.6
1932	841	324,210	10,502,033	1.8
1933	1,695	1,168,272	16,872,128	6.3
1934	1,856	1,466,695	19,591,949	7.2
1935	2,014	1,117,213	15,456,337	5.2
1936	2,172	788,648	13,901,956	3.1
1937	4,740	1,860,621	28,424,857	7.2
1938	2,772	688,376	9,148,273	2.8
1939	2,613	1,170,962	17,812,219	4.7
1940	2,508	576,988	6,700,872	2.3
1941	4,288	2,362,620	23,047,556	8.4
1942	2,968	839,961	4,182,557	2.8
1943	3,752	1,981,279	13,500,529	6.9
1944	4,956	2,115,637	8,721,079	7.0
1945	4,750	3,467,000	38,025,000	12.2
1945 (1st 9 mos.)	3,770	2,215,000	13,080,000	....

Source: "Work Stoppages Caused by Labor-Management Disputes in 1945," *Monthly Labor Review*, May 1946, page 720.

UMW official. The consequence of the resignations was the demise of the National Defense Mediation Board. The UMW won its demand through the appointment of a special board to mediate this particular dispute on which the public member was known in advance to be sympathetic to the miners' demand.

When the United States entered the war, strikes were at a low ebb. American workers had been witness, during the preceding year, to two conflicting roads. One was the ability of the American government to break strikes through the use of military force. The other was the ability of workers to stand up to the government and win over the concerted pressure of government, management, press, and labor leaders.\* Some strikes were called off as a result of the outbreak of war, others were not (see chapter 1) but gradually, the number of strikes began to mount.

What was the nature of the increasing number of strikes? They only had two things in common. They were all wildcats, that is, illegal under union rules. None of them involved traditional contract negotiations. Other than these factors, wartime strikes covered a tremendous range of circumstances. But much of the evidence is contradictory.

Some union leaders blamed management provocation or radical agitation.<sup>2</sup> Some management spokesmen blamed union agitators. For example, George Romney, speaking for the auto industry, charged that, "The manpower problem exists principally because the desire of a majority of workers to do more work and get this war over with is being thwarted by an unrestrained militant minority group of workers, stewards and union representatives."<sup>3</sup> It would be useful to indicate in some detail the specific causes or circumstances of certain strikes and the situation of particular plants or areas.

Tool and die shops seem to have been relatively free of wildcat strikes.<sup>4</sup> In western Michigan, Grand Rapids had fewer strikes, proportionately, than Muskegon. Leonard Woodcock, who was an international representative in this area (Region 1D) during World War II, attributes this, in part,

\*Perhaps the difference was not the use of military force by the government but the collaboration of union leaders which made the introduction of troops easier to accomplish.

to the relative conservatism of an area dominated by the Dutch Reformed Church. Muskegon, which had a much smaller influx of southerners, black and white, than Detroit (see Table 7), nevertheless was a center of wildcat strikes. "As a matter of fact, Cannon Foundries — there were four plants in Muskegon all close together — used to vie with the American Can and Foundry in Birwood, Pennsylvania, for the championship of who had the most wildcat strikes during the war years. We did not have that sentiment to the extent that it existed around some other places, such as Chicago, Detroit and so on. . . . I think most of [the strikes] were tied to the incentive systems. . . . There was constant bargaining about rates. This frequently led to hassles and stoppages and as these stoppages began to be productive of results, they became contagious."<sup>5</sup> Testifying before a Senate committee, Richard T. Frankenstein claimed: "I can say to you that to my knowledge there has not been a single strike since the war."<sup>6</sup> Frankenstein's claim is absolute nonsense and I would have to assume that Frankenstein knew it was nonsense when he made it. Woodcock's perception is closer to reality. That is to say, the fact that at least some strikes could be won was in itself an additional cause of strikes.

Woodcock indicates another cause of strikes which also showed the strike-breaking role of the union leadership. "Weak managements would make this problem worse. I remember at the Continental plant we had a lot of stoppages, and I used to spend a great deal of my time going down there and putting men back to work. But finally one day (this must have been around '43, I guess) the plant was down and I was sitting in with the committee and the management. Jack Reese was then president of Continental, as he still is, and he finally said to me, 'Well, what would you do about it?' I said, 'Well, I am not going to answer that question, but I will tell you this. If I were in your place, I would say to this union, "This plant stays down until this union comes to its senses."' He looked at me and then he said, 'All right, this plant is down.' So we had a membership meeting, and we just said that this sort of thing was intolerable and it is undemocratic and improper. We got a motion passed overwhelmingly that anybody who did this sort of thing was on his own. We did not have another wildcat strike in that place

for at least 18 months.”<sup>7</sup>

While it is obvious that Woodcock played a role in breaking strikes and contributed to a lessening of wildcats at Continental Motors, it would be dangerous to generalize from this experience of a so-called weak management. In Detroit, two of the plants that experienced well over the average number of wildcats were the Mack Ave. Briggs plant, characterized by one of the toughest and most hardnosed managements in the industry, and the Packard plant, where the management might conceivably be described as “weak.” The role of the management stemmed from factors that they could not control. Packard, for example, with much less flexibility than General Motors, often had to give in to workers’ pressure.

Disputes over piecework involved two elements. One was wages, the other was production standards. After wages were pretty generally frozen, workers in piecework plants might still be able to manipulate their income by challenging piecework rates. Some plants managed to beat the freeze. Michigan Steel Tube Products (Local 238) in Hamtramck, Michigan, was one such place.

Then there came a time when we saw our possibility of getting to the area wage level evaporating. We were in a war, this was after Pearl Harbor, and we saw a wage freeze coming and we decided that it was then or never. So what happened was that we demanded a 10-cent wage increase quick. We were not waiting for long negotiations because we never knew when there would be a wage freeze. A strike developed, of course. And we had a long strike. This was the strike that made the editorial pages of the Detroit newspapers. We were allies of Hirohito and next to Pearl Harbor, we were responsible for the rest of the troubles of the country, you know. . . .<sup>8</sup>

They won a 10-cent increase and a carefully controlled group incentive pay plan. In other plants less direct methods were employed to improve wage and income levels. Edward Purdy recalled the form this problem took at Fruehauf Trailer Co.

In 1942 the local negotiated a wage increase with

management. This is about the time as I recall that the War Manpower Board really got going. In fact, in 1944 I finally wound up before the Board answering the final questions. It took that long to get that wage increase. . . . The only thing we could get, for example, was a pit put into the paint shop so that the guys spraying the chassis did not have to lie down on the floor. . . . In that period we got coveralls paid for by the company. We got gloves for the welders. You name it, this was the sort of thing we were able to get for the workers during this period. This would have been considered any kind of economic gain in that they did not have to buy gloves that would have cost them \$1.50 a pair. They did not have to rent coveralls three times a week in order to be able to move. The company furnished them all of these things which were things they would have had to furnish before. But beyond this there was not anything that we could do other than process grievances. We could not make any kind of economic gain.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to the time it took to process a pay raise through government boards (when it wasn't rejected out of hand), there were the delays in paying awards after they were granted. Sam Sage, an official of the Wayne County CIO Council out of a Briggs local, said that, "it was a matter of not getting paid their retroactive pay as fast as they thought they should. . . ." <sup>10</sup>

The result was that you would get your raise approved as of today and it might be six weeks before you got the back pay in your pay envelope. About four weeks went by and a series of wildcat strikes would break out. The boys would say, "Well, to hell with it. We have not got our back pay." In fact, that was one of the things that cost me my presidency at my local union. . . . We were one of the first ones at Briggs local. But then other locals all over town got caught in the same wringer.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, in a contradiction that is more apparent than real, relatively high income also contributed to the frequency of wildcat strikes. Jess Ferrazza, also from a Briggs local but, unlike Sage, a militant opposed to the no-strike pledge, put it this way:

Another thing that led to a lot of the work stoppages was the fact that workers were drawing fairly good salaries. There were not too many things that it could be spent on because of the curtailment of amusements during the war. They could not travel too much. The result was that most plant workers had a little bit of money. A lot of them came from the farms and the hinterlands where they were not used to making the kind of money they did in the city. The result was that some days they were not too anxious to work. But this is something that you could expect. A lot of humorous incidents arose in connection with some of these work stoppages. I remember in one of the plants during the summer on a hot day, the fellows decided that they were going to stop working and go home because it was too hot to work. But they could not leave the plant for 45 minutes because it was raining so hard outside. We still remind some of these fellows who instigated this walkout about this.<sup>12</sup>

Striking to get more money and striking because there was a surplus of money is not as contradictory as it may seem. Workers were aware that they were bearing an unfair share of the cost of the war. There was a wage freeze that was pretty rigid, limitation of overtime pay, controls over movement to better jobs, considerably higher payroll taxes, and so on. At the same time workers were aware of skyrocketing wartime profits, no limits on executive salaries, inflationary price spirals and the like. Nevertheless, the financial status of the average worker was better than before the war. There was considerable forced overtime. Many workers had upgraded from lower-paying jobs in service and other trades, or in agriculture, to the relatively high union wages in defense industry. Substantial numbers of wartime workers had come off extended periods of unemployment and were experiencing relative security for the first time in their lives. And a higher proportion of working class families had more than one wage earner.

What is involved in struggles for improved income is not impoverishment but a combination of two factors. One factor was the awareness of discriminatory treatment of workers. Workers could see both the tremendous profits and the tremendous waste all around them and they could not see

why they had to accept limits that were not applied to any other section of the population. The other factor was power. This was the first time since the beginning of the Great Depression that there was anything like a shortage of labor. That is to say, this was the first time in anyone's memory that workers had the means to exert considerable pressure for improved wages. That, in fact, is why the government rushed to freeze wages at a ridiculously low level. The result was that workers imposed many back door deals on management, circumventing the wage freeze by changing job descriptions, promotions, supply of tools, work clothes, etc. which had previously been purchased by the worker, and so on. Struggles over wages also spilled over into other areas. This was especially true in shops where piecework prevailed. But it was also true in other situations where a grievance that might be monetary at the start might become transformed, consciously or unconsciously, when the road to monetary improvement was blocked. The reverse was also true. Grievances over production, safety, supervisory practices, etc. could be transformed into monetary terms if there seemed no other way to deal with the question.

The bulk of the situations that led to wildcat strikes, however, did not relate to questions of money. They involved, as they do to this day, the whole range of conditions at work including production standards, hours of work, health and safety, free time, promotions and transfers, grievance procedure, etc., all of which the spokesmen for management correctly, if stridently, denounced as interference with the functions of management.

The category of working conditions, however, like the category of pay, gives rise to contradictory testimony about the reality of life in the shops during World War II.

Jess Ferrazza, describing the situation at Briggs, where he was local union president, said,

Management would not settle grievances. They would tell us to take them to the War Labor Board. The War Labor Board, although they tried to do a job, was not properly staffed to handle the job that had to be done. The result was that grievances took a year or a year and a half to be processed. Many of the workers thought that this was the long course around. They after awhile became impatient

when their grievances remained unsettled. The result was that during the war we had many unauthorized work stoppages.

I can remember when I was president of Local 212 during the war. I used to think I had accomplished something if one of the plants had not gone on a strike because this thing kept popping up all over. If it was not the one plant, it was in the other plant. It was like a fireman with a water bucket running around trying to put fires out. The management, of course, never co-operated in these stoppages. If the grievance was a justifiable one, they would not settle it anyhow. They would tell you to get the workers back to work. Under the grievance procedure, of course, this was the thing that had to be done. But the War Labor Board at that time was sort of a box canyon. It would lead you into the canyon but there was no way out of it because you could not get your grievance settled. The result of these was that our local union, Local 212 took the initiative in fighting the no-strike pledge.<sup>13</sup>

In passing it should be noted that Ferrazza, one of the militants fighting against the no-strike pledge, found himself trying to prevent or terminate wildcats. He did not go around organizing strikes — although that may very well have happened on occasion. In this, his experience is borne out by other militants. F. D. “Jack” Palmer, of the Flint Chevrolet local, a leading anti-no-strike pledge militant, indicates he exerted a restraining influence in the shop. “When I was committeeman during the war, I could have shut that plant down hundreds of times but I would have been fired if I had.”<sup>14</sup> When asked what got the people worked up, he responded:

It was mostly over absenteeism and any little violation of any shop rules. They thought they were disciplining the workers at that time and they thought they had a chance to do it on account of the war. We have the umpire system in General Motors and you have to build a record against the man before you can take it to the umpire and actually discharge him. So they tried to build a record against everybody they could build a record against. . . . And they thought that was an opportune time to do it. . . .

I said we would go in and bargain on a grievance for a person being sent home for smoking. They sat there and

smoked and they would not let us smoke in the same office.<sup>15</sup>

This was confirmed by Norm Bully of GM's Buick plant in Flint.

. . . the company took advantage of this situation. The fact that we had pledged that we would not strike meant that when we went in to negotiate for something, a mere "no" was enough. There was nothing much that we could do about it. We had government agencies, of course, and long drawn-out procedures to seek relief but they were so time consuming and so detailed and very very difficult. . . . [Striking] was a desperation move actually. When we found that there was no other solution except a wildcat strike, we found ourselves striking not only against the corporation but against practically the government, at least public opinion, and our own union and its pledge.

Skeels (interviewer): But you did not have any trouble getting the people out at the time?

Bully: No. In fact, our problem was to keep them at work. You see, most of the people that worked in these plants realized the situation too and felt just as I have described to you. The corporations were showing no sense of patriotism or loyalty and were contributing nothing. All the sacrifices were on the part of the workers. When real and pressing grievances arose and there was no solution and management hid behind the no-strike pledge, the people felt that they were justified. They were justified in forcing a settlement.<sup>16</sup>

At the same time, Bully noted that, "All discipline was relaxed. It proved to me that when you removed the profit motive [he was referring to cost-plus contracts], things change."<sup>17</sup>

Once again there is the seeming contradiction between conditions that are simultaneously better and worse. This can only be understood in terms of sharpening conflict. On the one hand, workers, not yet out of the period of intense class conflict of the organizing days of the CIO, were taking advantage of the labor shortage and the requirements of the war to impose improvements in working conditions and in workers' control of the workplace. On the other hand,

corporations, sustained by the guaranteed profits of war contracts, both made concessions to the workers while attempting to discipline militants and, with an eye to post-war necessities, not letting workers get too far out of hand. Although the relations between management, workers, and union varied considerably from plant to plant, in general I think the weight of evidence is that it was the workers who were on the offensive and the corporations who were on the defensive.

One of the key figures in trying to control strikes in the Detroit area was the infamous Col. George E. Strong, Air Corps, Commanding Officer, Central District, Air Technical Service Command. He was responsible for much military procurement and spent much of his time trying to break strikes, fire militants and the like. In testimony before a Senate Committee, he put forward a general criticism of the labor force.

In these plants are many people who haven't worked in industry, who aren't used to discipline, who aren't subject to control by either management or by the union, who care nothing about unionism and resent management and they also, I think, resent all the wartime controls and, from time to time, something that O. P. A. does or the difficulty of transportation makes them want to take it out on somebody and management is the natural whipping boy for them to take it out on.<sup>18</sup>

It is noteworthy that, unlike some labor historians, Strong equates absence of a union tradition with militancy. Much of the testimony at these hearings revolved around the problems at the Packard Motor Car Co., another auto plant with a very high level of wildcat strikes. Some of the incidents discussed are quite revealing.

M. F. Macauley, Manufacturing Control Manager at Packard, testified about the difficulty in improving efficiency on an aircraft engine.

Mr. Macauley. . . . We weren't allowed in there for 2 years to time-study the job.

Sen. Ferguson. Wait a minute. You say you weren't allowed in?

Mr. Macauley. No, sir.

Sen. Ferguson. Who kept you out?

Mr. Macauley. The stewards of the plant objected every time we went in to study them. . . . [A] number of times they told the time-study man to get out of the department. So as to avoid trouble, he got out.

Sen. Ferguson. Well, now, I am just unable to . . . understand it, if a steward tells an employee of the company to get out of the factory, that he gets out. I am not able to understand it. Will you explain it?

Mr. Macauley. You would either have that or trouble or a walkout on you or bodily throw him out. . . .

Sen. Ferguson. So, one of two things happens: That if the steward tells an employee of the company to get out of the factory, and he doesn't go out voluntarily, they will do one of two things — walk out themselves or throw him out bodily.

Mr. Macauley. That is correct.

Sen. Ferguson. Well, have you ever had anybody thrown out? . . .

Mr. Macauley. No; I haven't on time study because they just got out before they got into trouble.

Sen. Ferguson. Have you ever had anybody thrown out by the stewards on any other study of any other work?

Mr. Macauley. Well, I think Mr. Patzkowsky can tell you some foremen who were walked out of the plant.

Sen. Ferguson. You mean the stewards took the foreman out of the plant?

Mr. Macauley. That is correct.<sup>19</sup>

Richard Bone, a Packard foreman, testified about the only time he could recall having a wildcat in his department:

Mr. Bone. It so happened that there was a misunderstanding on another floor, and the men were wrong. The plant committee was negotiating the grievance. These men came down and walked through my department and the men stopped. I said, "Fellows, you are all out of order. You had better get out of here." And they walked out. The steward and I called the men together and told them the facts. I addressed them and said, "All right, Clyde, you go ahead and tell them the facts, so they can think everything is in order."

Sen. Ferguson. Do I understand this is true: It is so

sensitive that, if some men from another department walk together down through your department, indicating that they have stopped in that department, your department stops right there?

Mr. Bone. No, it doesn't stop; but it is bad; has a bad effect on them.

Sen. Ferguson. But you said in that particular case it did stop. Is that right? . . .

Mr. Bone. That is right.

Sen. Ferguson. Did I understand you right, it was just because the men walked through there that caused the strike?

Mr. Bone. Well, they stopped a while.<sup>20</sup>

The foreman was obviously uneasy about admitting that there had been a wildcat. Another military man, testifying about conditions at Packard, had no such problems.

Sen. Ferguson. Have they had any strikes at Packard during the year and one-half that you were there?

Col. Anthony. A great many.

Sen. Ferguson. Notwithstanding what has been going on [that is, refusal to permit time study, "loafing," etc.], they have still had strikes?

Col. Anthony. Yes, sir.

Sen. Ferguson. How many?

Col. Anthony. During 1944, my file shows approximately 75 strikes.

Sen. Ferguson. What do you call a strike?

Col. Anthony. Any time when workers, on their own volition, stop work. [The implication of this exchange and the next few omitted lines is that many strikes went unreported in the press and in government statistics.] . . .

Sen. Ferguson. Have they had any since the first of the year 1945? [The hearing was in early March.] . . .

Col. Anthony. I would say approximately eight.

Acting Chairman. What caused those eight strikes?

Col. Anthony. Senator, there are a great many causes for these strikes. Some are based on rate questions, rate of pay. I would say that the larger number of them are based upon disciplinary action by the management. . . .

Well, we have had — you see there are so many different reasons — bad strikes in September and October over the rates of the maintenance workers in the company.

We had strikes in November on the question of racial discrimination in the polishing department. It got into racial questions. Those were serious. We had a very serious strike in May that came up over the organization of a foreman's association.

Now, those are the strikes which have caused the greatest loss in man-hours. The strikes that have resulted from disciplinary action have been a great deal more in number but of much shorter duration and inclined to be localized in a certain department rather than something in general.

Acting Chairman. Who won, generally, in the disciplinary strikes? Would you say either side won in a majority of the cases in the disciplinary strikes?

Col. Anthony. I would say that in the disciplinary strikes the company has been the loser.

Sen. Ferguson. What do you class as such a strike? Give us an example.

Col. Anthony. Where workers are docked because they quit early.

Sen. Ferguson. What do you call "quit early"?

Col. Anthony. Well, lining up in the clock alleys ahead of the proper time.

Sen. Ferguson. What would you say about congregating in the stairways?

Col. Anthony. That would definitely be a matter subject to docking, and people have been docked in large quantities for that action at Packard.

Sen. Ferguson. What would you say of last Friday, of some 50 or more women workers being in the stairway before quitting time?

Col. Anthony. Well, that is the type of case where there could be a disciplinary action, which the workers could resist by stopping the next day, when it was found that they had been docked for that stoppage.

Sen. Ferguson. Do I understand if the company docks them for that kind of an act, that there is a stoppage the next day?

Col. Anthony. In many cases there have been stoppages.

Sen. Ferguson. And how long would the stoppage last?

Col. Anthony. It might last anywhere from 15 minutes to a half day or three-quarters of a day.

Sen. Ferguson. Then what happens? Do they give them the time?

Col. Anthony. In certain cases the company has reversed its decision. In other cases the company had not reversed its decision.

Sen. Ferguson. How do they get the strike settled if they don't reverse?

Col. Anthony. Well, in that case you might say the workers decide that they have made their protest, and they are not going to carry it any further, so they come back.<sup>21</sup>

In completing his testimony, Col. Anthony put government strike statistics in considerable doubt.

Col. Anthony. Well, from the standpoint of the newspapers, I would say, certainly, that only a very small proportion of the strikes appear in the newspapers.

Sen. Ferguson. In other words, the fact that we get an official list from the State of Michigan or the Federal Government, that doesn't give us any true picture of the number of strikes in the war plants here in Detroit.

Col. Anthony. Judging from the figures you have given me, I would have to agree with that conclusion.

Sen. Ferguson. Well, do you know that to be a fact? You say they don't appear in the newspapers.

Col. Anthony. All I can state, Senator, is about the condition at Packard, and there I know that my records show a certain number of strikes, and I know that only a very small *proportion* of those have appeared in the newspapers. So, I can only speak on that case.

Sen. Ferguson. That is what I mean. That is a fact as far as the Packard plant.

Col. Anthony. So far as Packard is concerned, that is a fact.<sup>22</sup>

It should be noted that military officers in uniform were present in all of the war production plants during the war and they regularly intervened in strikes and potential strikes.<sup>23</sup> In other words, the reality of the war and the role of the government were concretely present to workers who went on strike or who threatened to go on strike.

George Romney, on behalf of the Automotive Council (the wartime name of the Automobile Manufacturers Association) presented a lengthy statement to this Senate Committee which was basically intended to brand the union as

responsible for all strikes and inefficiency in the war industries. Despite the inflated rhetoric, the statement contains interesting lists of strikes and the circumstances leading to strikes. (See next pages.)

This is not a complete accounting of walkouts in the auto industry. Assuming the distortions inevitable in a management document designed to make the union look bad, the accumulation of walkouts, large and small, in a wide variety of plants, provides an indication of the tensions and guerrilla warfare characteristic of the auto industry.

Although money was a factor, combined with the continual irritations of commodity shortages, housing shortages, and excessive overtime, the most common concern seems to have been the numerous kinds of grievances around production and discipline that challenged management's right to run their plants. Despite the opposition of the top union leadership and, often enough, local union leaders; despite the pressure of the government through uniformed officers present in the plants; despite the pressure of the draft boards to get rid of militants<sup>24</sup>; despite the loss of militants, including stewards and committeemen, through company dismissals; despite the fantastic pressure of the daily papers which bitterly and viciously attacked striking workers; wildcats continued to increase in number as the war went on.

In the middle of 1944, successes in the war in Europe led to the first layoffs. This raised the specter of post-war unemployment in addition to all the war-time problems. The effect was probably two-fold. It reduced the effectiveness of patriotic propaganda. It was difficult to justify maximum production from workers whose fellow workers were being laid off. At the same time, it ended the labor shortage which had given workers such a powerful weapon during the war years.

There does not seem to have been any consistent relationship between the militancy of the local union leadership and the incidence of wildcat strikes. Briggs Local 212 had both an extremely militant leadership and a considerable number of strikes. Chevrolet Local 659, on the other hand, had a militant, anti-no-strike pledge leadership, and relatively few wildcat strikes. One possible element in the situation is that conscious radicals were often a restraining influence

Taken from: Reported Work Stoppages in Automobile Plants in Dec. 1944, Jan., Feb. 1945<sup>25</sup>

<u>Company</u>	<u>Plant</u>	<u>Start. date</u>	<u>Dispute</u>
Briggs	Mack (Det.)	12/1/44	Protesting company policy concerning seniority of demoted foreman.
Ford	Rouge	12/1/44	Protest against demoted foreman replacing a No. 1 roller, despite this being his former classification.
General Motors	Fisher Body	12/1/44	Sand-blast employees demanded 10 minutes to clean up at end of shift; walked out when not granted.
Ford	Rouge	12/2/44	Committeeman forbade bricklayers and helpers to hook stock pans, as had been the custom, claiming it was outside their classification.
Mack	Allentown	12/2/44	When a number of employees did not show up for work, the remainder decided to go home also.
Briggs	Milwaukee Ave. (Det.)	12/2/44	Protest of warning notice given to employees.
Perfect Circle	New Castle	12/4/44	Result of misunderstanding in inspect-grind dept. concerning the grinding of certain rings.
Briggs	Mack (Det.)	12/5/44	Protest discharge of two employees.
Ford	Rouge	12/5/44	Protest against possibility of disciplinary action against first helper who permitted furnace roof to burn.
Hudson	Main	12/5/44	Protesting padlocking of entrance to toolroom to keep unauthorized persons from entering this area in order to eliminate theft of tools.
Chrysler	Dodge, truck	12/5/44	7 employees stopped work in protest of discharge of employee for refusing to perform his operation; 5 of this 7 were discharged when they refused to return to work; 320 employees then stopped work and left plant.

<u>Company</u>	<u>Plant</u>	<u>Start. date</u>	<u>Dispute</u>
L. A. Young	Plant 3 (Det.)	12/5/44	Protest against chairman of plant committee having been sent home for refusing to do as instructed.
Ford	Rouge	12/5/44	Protest against suspension of 2 committeemen for countermanding orders of supervision and reading newspapers on the job.
Ford	Rouge	12/6/44	Employees protested removal of stools.
Intl. Harvester	Fort Wayne	12/6/44	Demand for special piecework allowance.
Mack	Allentown	12/6/44	Protesting the transfer of 1 employee.
Chrysler	Dodge (Chi.)	12/6/44	Employees stopped work in protest when a conveyor loader was removed from an operation which could be handled by only one man
Chrysler	Dodge (Chi.)	12/6/44	Recurrence of above stoppage.
Briggs	Outer Drive (Det.)	12/6/44	Protest stepdown of employee, claiming that he should be transferred to another department instead.
General Motors	Chevrolet (St. Louis)	12/7/44	Employee sent home for refusing to do job assigned to him; 37 other employees refused to go to work unless employee was permitted to return.
Hudson	Main	12/7/44	Protesting dockage of 15 minutes for reporting late from lunch.
Chrysler	Dodge (Chi.)	12/8/44	Protesting 3-day disciplinary layoff of an employee for refusing to perform his operation.
Ford	Highland Park	12/8/44	Protest against dockage for leaving job. Also, demand for removal of foreman.
American Brake-Shoe	Detroit	12/8/44	Small group in press department demanded discharge of 1 man disliked by the group; no grievance was filed; company refused to dismiss and workers walked out.
Chrysler	Dodge (Chi.)	12/9/44	Employees stopped work and left plant when 1 employee was denied pass to go home after he had refused to go to first aid in order that

<u>Company</u>	<u>Plant</u>	<u>Start. date</u>	<u>Dispute</u>
			they might determine the extent of his alleged illness.
Briggs	Garage (Det.)	12/11/44	Questioning company application of seniority provisions.
Briggs	Mack (Det.)	12/11/44	Crane operators refused to work more than 8 hours.
Ford	Rouge	12/14/44	2 men were reprimanded for smoking; fellow-employees accompanied them to labor-relations office in sympathy.
General Motors	Chevrolet (St. Louis)	12/14/44	Material unloading men refused to work until 4 men suspended for refusing to do their jobs were put back to work.
General Motors	Cadillac (Det.)	12/14/44	Mass smoking demonstration protesting shop-smoking regulations.
Chrysler	Dodge (Chi.)	12/15/44	Stopped work claiming that band-saw blades were not sharp.
Chrysler	Dodge (Chi.)	12/15/44	Stopped work in protest when notified that they would not be paid for time not worked during above stoppage.
Chrysler	Dodge (Main)	12/15/44	51 employees in transportation dept. refused to begin work in protest against disciplinary layoff given 1 driver who had been drinking during working hours.
Chrysler	Dodge (Main)	12/15/44	Protesting discharge of employee for threatening foreman with bodily harm after being informed that he would not be paid for time he did not work before end of shift.
Chrysler	Dodge (Main)	12/15/44	Employees left plant in protest of discharge of asst. chief steward for countermanding orders of supervision.
Ford	Willow Run	12/15/44	Employees demanded 5 cent increase in rate claiming they were performing duties of a higher classification.
Chrysler	Kercheval (Det.)	12/19/44	Employees stopped work because females having more seniority than men on the same classification were laid off because of inability to perform heavy work.
Briggs	Conner (Det.)	12/20/44	Protest discharge of 3 employees.

<u>Company</u>	<u>Plant</u>	<u>Start. date</u>	<u>Dispute</u>
Briggs	Outer Drive (Det.)	12/20/44	Protest company refusing to allow employee of another plant into this plant without credentials.
General Motors	Hyatt Bearings (Rahway, N.J.)	12/20/44	Employee transferred to automatic dept. from external grinding. Employees in auto. dept. requested transferred employee be given lower rated job and lower classified employee in auto. dept. be promoted; answer promised by next day; however, entire day shift did not report.
Briggs	Mack (Det.)	12/20/44	Claim job required more men.
Chrysler	Dodge (Chi.)	12/21/44	Protesting removal of chairs and stools from production machines.
Chrysler	Dodge (Chi.)	12/21/44	Same (but involving 200 more employees).
Chrysler	Dodge (Chi.)	12/21/44	Sympathy with stoppage caused by removal of chairs.
Chrysler	Dodge (Chi.)	12/22/44	Protesting removal of chairs and stools from production machines.
Ford	Rouge	12/23/44	Outside dock workers refused to work indoors as necessitated by excessive absenteeism.
Chrysler	Jefferson (Det.)	12/23/44	Employees stopped work for 45 minutes because of discharge of employee for spoiling work.
Ford	Rouge	12/26/44	Key employees failed to report to work, causing job to shut down. [Unclear whether strike or absenteeism.]
Packard	Main	12/26/44	Chief steward claimed supervision would not recognize district steward.
Ford	Willow Run	12/26/44	Protest against suspension of committeeman for being off job without pass.
Chrysler	Dodge (Chi.)	12/27/44	Left plant because of 3-day lay-off given 2 employees for refusing to assist in setting trimmer dies.
Packard	Main	12/28/44	Objected to being paid on Saturday instead of Friday.

<u>Company</u>	<u>Plant</u>	<u>Start. date</u>	<u>Dispute</u>
Chrysler	McKinstry (Det.)	12/28/44	Left plant because they did not wish to perform some emergency work.
Ford	Highland Park	12/29/44	Employees accompanied fellow-worker sent to labor relations for smoking.
Packard	Main	12/30/44	Protest against employees being docked for leaving plant early.
Ford	Lincoln (Det.)	12/30/44	Protest against temporary transfers to another job and suspension of worker for striking foreman.
Eaton	Massilon, O.	12/31/44	Rolling mill operator refused job assignment and was suspended. 9 of his fellow workers walked out in sympathy.
Chrysler	Dodge (Chi.)	1/1/45	Employees struck and left plant at midnight 2 hours before end of shift, because they were only to receive straight time for hours after midnight following a holiday.
Muskegon Mot. Sp.	Jackson Crank-shaft	1/2/45	Attended union meeting not authorized by management.
Murray Corp.	Ecorse, Mich.	1/2/45	Would not work outside because of cold.
Ford	Rouge	1/4/45	Core makers stopped work to protest against disciplinary suspension of employee for slowing down production.
Chrysler	Dodge (Main)	1/4/45	Left plant because of disciplinary action on probationary employee who refused to perform duties to which assigned.
Ford	Rouge	1/5/45	Switchmen protested the sending of 2 men to the labor relations office for leaving job before quitting time.
Chrysler	DeSoto (Main)	1/5/45	Employees on 2nd shift in dept. left plant because they alleged 1st shift was putting in more overtime work.
Chrysler	Dodge (Main)	1/6/45	6 inspectors refused to resume work after lunch claiming there was a draft and no heat on.

<u>Company</u>	<u>Plant</u>	<u>Start. date</u>	<u>Dispute</u>
General Motors	Chevy, Grey Iron (Saginaw)	1/6/45	Protest by employees of the scheduled working hours; disliked late quitting time (6:06 p.m.)
Intl. Harvester	Indianapolis	1/8/45	Demand that foundry job rate be increased or placed on incentive basis.
Packard	Main	1/8/45	Refused to test two engines on test stand.
Briggs	Vernor (Det.)	1/8/45	Protesting of wage rates.
Chrysler	Dodge (Chi.)	1/8/45	60 employees stopped work when general foreman brought employee discharged for striking foreman to tool crib to clear tools.
Briggs	Milw. (Det.)	1/9/45	Protesting layoff.
Briggs	Milw. (Det.)	1/9/45	Protest discipline for refusing to take orders from foreman.
Briggs	Mack (Det.)	1/9/45	Dispute over classification of 1 employee.
Briggs	Mack (Det.)	1/9/45	In sympathy with above strike.
Ford	Willow Run	1/10/45	Protest for dockage for changing into work clothes on company time.
Packard	Main	1/11/45	Inspector taken off job by steward; mechanics left job.
Ford	Willow Run	1/11/45	Workers demanded that storm sheds be built on receiving dock to prevent drafts when trucks enter or leave.
General Motors	Buick (Flint)	1/11/45	Protest because locker rooms were locked during working hours to prevent loafing.
Ford	Willow Run	1/12/45	Protest against disciplinary penalty imposed on a fellow employee for deliberately slowing down his production.
Ferro Mac. & Foundry	Cleveland	1/13/45	Protesting refusal to pay for time not worked.
Chrysler	Dodge Truck	1/15/45	14 employees stopped work because they claimed there was not enough manpower on their jobs. 268 others affected.
Ford	Willow Run	1/15/45	Inspectors protested removal of desks.

<u>Company</u>	<u>Plant</u>	<u>Start. date</u>	<u>Dispute</u>
Packard	Main	1/15/45	3 colored employees refused to do work assigned.*
Packard	Main	1/15/45	Demand change in classification.
Chrysler	Dodge (Chi.)	1/15/45	95 employees left plant because they did not want to work the scheduled 12-hour shift.
General Motors	Frigid. (Dayton)	1/16/45	1 of 6 female employees involved stated they had stopped working in protest of the transfer of a Negro employee into their dept. group.
General Motors	Det. Diesel	1/16/45	Protest suspension of job setter in screw machine dept. who refused to do job assignment.
General Motors	Fisher Body Aircraft	1/18/45	In sympathy with one of their group who was in office for disciplinary action.
General Motors	Same	1/20/45	Spotwelder penalized for refusing to move stock to his machine so he could continue working. 5 others then quit.
Chrysler	Dodge (Chi.)	1/20/45	Employees in materials handling dept. stopped work in protest of a 3-day layoff given an electric truck driver for failure to report an accident and leaving scene of accident without giving aid to injured
Chrysler	Dodge (Chi.)	1/22/45	Same employees refused to work for 2 hrs. when above employees failed to report for work after layoff.
Briggs	Vernor (Det.)	1/20/45	Protest of time standards.
Motor Wheel	Lansing	1/20/45	Dispute over inspection rates.
GM Chevy	Grey Iron (Saginaw)	1/22/45	Employees in carburetor core job refused to make up discount cores even though they had time to do so. Discount cores are due to poor workmanship and deducted from production.

\*This was the plant that in 1943 had the largest strike against employment of Negroes. In this case 96 employees struck in support of Negro workers.

<u>Company</u>	<u>Plant</u>	<u>Start. date</u>	<u>Dispute</u>
Briggs	Vernor (Det.)	1/22/45	Reported late; attended union meeting.
Chrysler	Highland Park	1/24/45	Employees stopped work because of disciplinary action on employee for threatening foreman.
Ford	Willow Run	1/24/45	Protest against dockage of 3 men who lined up at time clock before quitting time. Employees also demanded removal of foreman who imposed this dockage.
Ford	Willow Run	1/24/45	Employees refused to carry out supervisory orders to clean work areas; propriety of order had been upheld by an impartial umpire.*
Ford	Willow Run	1/24/45	Protest against sending 2 employees to labor relations for failure to show and wear badge and for striking a plant protection man.
Ford	Rouge	1/24/45	Refusal to accept change in lunch period starting time.
Ford	Willow Run	1/25/45	3 employees refused to sweep their working areas as requested by supervision; other employees joined them in a protest stoppage.*
Ford	Willow Run	1/25/45	Strike in sympathy with dept. that struck in support of workers disciplined for not showing badge and hitting plant protection man.
Ford	Rouge	1/25/45	Protest against alleged defective machine.
Ford	Willow Run	1/25/45	9 employees ordered to labor relations for refusing to sweep their working area. They succeeded in getting others to join them in a protest stoppage.*
Ford	Willow Run	1/25/45	Protest against disciplinary 2-day layoff of a committeeman for pushing a foreman during an argument.

\*This seems to be a common situation in which workers had completed production for the day and foremen tried to prevent them from just standing around by assigning unnecessary tasks.

<u>Company</u>	<u>Plant</u>	<u>Start. date</u>	<u>Dispute</u>
General Motors	Truck & Coach (Calif.)	1/26/45	Protesting failure of NWLB to act favorably on joint request for wage increase.
Chrysler	Dodge (Chi.)	1/26/45	Left plant because they were not paid for time they did not work when lining up at clock before quitting time.
Chrysler	Dodge (Chi.)	1/29/45	10 machine operators sent home for refusing to operate 2 machines as instructed. 23 others walked out in sympathy.
Chrysler	Jefferson (Det.)	1/29/45	Employees stopped work because management requested the men to produce 1 additional unit per hour.
Ferro Mac. & Foundry	Cleveland	1/29/45	Dispute over piecework rates.
Ford	Rouge	1/30/45	Protest against discipline of committeeman for using foul and profane language and threatening foreman.
Intl. Harvester	Indianapolis	1/30/45	Dispute over piecework.
Chrysler	Tank arsenal	1/31/45	Protesting disciplinary action.
Chrysler	Tank arsenal	2/1/45	Protest against discharge of probationary employee discharged for excessive absenteeism.
Briggs		2/6/45	Refusal to reclassify a job to higher rate.
General Motors	Delco	2/7/45	Protesting another employee, outside AFL unit, being given burring work to do on a polishing lathe.
Hudson	Detroit	2/7/45	Engineering employees protested salaried assistant foreman doing hourly rated work in addition to acting as supervisor in absence of foreman.
Hudson	Detroit	2/10/45	Protest dockage of several men for quitting early.
Chrysler	Dodge (Main)	2/10/45	Protesting company giving 2 men a 3-day layoff for loafing.
Continental		2/12/45	Walked out asserting 2 workers disciplined unjustly.

<u>Company</u>	<u>Plant</u>	<u>Start. date</u>	<u>Dispute</u>
Borg-Warner	Detroit	2/14/45	Protesting discharge of 2 employees for refusing to work after transfer by foreman to new jobs.
Ford	Rouge	2/20/45	Complaint that ventilating system was faulty.
Packard	Detroit	2/20/45	Dispute with supervisory employees.
GM Chevy	St. Louis	2/22/45	Sympathy with employee of Truck Assembly Line suspended for refusing to do job assigned by his foreman.
Chrysler	Dodge	2/23/45	Protesting discharge of 8 employees in gear department for refusal to report production count.
Ford	Rouge	2/28/45	Protest against discharge of 2 workers charged with failure to maintain production rates.

because of their need to protect their own position in the plants. It is likely that the varying tendencies of different shops was the result of a complex combination of company policy and administration, union leadership, and composition of the work force. But it should be noted that the number of wildcat strikes does not tell the whole story in considering how many workers were ready and willing to strike during the war.