Correspondence from readers on the GM strike

3 July 1998

As a former Political Science major now working as an administrative support employer, I can hardly close my eyes and quiet my sighs at the world in front of me today. So I wanted to voice my views and support for the striking auto workers. The pendulum is swinging back in favor of the worker and pulling at the purse strings of the Corporate CEOs. As a worker in Corporate America, it scares me that so few stand up for their beliefs for fear of reprisal. Unity is the only solution. Working for a corporation that voted out a union, I honestly do have mixed views, but know for certain, that RECORD corporate profits and continual downsizing and a younger and cheaper workforce in America reduce the chances of me staying afloat after I turn 50 years old.

The pseudo-TV-worker personality prototype is killing those of us that live in reality. Single mothers, deadbeat parents, higher costs of everything and of course you know we must have everything. Ugh! Where does it all end?

The exploitation of the third-world countries' labor force and the declining cost of labor to produce more, that is of a lesser quality, can only mean trouble for those that seek to hold onto their jobs in the so-called developed worlds. Furthermore, with the world population dramatically increasing, is there enough and for who? Our democracy is not a voice for the people any longer, but for the corporate puppets who manipulate the legislation. I smell trouble in the air for the future of America. Look at our violent youth... SOS. Guess I can struggle and stand up for justice and peace and achieve a state of a peaceful wreck.

Wide Awake in America

LP

1 July 1998

Being new to the web, I was very surprised to find this site. I am a factory worker who is on lay-off because of these strikes, and I am employed by GM. I was very surprised to find in the interviews with two of our Australian counterparts (fellow auto employees) that we here in the US are considered competitors.

Perhaps I am naive, but I had never thought of the people in other nations, in the blue collar workforce, as competitors. I guess that perhaps this comes from the differences in the ways that different people express themselves. I have always felt that the very fact that we are employed in the auto industry and face the same problems in the workplace makes us brothers and sisters with the same cause, not only to do our respective jobs to the best of our abilities, but also to keep our workplaces the safest that we can for all concerned.

I was pleased to see that they recognize that our fate is intertwined with theirs. We here are fighting to have GM keep their word that has been negotiated and is in a signed contract. If we allow them to break their word and continue to do as they like at a local level, then the contracts that they have signed nationally will be no good either. Time after time they have given their word at various individual plants in many locations, only to break it when they feel that it is to their advantage.

I work for a plant that GM had promised not to sell or close before 1999. In December of 1997, they passed out a paper that said that they were going ahead and putting the plant on the sale block. Then they sold the plant. The new owners were supposed to close the sale by the end of June. So far they haven't closed the sale, but this is what we are fighting over. We opened the local agreement talks early, because GM asked us to, and gave them what they wanted as far as things that they said needed to be changed. They then turned around and broke the promises that they made in return for the changes that we agreed to.

Do not take me wrong, I agree that there are practices

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in the workplace that need to be changed. But in the case of my plant the changes were made and then GM did what it wanted to do anyway. If we allow it to continue here, it will not be long before it is being done everywhere else. I can see where it is being done to the workers in Australia and that the union hasn't been successful in stopping it. I have no answers, because from what I read and understood, perhaps the unions operate differently in other nations. I cannot say much from the standpoint of those unions, because I have no understanding of the way things work in other countries. I do not mean to offend anyone because of my misunderstanding. It would be nice to be able to talk to other people in the auto industry and see what they feel and how things are being done in their situations.

Fraternally yours,

SC

United States

30 June 1998

I just read your article titled, 'GM's hard line staggers United Auto Workers officials.' I don't have time to give a detailed response to it, but I want to thank you for publishing it.

Traditional media outlets report the facts of events, but they inevitably (and deliberately) neglect the reasons for the events, the greater context that gives meaning to the events. Your article is illuminating for filling in what CNN leaves out.

Thanks again, and keep up the great writing.

AD

30 June 1998

As long as the GM has all the power to control its workers and the labor unions give in workers will have an uphill battle for their jobs.

RR UFCW/Organizer/Rep.

27 June 1998

I happen to be an American citizen living in Georgia. I have absolutely nothing to do with the auto industry with the exception of purchasing one from time to time. I was, however, infuriated by the evening world news tonight seeing all the auto industry going to Mexico and China. I am also a Vietnam veteran and I fought for this country and to see it being handed over to foreign countries is just appalling. I am curious as to why the UAW doesn't launch a major campaign to all Americans with any patriotism left in them at all to completely boycott General Motors!

Sincerely,

DJS

22 June 1998

I can understand that UAW wants to keep their jobs here. I hope that they do. What I don't understand is all these UAW workers complaining they don't make enough money. Most GM workers earn more than three people put together. I work for a rubber factory that makes all the car mats for the Big Three. Plus they make mats for every other car maker there is. GM workers complain about $25 an hour. Well come to my work and try working for $8.35 an hour and see how they like that. I still can make a good living. So I hope they can keep there jobs here but quit complaining about the money they make. I would do anything I could to work for you guys.

USWA Local 50 member

19 June 1998

I'm writing because we have to do something about what is going on with the UAW. I think they are striking for a good reason. Plus I remember back in 1994 when they were going to help us with our strike fund. Now we all should stand up and help them out. They are striking because enough jobs are going over the border. Plus these companies are starting nonunion companies. We have to stand up for our future and our children's future or we will all lose. Plus we have to stand up to the Government. They are trying to get their hands in our pensions and we can't let it happen. I'm tired and I'm sure a lot of other people are tired of the government not paying attention to the people in the United States. We should come first. Think of all the people that are in the unions. We should strike the nation and stand up for our rights. If we don't it will be to late. So let's unite and stand and fight.

Thank you,

MM

16 June 1998

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