

report on June 16th picket

Dianne Feeley

Wed., June 17, 2009

Dear Autoworkercaravan folks,

I wanted to give a short report about the picket at the Ren Cen on June 16, while AAM CEO Dick Dauch and ex-gov John Engler were giving their talks at the National Business Summit.

There were over 200 who picketed, autoworkers from a number of different plants in Michigan and Ohio, and many labor and social justice activists in the Detroit area. There was a lot of energy among the participants and quite a few media interviewed various people.

Following the picket we marched to Grand Circus Park, also in downtown Detroit, which functioned as the HQ for the People's Summit, and where there had been tents and tables set up.

[Paul & Calvin from Toledo had set up a display there that lots of people came by to look at. Perhaps Calvin will send out a photo or two of it. It was great!]

Following the march there was a rally at Grand Circus Park and a number of autoworkers and retirees spoke including Frank Hammer, Gregg Shotwell, Tony Browning, Ignacio Mendez, Martha Grevatt and myself. Jesse Jackson had agreed to speak, and arrived fashionably late. He seemed quite tired, but I'm glad he came.

I want to mention two other speakers of particular note: David Bullock, from Greater St. Matthew Baptist Church, introduced Jackson, and Ed Rowe from Central Methodist.

Here is an article from Associated Press, but I don't think it really gives a flavor of the picket line.

<http://www.forbes.com/feeds/ap/2009/06/16/ap6552271.html>

I understand that we were on a few TV stations last night and I heard a short report on WDET radio this morning.

The Real News filmed the picket and rally and asked if we could, at the end of the rally, pull together a meeting of retirees. I believe something like 9 of us got together for a conversation of more than an hour. We talked about our lives and what the economic crisis in auto means for us.

While folks made many important points, I was most touched by the comments of Judy and Stacey, who were not so much worried about the current situation, but about what this will mean for their grandchildren--what kind of life will they be able to have? Is job security and the right to retire and live without being under financial stress something they will never know?

I really found our getting together at the end of the day and talking so important and glad that those of us who stayed were able to have that gift.

I hope by next week we can gather together some of the photos folks took and get them up on the caravan web site! So glad we organized the picket and rally--and got a bit of our message out. We're going to have to do this again.

Many thanks for all who pitched in and helped pull the events together!

In solidarity,

dianne