

# WANTED

## Outspoken UAW Members

September 8th we will be holding the fourth annual Autoworker Speakout sponsored by the Autoworker Caravan. Previous Speakouts have focused, first and foremost, on workplace conditions. Two-tier wage and benefits, speedups, alternative work schedules, health & safety problems related to heat and sewage backups have all been discussed. Strategies for combating these issues will be considered.

Much of the fault for the decline in wages and working conditions can be traced to cooperation schemes between the UAW International Union and the corporations we work for. This cooperation has left workers in the absurd position of paying union dues for the salaries of union “executives” and their staff that are more responsive to the needs of the corporations than they are to the needs of the workers.

Union “executives” have been converted to the “Business Model” of contract negotiations. They find cooperation is more cost effective than actually fighting for just treatment and compensation.

Their new paradigm casts aside the use of job action in the form of a strike. That is why over \$200 million has been siphoned from the International Strike Fund since 2006. We can start by stopping these diversions of money to the General Fund.

Proof of this paradigm shift can be seen in the no strike language inserted into the contracts of GM and Chrysler. Further proof can be seen in the attempt to add that language to the Ford contract even though Ford narrowly avoided the bankruptcy GM and Chrysler had to endure.

At the Speakout we will be discussing these issues which are at the heart of the decline in wages and working conditions of UAW members. Please plan to join us. Bring your issues and your drive for improving upon these conditions.

### **Autoworker Caravan Speakout**

**Sunday September 8th 2PM at St. John the Baptist Church**

**2371 Woodstock Dr. Detroit, MI (Just South of Eight Mile at Woodward)**

**At the Speakout we will develop amendments and resolutions based on shop-floor issues. We want to develop and circulate leaflets for members to bring to their locals to help pass resolutions for the 2014 Constitutional Convention. We want people to run for delegates from their local on a principled basis.**

We need to rebuild our fighting union. We want the union that once boasted of wage increases, defined pension plans, and COLA. We need to end the discrimination against low seniority members that tiered wage structures has created. We must prepare for the fight in 2015. **COME SPEAK OUT!**

### **Who We Are**

Autoworker Caravan (AWC) was formed by a group of rank-and-file autoworkers at the Big Three and parts suppliers during the 2008 economic crisis, when autoworkers were taking the fall for poor decisions by management.

AWC went to Washington DC to oppose concessions by the union in order to supposedly “save” the industry. Our wages and benefits amount to well under 10% of a vehicle's cost! We've been taking concessions since the bailout of Chrysler thirty years ago.

A month after the DC trip AWC demonstrated outside the Detroit Auto Show. We've done so every year since. Our cities still suffer from mass unemployment for which the auto bosses are partly responsible—75 plants have closed in Michigan alone since 1979!

We've witnessed the escalating crisis of global warming to which the auto industry is a contributor. AWC calls for a moratorium on plant closings and demand closed plants be retooled and reopened to build green products, from wind turbines to light rail cars and buses. This will create good jobs to employ workers abandoned by the Wall Street economy.

We believe that a job is a human right. We see the need for

solidarity across borders and oceans. Workers in other countries—or from other countries—are our sisters and brothers, not our enemies. We must fight to improve conditions for all workers.

AWC has opposed concessions, particularly two-tier wages and benefits. Before the 2011 contract we developed leaflets informing members that concessions were not needed. We exposed the injustice of a contract that left a huge gap between first and second tier pay and institutionalized all the rotten concessions we've swallowed. Many of the plants that voted no were plants where the AWC campaigned.

#### **AutoworkerCaravan Newsletter editors:**

**Dianne Feeley, UAW Local 235 (retired)**

**Martha Grevatt, UAW Local 869**

**Frank Hammer, UAW Local 909 (retired)**

**Scott Houldieson UAW Local 551**

**If you would like to submit an article email to:**

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**And "follow us on facebook":**

**[www.facebook.com/autoworkercaravan](http://www.facebook.com/autoworkercaravan)**

## Caravan Activists Vie for Local Union Office

**E**lections at UAW Local 551 in Chicago ushered in an Autoworker Caravan activist Terri Houldieson as Trustee. Terri's successful campaign touted her independent status along with the inspiration to union activism that her Father and Step Mother, Scott and Vicky Houldieson helped instill in her. Terri also showcased her active roles on the By-Laws and Worker to Worker Committees.

Scott Houldieson ran for the Bargaining Committee at Local 551 and fell just 42 votes short of election. He gave up his incumbent status as Financial Secretary in order to have an impact on negotiations.

Scott's campaign highlighted his commitment to reform the UAW and the outspoken role in his continuing effort to beat back concessions. He reminded voters of his vote at the UAW Constitutional Convention for anti-concession candidate Gary Walkowicz. He reminded voters of his efforts to defeat a bad

Ford contract in 2011 that resulted in a 77% no vote at Chicago Assembly Plant.

Scott is already using his free time to push for an Amendment to the Constitution to allow direct election of our International Executive Board. With the help of Autoworker Caravan and other activists this will be a key topic for the 2014 Constitutional Convention.

At UAW Local 600, Ford Rouge and other Units, Eric Truss and Reggie Kendrick ran uphill races against known caucuses in their units. They were not elected to the local-wide General Council, but raised issues that most candidates ignored. They said we need officers who openly campaign against concessions. They campaigned for early strike preparation to give us leverage with management before contract expiration – instead of making members feel unprepared at the last minute. Write us for copies of their leaflets.

## How Did Two-Tier Wage Structures Save the Auto Industry?

By Scott Houldieson

**O**kay; I'll admit it right up front. The question in the title of this article is a "trick question." That's because the two-tier wage structure, can never bring any company back from the brink of liquidation!

The two-tier wage structures was thrust into UAW auto contracts in 2007. The American Auto Manufacturers were already suffering from self-imposed loss of market share. They had jumped in bed with big oil and based their profits on gas guzzling Pick Up Trucks and SUV's. Sure they still made cars but, for fuel efficiency, customers had been turning to the Asian Auto Manufacturers since the 1970's.

The American Auto Companies, from 2005 to 2011 closed 48 North American factories. **In order to take advantage of two tiered wage structure you must be hiring! If your company is about to go under you are not hiring!**

GM and Chrysler had to go through a government-sponsored bankruptcy and close 37 plants before beginning to hire second tier employees. Ford mortgaged practically the entire company for \$23.6 billion and closed 11 plants to avoid the fate of GM and Chrysler.

Two-tier wages do not salvage a struggling company. They only serve to divide a union membership and doom the next generation to a lower standard of living than their parents and grandparents enjoyed. Let's fight to end this scourge!

## FIAT "Bugs" and "Sues" the Union in Poland

By George Windau

**W**hen most people think of Polish unions, they think of the one big union called "Solidarnosch." However; Franciszek Gierot is a union rep from a union that split off from Solidarnosch back in 1980.

When I was in Germany in May 2012, I conducted an interview with Franciszek, who said we Americans can simply call him "Frank" and his union simply "August 80." Frank represents about 1,800 FIAT workers in Tychy, Poland, near the major city of Katowice in Silesia.

There are seven autoworker unions in Poland but Frank's union is the largest that represents autoworkers at Fiat in Poland. Solidarnosch still exists and it is the second largest union at FIAT. The third largest is the Metal Workers Union, the old communist union established after WWII.

Frank considers Mr. Marchionne to be a dictator. Since Marchionne took over, there have been production slumps and layoffs. When I spoke to him, about 1,000 members of his union were on laid off. Furthermore, Marchionne unilaterally withheld raises that were negotiated; he even demanded wage cuts! The "August 80" union responded with in-plant rallies during break-times. Management backed off from the wage cuts but took the "August 80" union to court, suing for compensation stemming from the loss of three (3) minutes of production time during one

break-time rally. FIAT lost, but Frank says that management is appealing the court decision.

When I interviewed Frank, Fiat was laying off about 1,000 workers per month. There's no seniority system at FIAT in Poland so workers are laid off according to a "performance evaluation" system. But contractually, Fiat cannot layoff all the members of one particular family. One worker must stay to provide the family's income. However; management is using this to selectively layoff "August 80" members. If a worker openly renounces his/her membership in "August 80," he/she can keep working. Refusal to renounce membership means a "layoff" based upon a low performance evaluation.

Needless to say, Frank and his union are fighting this unfair "layoff" policy. Members of "August 80" have to guard what they say on telephones. He commented that the land-lines in the factory are monitored by FIAT management. "August 80" members have eliminated some, but not all, of the listening device "bugs" planted at the union hall by unknown persons (I wonder who would do that?). Franks says there's nothing they can do about the company monitoring the telephones in the factory, but they expect to keep the union hall de-bugged.

Frank says that Marchionne keeps promising that new products will come to FIAT factories in Poland, but few Polish autoworkers believe anything Marchionne says anymore.