

# WORKER'S VOICE



Published by the Imerman Nucleus of the Communist Labor Party, USNA

## SUPPORT GAS WORKERS

Gas Workers Local 80, AFL-CIO have been on strike since before Christmas. The Gas Workers include meter readers, repairmen, servicemen, pipe line repairmen. The gas workers, on the average, receive a lower wage than workers in comparable classifications in other area industries.

They have only one demand left on the table - no cap on COLA. The gas company, Michigan Consolidated, will only give them 50¢ over the next 3 years. The projected COLA for the UAW is over \$1.00. Local 80 has conceded some demands, like dental plan, eyeglasses, prescription drugs, understanding that the company is attempting to turn the public against the strike, but they are holding firm on the COLA demand.

The union's position is that the company has put the entire city in a very dangerous position by not settling the strike. By the company's own admission, there have been at least 108 MAIN LEAKS due to the extreme cold, but the company denies that the strike is affecting the situation. Consider the fact that gas workers in Chicago and New York City are working 12 hours a day, 7 days a week just to keep up! And this, with the companies hiring outside firms to do the digging, so that the gas workers spend all the time on actual repairs. How, then, is Michigan Cons. able to keep up, with no skilled workers (only company scabs) on the job?

Another aspect is that 22¢ of every dollar we pay on our bills (according to the company) goes for wages and expenses, but for the last two months, we have not received the services we are paying

for - no maintenance, no repair, no one to check out leaks, no meter readers.

A meter reader is a trained person, who not only reads meters but also can spot problems, leaks, etc. Furthermore, we are being asked by the company to scab by reading our own meters. The union said we do not have to pay an estimated bill, but now PSC said we do because the company cannot read the meters due to the strike. The government is siding with the company against the consumers and workers by reversing their position on estimated bills. Nevertheless, consumers can demand a hearing on their bills, and do not pay them until a hearing, so we should refuse to pay these bills until the meter is read and demand a hearing if they threaten shut off. The company has said it would take over 2 months to shut off after the bill was due.

Michigan Cons. has gouged all workers long enough!! We can support this strike by informing the gas company that:

1. We WILL NOT 'scab' by reading our own meter.
2. We WILL NOT pay an estimated bill.

## FORTY YEARS OF STRUGGLE!

In 1936, the conditions in the auto plants had reached intolerable conditions. Speed-up had become a killer in Detroit, Flint, Pontiac, and Dearborn. In the July heat of 1936, men were pushed to the point of desperation, dropping to the floor from exhaustion. Death in the state ran into the hundreds.

Men were through by the age of forty, burned out and cast aside.

All the labor struggles of the past were coming to a head as a result of speed-up and the lowering of wages at the same time.

Labor had just won an important victory, the passage of the Wagner Labor Act, which made it mandatory for the company to negotiate with their union members. But big corporations like GM had no intention of obeying such a law.

Men that attempted to organize a union were fired and often beaten up. Sometimes men were fired for no reason at all. The company thought these tactics would keep men docile. At Ford's, criminals and thugs were as thick as flies. They were employed by the so-called Service Department under Harry Bennett. Lunch boxes were searched, a policy of silence and absolutely no human communication was induced by terror. But all this repression only succeeded in making the auto workers bitter, the breaking point was soon to arrive.

In May, 1936, the Auto Workers Union left the AFL and joined the CIO as the United Automobile Workers of America.

In 1936 the mass hatred of the auto workers broke through. It took the form of the sit down strike. On November 18, 1936, there was a sit down strike at the GM Atlanta plant, on December 15 the GM Plant in Kansas City, on Dec. 28, the GM Cleveland Plant sat down and militant U.A.W. Vice-Pres. Wyndham Mortimer announced the settlement of the Cleveland sit down could only end with a national agreement with GM. On Dec. 30 there were sit downs at four major plants including the very heart of the GM empire

in Flint, the Chevrolet Plant, Fisher Body No. 1 and Fisher No. 2. By January, sit downers were in possession of the plants in Cleveland; Atlanta; Anderson, Indiana; Norwood, Ohio; Kansas City and above all, at Flint. Workers rushed from all over the country to Flint in support of the Flint sit down to form a picket line of thousands to protect the sitdowners from militia Police, goons, and all the other forces the company could muster.

After 44 days of valient struggle, after gas and shooting attacks by the police; after days of waiting and wondering if the strike was going to be turned into a blood bath, the strike ended.

On February 11, 1937, at 2:45 a.m. giant GM surrendered. They announced they would recognize the union and negotiate nationally as to hours, wages and speed-up.

After many, many years of struggle, beatings, lynching; child labor, speed-ups, 12 hour days; whole families working to survive; the endless discrimination against the Negro, the woman, foreign born and the unskilled, we had brought mighty GM to the bargaining table!!

Our union is young here, we have come a long way and still have a long way to go. The company will never stop trying to break the union. We must struggle to build our contract with class solidarity and carry on the militant history of our past.

BUILD A STRONG UNION!!

