



MiARA Newsletter

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UAW Strike: A Fight for Fairness

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Important Notice

The next MI-ARA quarterly meeting will be held:

November 8, 2023

10:00 a.m.

UAW Region 1

27800 George Merrelli Dr

Warren, MI

Free lunch to be served
RSVP to sneequaye@uaw.net



The Great Recession of 2007 brought the country to its financial knees. As demand for goods and services dried up, countless businesses failed and millions of Americans were left jobless. The U.S. auto industry was especially hard hit. G.M. and Chrysler were forced into bankruptcy. Ford, having secured a huge loan prior to the down turn, with the help of concessions by its UAW employees, was able to weather the storm. The fact is that without UAW members making large sacrifices, none of the domestic car producers would have survived.

That was then. Since the end of the recession in 2009, the Detroit Three have reaped combined profits of over \$250 billion dollars. That is one quarter of 1 trillion bucks flowing into their corporate coffers. Now the UAW is asking for its fair share of the profits that its members labored to produce. As President Biden said on the picket line here in Wayne, MI, "Record profits mean record contracts."

One of the major concessions UAW members agreed in contracts aimed to bail out the car companies was the end of defined benefit pensions effective for represented employees hired after 2009. Pensions were replaced with 401 (k) plans. Those plans are riskier and likely mean workers will be forced to work until age



MI-ARA President Jim Pedersen (2nd from right) on UAW picket line in Wayne, MI

67 when they become eligible to receive Social Security. As any one who has ever worked in a car plant, steel or paper mill or any other industrial manufacturing facility knows, the human body isn't meant for that. The human body begins to show the wear and tear well before that age. Government backed pensions are needed to help workers reach and maintain retirement security and dignity in old age. That is a major issue for UAW members.

Another issue is the future of the U.S. automotive industry. As we see right now, that future will be heavily reliant on electric vehicles. The UAW is fighting to ensure that the cars of the future will continue to be made by UAW members. That is a policy that all three companies appear

to be resisting. The UAW is fighting to secure a transition to an EV industry that includes safe jobs and excellent working conditions with competitive wages and benefits for its workers. Imagine yourself on a job that paid you less money than a worker doing the exact same work as you. It just doesn't seem right does it?

That is another issue the UAW is fighting to overcome. The two tier wage system in place at the Detroit Three has to end. It was implemented to help the companies survive a financial disaster. The disaster is over and the tiers must end.

And finally, while the demand for a 32 hour work sounds over the top for much of the media, it is bringing attention to a problem that workers face in almost every workplace: mandatory overtime! Unions point out that they helped bring about the 40 hour work week. But that is quickly becoming a thing of the past as employers force workers to work more days and longer hours to avoid hiring more employees. This fight is about making work days more reasonable. As Union activists said during the effort to create the forty hour work week: Eight hours work, eight hours leisure and eight hours rest. It was important then. It is important now!

The President's Report

by Jim Pedersen

The Michigan Alliance for Retired Americans has had a pretty good run in the Michigan legislature. This year, after gaining the election “trifecta” of taking control of the Michigan House, Senate and Governor’s Office, we assisted in scoring huge victories for retired Americans. Together, with our Union affiliated partners, we repealed the dreaded pension tax and right to work, restored worker freedom, helped the building trades restore Union scale wages on construction projects and won big tax advantages for low wage working families. As this newsletter hits your “In-Box”, we may have won relief for seniors struggling to meet the ever increasing costs of prescription drugs. A plan we backed, called the Prescription Drug Affordability Board, or PDAB for short, forces drug manufacturers to justify all future drug price increases. Enacting the PDAB will help all Michiganders that depend on pharma for maintaining good health, especially those on a fixed income.

As autumn came, MiARA switched its attention to the courts to gain relief for working families. MiARA joined a law suit to overturn a Republican imposed ban on paid transportation for voters on election day. This ban impacts seniors and mobility impaired voters by forbidding Uber, LYFT and

paid staff from providing rides to voting places. This practice was common in both rural and urban areas and helped boost voter participation across the state. Some how, it was either overlooked or taken for granted when Michigan acted to reform many common sense election regulations in Prop 3-18 and Prop 2-22. Thankfully, the election reform friendly Michigan legislature has introduced a bill that will to repeal the ban on paid transportation. When it is passed and signed into law, it is likely the we will withdraw from that lawsuit. Keep an eye on this column for future updates.

We also joined with the Detroit and Downriver Chapters of the A. Philip Randolph Institute (ARPI) and Voters Not Politicians to intervene on behalf of strong voting rights in a law suit brought by Republicans seeking to reduce voting access. The case is a federal action to asking to declare Props 2-22 and 3-18 unconstitutional. Prop 3 created the Michigan Citizens Redistricting Commission, which ended partisan politicians from gerrymandering, or redrawing legislative district to the advantage of a particular party. That reform has led to the formation of districts that are more representative of the state electorate and broke a 40 year deadlock of Republican control of the state House and Senate.



Jimmy Pedersen, President MI-ARA

Prop 2-22 gave us wider and easier access to voting. It expanded any reason absentee voting, early in-person voting, and same day registration. The suit by Republicans, obviously upset that fairness ruined their majority, holds that only legislators have the power to make changes in election laws. According to them, apparently, “We the People” are excluded from the process. Apparently, the fact that these two ballot initiatives were passed by Michigan voters with a nearly two-thirds majority, means nothing to them. But it means everything to us. The MiARA is going to continue to fight to protect our current election laws and to pass legislation that expanding access and makes it easier for Michiganders to cast their votes in free and fair elections.

USW President Loses Battle with Cancer

United Steelworkers International President, Tom Conway, has lost his battle with lung cancer passing away on September 25. He was 71 years old

Conway became a Steelworker in 1978 as an employee of Bethlehem Steel's Burns Harbor Works in Indiana. He immediately became active in USW Local 6787 as a member of the Local's Grievance, Safety and Health and Contracting Out Committees. His work at that level led to an appointment to USW International Staff in 1987. In addition to his negotiating and representation responsibility, Tom accepted assignments that saw him spearhead several important corporate campaigns to resolve a number of major strikes against several

several large USW employers. The most notable being Firestone.

He was elected International Vice President in 2005. In that position he took on the lead negotiator role for several core Steelworker sectors, where his talent as a top notch negotiator was revealed. That ability and the experience of developing member participation and organizing strategies led to his selection as International President upon the retirement of former Steelworker President, Leo Gerard.

Upon announcing his cancer diagnosis, Conway was asked, "What is the plan going forward." Tom replied, "The plan for our Union going forward is to continue to fight for better conditions, better contracts, and better wages. We are going to do what we have always

done. So, if you think about what we are going to do, we will keep fighting and moving forward. In short, we are going to be keep being Steelworkers!"



Late USW President Thomas Conway

Biden's IRA: Saving Michiganders Big Money

It has been just over a year since President Biden signed his Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) into law. In that short time, many of us have already been experiencing the savings brought on by the Act. Here in Michigan below here are some of the benefits we've witnessed:

The first benefit is a big one. According to the Bluegreen Alliance, the IRA stands to create 167,000 new, good paying jobs in our state. The Act invests million of dollars into several important sectors of Our economy. The money it invests will result in 97,362 jobs in clean energy, 45,551 in infrastructure and clean manufacturing, 12,227 in transportation, 9,632 in lands and agriculture and 2,336 in environmental justice and community resilience.

Our second benefit is one that we retirees will truly appreciate. That is lower drug prices. The Inflation Reduction Act created an annual \$2,000.00 cap on what seniors have

to pay for prescription drugs at their pharmacy.

It also put a \$35 cap on how much Medicare subscribers pay monthly for insulin. For a lot of seniors that is a huge savings.

Finally another area the IRA will save us money is in energy costs. The act creates a series of tax credits to help homeowner install solar panels, buy energy efficient appliances and to initiate clean energy community projects.

The above information comes from *In Union*, a newsletter produced for working families.

A Parting Shot

Recently an Executive at a Detroit Three automaker complained that UAW contract demands would price American car companies out of business. Really? What about management? How do they compare to the global competition?

Mary Barra, the CEO of GM brings home a staggering \$29 million pr Year. Stellantis saw its top guy, Carlos Tavares rack up a com-

ensation of \$24.8 annually. Jim Farley, the head guy at Ford comes in third at just \$21 million for 2022. That is total pay of \$74.8 million for just three individuals.

In Japan the big three in that country earn much less. The former boss of Toyota, Japan's largest employer made \$6.7 million. Honda's CEO cashed in at \$2.3 million and Nissan's head honcho was paid \$4.5 million. That comes a total of \$13.4 million or a \$61.4 million advantage.

It isn't much better when compared to Europe. Over in the UK the top guy at Aston Martin pocketed \$925,000 annually. German carmaker BMW compensated its top guy to the tune of \$5.6 million per year. And at Mercedes-Benz the boss was awarded \$7.5 million. Total compensation for those three is \$14 million or a \$60.8 million advantage for European car manufacturers. Remember, those figures are just for the top three. Imagine the what the rest of the fat cats get.

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President Pedersen delivers non-perishable goods to members of UAW Local 2256 who are on strike at Blue Cross/Blue Shield MI.

SOLIDARITYWORKS!

Care to show striking UAW members your support? There are three ways to do that.

1st: Call or write the car companies and demand that they bargain a fair contract soon!

2nd: Check the UAW website for a strike location near you. Then go join the picket line. For more fun, work with your Local or International Union to organize a Solidarity Day with picketers.

3rd: Make donations to striking Local Unions. As mentioned elsewhere, the UAW International Union is not set up to accept donations. However, you can contribute goods to Local Unions. Locals are accepting donations of non-perishable foods, soft drinks, firewood and propane, snacks & sandwiches on the picket line and personal health care products. Or you can contact a UAW and ask what their needs are.

Remember we are all in this fight together. Let's stand with our UAW brothers and sisters!

And Don't Forget Workers at Blue Cross/Blue Shield!

A week prior to a planned strike by the UAW at the Detroit Three automakers, 1,000 members of UAW members at BCBS of Michigan hit the bricks in an effort to gain a fair contract. Unfortunately, due to the sheer numbers of those impacted by the automakers bargaining Their plight has received very little media coverage. Like members in the auto sector, workers at the state's largest health insurer need public support to influence the direction of contract negotiations. They are asking Michigan Union activists to help out by:

Calling Blue Cross/Blue

Shield to demand that management bargains in good faith to reach a fair agreement with its employees. Many Michigan labor agreements offer BC/BS benefits to Union workers. Tell the company that future good relations will be impacted by a prolonged, unnecessary work stoppage.

Drop by the picket line at 600 E. Lafayette in Detroit and walk in solidarity with our UAW brothers and sisters.

Because the UAW is not equipped to accept cash contributions, you can make donations of non-perishable food items, snacks, and personal

hygiene items (Toothpaste, shampoo, hand cream, etc.) to Region 1 & Region 1D.

Strikers mostly work in the company's claims and customer services department. At issue in this round of contract talks are higher wages, better benefits and an end to outsourcing UAW jobs. In recent years outsourcing has nearly tripled at the health insurance provider. According one UAW member, "Our workloads keep increasing as the number of available workers is shrinking. We need to maintain job to ensure product quality and timely delivery of the services we provide."