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A Slacker's Paradise

"The Fight For 30 Hours Work at 40 Hours' Pay
in the United Automobile Workers, 1941-1966"

By
JONATHAN C. CUTLER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology
in partial fulfillmanet of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1998

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Abstract

A Slacker's Paradise:
The Fight For 30 Hours Work at 40 Hours' Pay
in the United Automobile Workers, 1941-1966

by
Jonathan C. Cutler

Adviser: Professor Stanley Aronowitz

This study demonstrates the persistence, after the Great Depression, of support among rank-and-file workers within organized labor for the shorter work week. Some scholars have suggested that the promise of economic prosperity which arrived with the advent of World War II combined with the desire for higher wages and more consumer goods to undermine support for a shorter work week. Furthermore, these scholars suggest that any renewal support for a shorter work week will await the rejection of consumerism among American workers.

In contrast to these scholars, the findings of this study suggest that support for a shorter work week persisted beyond the Depression years and that the failure within organized labor to fight for and win the shorter work week was a result of the unresponsiveness of organized labor in relation to persistent rank-and-file support for a shorter work week.

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Introduction: A Slacker's Paradise

As I write, the unemployment rate in the United States hovers at a humiliatingly low 4.6%. So low that I am tempted to deny the accuracy of the statistics. After all, the unemployment rate doesn't even count as unemployed those people who, in despair, have stopped looking for work. And then there are all the people locked up in prisons and mental institutions. None of them are counted. But it is no use; the wall of denial crumbles. In fact, the "discouraged" population has been shrinking at an extraordinary rate as the labor force participation rate has grown to all time highs. And, while the institutionalized are not counted, that was as true during the double digit unemployment of the early 1980s as it is today. Even if the "accurate" rate is as much as 10% higher than the official rate, it is nevertheless impossible to avoid the humiliating fact that unemployment has been allowed to fall significantly, relative to any rate -- official or clandestine.

Why humiliating? Because just a couple of years ago, most economists -- corporate and academic -- believed that if unemployment dropped below 5.7 or 5.6%, workers would become sufficiently self-confident to begin making costly demands on employers. Economists have a name for that line in the sand. The so-called "non-inflationary rate of unemployment" ("NIRU") is essentially a measure of worker militancy and market audacity. It asks, "How high does unemployment have to go before you break the spirit of the working class?" or conversely, "How low can

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In 1996, as the falling unemployment rate approached 5.6%, Stephen Roach, chief economist at Morgan Stanley, put his reputation on the line when he warned his clients that with such low rates -- combined with the coincidence of new leadership at the helm of organized labor -- the US was due for a profound worker backlash. Worker self-confidence leads to new demands on employers, dramatically increasing wage pressures and, ultimately, undermining corporate profits. He warned Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan that lowering interest rates to create even faster economic growth and lower unemployment would ignite an unprecedented round of wage inflation that could only hurt investors in the long run.

But Greenspan argued that there is no direct correlation between any particular unemployment rate and worker self-confidence. Indeed, one feature of Greenspan's tenure has been that economists have acknowledged the way the shifting sands of time reconfigure the relationship between unemployment and the assertiveness of the working class. In a nod to the variability of the empowerment-unemployment threshold, the economists changed its name from the so-called "natural rate of unemployment" ("NARU") to its current, floating signifier.

Why did Greenspan ignore Roach and the conventional wisdom, loosening monetary policy and allowing unemployment to drop precipitously? Leaving aside the explanation that he is "a nice man," Greenspan's unconventional approach was grounded in his keen appreciation for the subjective mediation that disturbs any simple correlation between unemployment and wage pressure. He has highlighted a key variable -- the so-called "quit rate" -- which, he has argued, is a more sensitive index

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of emergent labor market pressures, but which is not tightly correlated with the unemployment rate. Known less formally as the "take-this-job-and-shove-it" index, the quit rate measures the proportion of employed workers audacious enough to jump ship, quitting their jobs without having already found new employment, hurling themselves into the mosh pit of the labor market.

What Greenspan recognized, when few others did, was that there is linear *history* to worker audacity that runs through the cyclical vacillation. There is a new kind of "learning curve" behind the labor market anxiety. Back in 1979, his predecessor, Paul Volker, was forced to tighten monetary policy until unemployment reached into *double digits* before he could be certain that he had broken the back of the working class and put an end to wage pressure. The working class, having been battered by bouts of unemployment throughout the 1970s, kept coming back for more, like some Hollywood hero. Volker had his work cut out for him. It was impressive, really.

But when Greenspan hit the brakes to slow the economy in 1987, he was surprised to see how readily wage earners cried for mercy. By the 1990s, Greenspan perceived, words like "down-sizing" were pulsing through the working class like a kind of perpetual electric shock therapy. Soon, Greenspan mused, even verbal threats would become unnecessary. Employers would simply have to *twitch* for workers to roll over and play dead.

It is possible that Greenspan's optimism -- that in his "new era" paradigm, there is no cyclical end to the free fall of worker anxiety -- is unwarranted. News of

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the death of the working class is greatly exaggerated and there is plenty of money to be lost betting against the pretensions of wage earners. Alternatively, Greenspan may not be willing to maintain his "easy money" policy long enough to find the bottom of the barrel. Either way it is important to begin to consider the factors which have engendered this historical moment of humility.

A Loafer's Paradise

During World War II, Martin Glaberman witnessed first-hand the audacious militancy of the working class. As a young Detroit labor activist associated with a small left-wing group, Glaberman opposed the War and committed himself to supporting the labor struggles of rank-and-file members of the United Automobile Workers (UAW). Interested in the strike activity of the working class during wartime, Glaberman had a unique perspective with which to view the impact of labor market shortages on the self-confidence of the working class, even against the backdrop of intense demands for patriotic self-sacrifice. His 1980 study of that period, *Wartime Strikes: The Struggle Against the No-Strike Pledge in the UAW During World War II*, stands as one of the great documentary studies of what the Italian Marxist, Antonio Negri, called the "self-valorization" of the working class.[1]

In Detroit there was a period of remarkably bold struggles in which African American men and women, white women, and young white men from the rural south took advantage of their newly discovered labor market leverage to improve their lot.

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[1] Martin Glaberman (1980) Wartime Strikes: The Struggle against the No-Strike Pledge in the UAW. Detroit: Bewick Editions; Antonio Negri (1984) *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse*. New York: Autonomedia.

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The terms of struggle ranged from extraordinarily bold and historic demands for the abolition of employment discrimination against African American men and women of all races, to everyday petitions for improved air quality and a slower pace of work. *Fortune* magazine referred to one auto plant, the Nash-Kelvinator Plymoth Road plant in Detroit as having been "a loafer's paradise. During World War II," the *Fortune* article continued, "it was common practice for workers to get haircuts, cook food, and shoot dice during working hours."[2] For workers with labor market leverage, the limits of imagination fixed the boundaries of the possible.

While there is no question that wartime labor shortages have been occasions for extraordinary labor militancy, the term "self-valorization" is only partially appropriate for describing wartime militancy. As Glaberman acknowledged in another essay, the intoxicating labor market leverage of wartime was built on the foundation of an "exogenous" variable: world war.[3] For Glaberman, the implication is that, while workers demonstrate a capacity for militant struggle within a capitalist economy, they remain ineluctably dependent on the employers' demand for labor, and thereby, the vicissitudes of the labor market. Glaberman seems to suggest that the worker audacity that he witnessed was a chance event -- inspiring but unsustainable. Like Greenspan -- and Karl Marx -- Glaberman seems convinced that, in the long run, a reduction in the market demand for labor is sufficient to curb the pretensions of labor. Like Marx -- but unlike Greenspan! -- Glaberman argues that, ultimately, the only alternative to working class dependence and subservience is socialism.

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[2] *Fortune*, January 1955.
[3] Martin Glaberman (1968) "Unions and Black Liberation" *Radical America* 2: 57-62.

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This study seeks to demonstrate that while worker self-valorization was not responsible for creating the labor market leverage of the second World War, workers struggled to *maintain* labor shortages in the post-war era and *break* labor's dependence, not only on war, but on all exogenous variables. If, in the labor market, exogenous variables are those arising from the employer side of the bargaining equation -- that is, the *demand* for labor -- then workers have one pivotal endogenous variable attributable to and determined by the sellers' side of the equation -- the *supply* of labor.

In fact, Glaberman's own study documents the wartime popularity of the demand for "a thirty hour work week at forty hours' pay," but he seems to have viewed the proposal as indistinguishable from an assortment of other legitimate demands.[4] Apparently viewing the demand as an end unto itself -- i.e., a demand for more leisure time -- Glaberman's study does not recognize the additional significance of the proposal. The shorter work week is, after all, an essential component of a profound movement to *withdraw labor supply from the labor market* in order to maintain labor shortages -- and the intoxication of labor market leverage --without regard to the demand for labor.

Capitalist Contexts

Of course, the buyers of labor are always active in seeking leverage. In addition to the use of monetary and fiscal policy to create unemployment through "economic crisis" and recession, the buyers of labor can also modify the demand for

[4] Glaberman (1980), p.114.

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labor through the technological transformation of the labor process and through the spatial rearrangement of production.

The post-war era witnessed examples of each of these employer strategies. "Cyclical" unemployment -- i.e., an economic "slump" -- surfaced as a potential threat to labor market leverage, not only immediately after the cessation of wartime mobilization, but also during the period from 1953-54 and, more dramatically, from 1957-58. By 1952, Ford Motor Company had delivered the term "automation" to the American lexicon. In the aftermath of the wartime labor shortages, Ford engineers, and industrial engineers throughout the economy, had set about creating impressive new labor-saving technologies with which it would be possible to increase production of commodities while diminishing employer reliance on living labor. Finally, Ford and other employers responded to tight labor markets in specific areas by seeking out geographic locations where labor markets were, at least temporarily, more flooded and workers were more modest and self-sacrificing.

However, as an effort to sever labor's dependence on the demand for labor, the movement for a shorter work week was not so exclusively, or even primarily, a battle between workers and employers. More to the point, all of the "movement" happens on the sellers' side of the table and revolves around issues of labor supply. While some schools of labor historiography insist that one begin by situating workers within "their industry" and "their company," this is the history of corporations and capitalists, not of workers. The historian of syndicalist labor struggle has as only as much interest in such things as do syndicalist movements themselves, i.e., not much.

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A self-valorizing movement for working class leverage within a capitalist labor market must stipulate the compulsion of capitalist initiatives from the start. The persistent drive by employers to flood the labor market and reduce the leverage of workers forms the backdrop against which workers struggle. But a self-valorizing movement is essentially *affirmative* in its action, not merely defensive or reactive, and certainly not conservative.

Syndicalist Strategies

Self-valorizing movements of market sellers' -- regardless of the commodity for sale -- are commonly called "syndicates." The aim of syndicalist movements, including syndicalist labor movements, is to withdrawal supply of a commodity in a sustainable manner. The decisive strategic question for syndicalists is not *whether* to reduce supply, but *how* this shall be accomplished.

For any post-war syndicalist labor movement, the *method* of withdrawing labor supply would be crucial in determining the strategic sustainability of any postwar labor movement. During World War II, when the demand for labor soared and "manpower" was shipped overseas, those who remained -- especially those traditionally excluded from selling labor for wages in the labor market, or limited to segregated areas of the market -- took advantage of the opportunity to supply labor and enjoy the leverage of wartime labor market relations. It was, as noted above, a time of tremendous dynamism and transformative opportunity for African American men and women,

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white women, and young urban neophytes breaking free from the limitations and inhibitions of rural life.

As the war ended, the threat of a flooded labor market in the post-war era put a premium on the question of labor supply. In the immediate aftermath of the war, many white women did retreat -- many were pushed -- from the labor market.[5] Ultimately, however, this would prove to be a temporary withdrawal through non-participation. The entire history of post-war labor market dynamics could be written in terms of the struggle of such women, and their daughters, to return to the labor market. So, too, African American men and women have struggled, not only to maintain, but to amplify the labor market gains made during World War II.[6]

From the perspective of a syndicalist labor movement, the question was how to confront these demands for market participation, while simultaneously withdrawing labor supply and maintaining market leverage. How would labor supply be limited? Through a return to exclusions, segregations, and divisive seniority mechanisms? Through the progressive reduction in the hours of labor supplied by each worker? Or would labor force participation increase *without* a simultaneous withdrawal of labor supply, flooding labor markets and curbing the pretensions of all market participants?

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[5] Nancy F. Gabin (1990) *Feminism in the Labor Movement: Women and the United Auto Workers, 1935-1975*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Nancy Gabin (1991) "Time out of Mind: The UAW's Response to Female Labor Laws and Mandatory Overtime in the 1960s" in *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor* edited by Ava Baron. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. See also, Ruth Milkman (1987) *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

[6] August Meier & Elliot Rudwick (1979) *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW*. New York: Oxford University Press; Charles Denby (1989) *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press; Martin Glaberman (1968) "Unions and Black Liberation" *Radical America* 2: 57-62; William H. Harris (1982) *The Harder We Run: Black Workers Since the Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press.

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The Corporatist-Socialist Opposition

But these are the questions of a *syndicalist* labor movement. And while the American labor movement was, for a time, famous around the world for its uniquely *market* oriented approach, elements of the American republican tradition of democratic citizen participation, along with European and socialist traditions, were combined in the formation of an alternative *corporatist* approach to labor relations. In 1928, J.B.S. Hardman, one of the leading theorists of corporatist labor relations, accurately specified the distinction between the two traditions.

> The chieftains of labor were bargainers, shrewd politicians, and, save for rare exceptions, they were totally unrelated to the fundamental processes and problems of industry. The opportunity... lay in a direction more significant than collective bargaining. Labor could, if it would, assume responsibilities for production and ascend to active participation in the control of industry. But leaders of labor stuck to what they thought was their God-ordained job: they would sell labor for as good a price as they could command, but exercise control of industry they would not. They brushed aside the power that lay in their reach. They lacked the will to power.[7]

Hardman, in youth a revolutionary socialist and in maturity a social democrat, was not simply a labor theorist, but a top adviser to the first great corporatist labor leader in America, Sidney Hillman, and a great admirer of the second, Walter Reuther. Hillman, as president of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA), and Reuther, as president of the United Automobile Workers (UAW), were hailed by

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[7] J.B.S. Hardman (1928) "Postscripts to Ten Years of Labor Movement" in *American Labor Dynamics in the Light of Post-War Developments* edited by J.B.S. Hardman. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

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corporatists and socialists for seeking to *transcend* the narrow and partial interests of sellers' in a market. In a tribute to the republican impulse, these two leaders were exalted as "labor statesmen." In its most revolutionary ambitions, corporatism would become synonymous with socialism and labor would set aside *market leverage* in exchange for *political sovereignty*. Corporatism and socialism aim to *abolish the differentiated space of markets* and market struggles and establish, in their place, a *unified polis*.

In his 1970 book, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, Albert Hirschman suggests that the "political" model of interaction is fundamentally distinct from the "market" model of exchange.[8] It might be useful, therefore, to think of corporatism as corresponding to Hirschman's political model, while syndicalism might be understood in terms of his market model. Hirschman contrasts the "exit option," associated with competitive market conditions, to the "voice option," associated with a political mode of that Hirschman links with a "monopoly" situation in which there is no exit. Hirschman defines the "voice option" as "any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs." Hence, "voice" is also associated with loyalty. In their 1984 book, *What Do Unions Do?*, Richard Freeman and James Medoff provide a useful application of Hirschman's "voice option" to the field of labor relations.[9] In a definition that approximates Hardman's corporatist vision, Freeman and Medoff, assert that "voice means discussing with an employer conditions that ought to be changed."

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[8] Albert O. Hirschman, (1970) *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
[9] Richard B. Freeman & James L. Medoff (1984) *What Do Unions Do?*. New York: Basic Books.

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In Hirschman's work, the exit option is associated with market leverage: a market player does not feel compelled to "discuss" anything. Rather, dissatisfaction is "articulated" only indirectly and irresponsibly, through exit. As Greenspan understands, the exit option is associated with leverage. For the market syndicalist, loyalty, if it means anything, is simply the effect of having no exit.

A syndicalist labor movement, therefore faces two significant challenges without even entering into market exchanges with employers. The first challenge, establishing a sustainable *method* for the withdrawal of labor supply, may not even be as difficult as the second challenge, maintaining *the exit options* of market spaces *as such* in the struggle against corporatism. Indeed, in the post-war struggle to withdraw labor through the reduction of the length of the work week, the most significant obstacle was not racial, gender, ethnic, or age cleavages, but the opposition of corporatists, especially -- but not exclusively -- Walter Reuther.

Union Factionalism and Rival Unionism

There is, within organized labor, the widely endorsed notion that a united labor movement is stronger than a divided movement. Thus, within unions, there is a fear of and bias against bitter factional fights in union elections and -- even more pronounced -- against rival unionism and raiding efforts by collective bargaining agents. One indication of the consensus: the most thoughtful -- though fallacious -- studies of union factionalism and rival unionism were written more than 50 years ago.

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Presumably, the question has been settled and the case closed, with no further investigation necessary.

In his 1928 article, "Factional Fights in Trade Unions," A. J. Muste suggested that the bias against factionalism was premised on the assumption that as an army preparing to do battle with a single-minded foe, unions required rank-and-file workers to unify behind the incumbent leadership.[10] Anti-incumbents are viewed with suspicion and easily portrayed by opponents as perfidious traitors to the cause of labor unity.

The classic work on rival unionism remains Walter Galenson's 1940 book, *Rival Unionism in the United States.*[11] But, remarkably, even this book -- written in the context of the rival unionism represented by the formation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) as a rival to the American Federation of Labor (AFL) -- does not stop to investigate the consequences of rivalry, but only to evaluate the effectiveness of various strategies for *overcoming* rivalry. The premise of the book, which is merely asserted and not demonstrated, is that the consequences of rival unionism are altogether negative. Indeed, Galenson considered this to be "obvious" and "daily shouted in newspaper headlines." It is precisely this obvious consensus that demands interrogation.

The problem with this bias toward unity is that it confuses the undeniable necessity for solidarity among workers with the unity of labor representatives and bargaining agents at the expense of the rank-and-file. Specifically, solidarity among

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[10] A.J. Muste (1928) "Factional Fights in Trade Unions" in *American Labor Dynamics* edited by J.B.S. Hardman. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Co..

[11] Walter Galenson (1940) *Rival Unionism in the United States.* New York: American Council on Public Affairs.

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workers in a syndicalist labor movement is enhanced insofar as workers refuse to underbid one another in the labor market and insofar as they join in the struggle against labor itself, by refusing to flood the labor market. Nothing within the terms of this solidaristic effort -- what John Commons, a theorist of labor syndicalism, referred to as the imperative of "joint aggrandizement" -- necessitates anti-competitive "unity slates" among candidates for union office or "no-raiding pacts" among collective bargaining agents.[12]

What follows from this unity bias, however, is that workers are deprived of "exit" options and limited to relatively ineffective "voice" strategies when seeking to further their interests. Thus, for example, within the post-war labor movement, the fight for a shorter work week was a rank-and-file struggle, resisted in many cases by corporatist -- or simply complacent -- labor bureaucracies. But the rank-and-file desire for a shorter work week was most potent in a local union, UAW Local 600, which was most famous within the labor union for its *factionalism*. In Local 600, where elected leaders competed to represent the desires of the rank-and-file, factionalism created an *upward* spiral of militancy. Those leaders who became complacent were not moved by persuasive "voices" from below, but by the threat of "exit" -- that is, the rank-and-file withdrawal of support within a competitive political marketplace.

Similarly, the movement for a shorter work week was enhanced, not undermined, by the existence of rival unionism after 1935. This was *not* a

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[12] John R. Commons (1913) "Restrictions By Trade Unions" in *Labor and Administration*. New York: Sentry Press.

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consequence of any progressive "essence" at the core of the CIO. Indeed, if anything, the more corporatist leadership of the CIO opposed, as a matter of principle, the struggle for a shorter work week. But the rivalry between the AFL and the CIO made the "principles" of labor statesmen far less important than their responsiveness to rank-and-file demands. While Galenson suggested that the rivalry between the AFL and the CIO was essentially harmful to the cause of labor, there is reason to believe that the sum of the *rival* parts was greater than the *merged* whole. Thus, even the relatively underdeveloped tradition of rival unionism during the early years of the post-war era, the threat of rank-and-file "exit" -- through the successful raiding campaign of a rival union -- made all labor leaders more accountable to the rank-and-file demand for a shorter work week. Few events undermined the rank-and-file demand for a shorter work week as much as the signing of a no-raiding pact between the AFL and the CIO, and the ultimate merger of the rival federations in December 1955.

The Cold War Entrepreneur

The factionalism running through the internal political process at UAW Local 600 was not the result of an entrepreneurial spirit *as such*. Indeed, none of the competing parties actually would have made an argument for the value of factionalism or rival unionism. Rather, the factionalism was the consequence of a Cold War drive by Communists and anti-Communists of various sorts to win control of the institutions of the American labor movement.

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In 1941, when Ford recognized the UAW local as the collective bargaining unit for employees at his gigantic River Rouge plant, Ford had approximately 85,000 autoworkers on the payroll. The Local was itself the size of many International Unions in other industries, and in terms of internal political structure, the Local was divided into approximately 18 different buildings or "units" which would, on a comparative basis with other *Local* unions, be themselves considered *very large*.

The size of this local captured the imagination of all the key players in drama of Communism and anti-Communism in the American labor movement. From the initiation of its construction in 1917, those who dreamed of capturing control of the means of production, in general, or control of the labor movement, in particular, dreamed of capturing one trophy above all others: the Rouge. With the production of Diego Rivera's famous 1932 murals depicting the Rouge production process, the Ford plant became *the* symbol of modern, vertically integrated, industrial production. As many scholars have documented, the Rouge was targeted almost immediately by the Communist Party (CP) and by the later years of the Depression, was home to active political factions, including the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (or, ACTU). As other Cold War players, like the ex-Trotskyist Workers Party (WP) and the ex-Trotskyist Socialist Union, arrived on stage in later years, they struggled to establish a base in Local 600.

Indeed, the same economies of scale intended to benefit the Ford Motor Company were immediately recognized as advantageous for Cold War factionalists. With 85,000 workers concentrated in one local union, the "per capita" costs of

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assigning organizers to the Rouge and assigning reporters to cover Rouge events for factional newspapers were significantly lower than those of smaller local unions. Between the late 1940s and mid-fifties, factional newspapers regularly covering events at the Rouge included the CP's *Daily Worker*, as well as its special *Michigan Edition* of the *Sunday Worker*; the SWP's newspaper, *The Militant*; the Shachtmanite Workers Party -- later the Independent Socialist League (ISL) -- newspaper, *Labor Action*; and the Association of Catholic Trade Unionist newspaper, the *Wage Earner*. The political culture of the Rouge was well developed. Indeed, it was in all likelihood the most pluralistic, factionally divided local in the UAW.

To the extent that this political culture demanded competitive elections and appeals to rank-and-file desires, Cold War parties learned how to "market" themselves to the rank-and-file. What emerged from this competition was a potent shorter work week campaign, championed by Cold Warriors committed to maintaining a base of support among the rank-and-file of Local 600.

Thus, there were essentially two lines of history flowing through Local 600. At one level, Cold War opponents -- ironically, *all* corporatists in *their own* perspectives on the labor movement -- battled for control of the giant Local 600. But, in competing with each other, and in learning how to say what the rank-and-file wanted to hear, they revealed a second level of history: a militant, syndicalist, rank-and-file committed to the fight for a shorter work week.

Forgotten History

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The post-war movement for a shorter work week -- and the tremendous militancy of the rank-and-file workers who struggled for self-valorization and market leverage -- is, for the most part, a *forgotten history*. This may be the result of a random and inadvertent lapse within the fields of 20th century American labor and social history. If so, then I hope that this study, although undertaken by a sociologist and intended to serve as sociological inquiry, will nevertheless be accepted as a minor contribution to the historical chronicle of the post-war American labor movement.

I argue, however, that the militancy of rank-and-file workers in the post-war era and their struggle for a shorter work week was forgotten for one simple reason: the Communist Party learned how to champion their cause. At the start of the Cold War, the Communists were desperate to retain a base of power in the American labor movement. Where Communists -- or their allies -- controlled the leadership of a union, the CP sought to maintain that control of the bureaucracy. Where anti-Communists controlled the leadership of a union, the CP became a champion of rank-and-file rebellions, insurgencies, and militant labor struggles of all kinds. While not particularly interested in the particular demands or struggles, the CP was desperate, when in the opposition, to win a base of support among the rank-and-file by effectively articulating their demands. Indeed, the CP would eventually opt out of this game when it decided that it could aid Soviet interests without the support of the rank-and-file. But it was during the immediate post-war years that the terms of the Cold War alignments were fixed and the movement for a shorter work week was a Communist-led movement.

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Many anti-Communists were committed socialists with long-standing interest in the struggles of rank-and-file workers. However, when Communists began to champion these struggles, many anti-Communists decided that the struggle against Communism would have to take precedence over the struggles of rank-and-file workers. It would be difficult or even impossible, they reasoned, to support rank-and-file insurgencies and articulate militant rank-and-file demands without giving aid and comfort to the Stalinists. It was a very real dilemma for many very well-intentioned figures within the anti-Stalinist left.

Reuther Fiction

It is a tragedy of Cold War history that many figures within the anti-Stalinist left who put anti-Communist struggles ahead of rank-and-file struggles often did so by withdrawing from the factional contest in which parties competed in games of one-upmanship in an effort to win the support of the rank-and-file. In the UAW, in particular, some of the most intellectually sophisticated figures of the anti-Stalinist left -- especially the members of the Workers Party (later, the Independent Socialist League), an ex-Trotskyist group led by Max Shachtman -- aligned themselves with the incumbent administration, led by the anti-Stalinist Walter Reuther. Like Reuther, the Shachtmanites committed themselves to the task of *containing* and *destroying* the troublesome (i.e., "Stalinist") rank-and-file struggles and opposition factions.

What is important about this Shachtmanite-Reuther alliance is not the repressive effort. That effort was largely unsuccessful, often humiliatingly so, because

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the rank-and-file was unwilling to allow labor struggles to be subordinated to Cold War battles and refused to have the Cold War be resolved at the expense of its syndicalist labor agenda. Rather, there are two other reasons why the Shachtmanite maneuver was consequential.

First, the Shachtmanite tradition of anti-Stalinism included a compelling critique of the "bureaucratic" logic at the heart of Soviet totalitarianism that attracted many of the great writers and thinkers of the post-war era. It is impossible to determine, but interesting to ponder, how much more powerful the syndicalist current within the rank-and-file would have been had this cosmopolitan intellectual circle continued to compete for the support of, and articulate the demands of, rank-and-file workers in the post-war era.

Second, the Shachtmanite faction, once it aligned itself with the UAW bureaucracy, developed a legitimizing narrative that shaped the post-war understanding of the relationship between labor bureaucracies and rank-and-file workers, as well as assumptions about the aspirations of workers in the post-war era.

During World War II, the Shachtmanites, who opposed the War, were unique among left-wing factions within the UAW for their defense of rank-and-file struggles and anti-bureaucratic insurgencies. Thus, the two major histories of the struggles of rank-and-file workers during World War II were crafted by two authors more-or-less faithful to the Shachmanite wartime perspective. Glaberman's 1980 book, *Wartime Strikes*, and Nelson Lichtenstein's 1982 book, *Labor's War at Home: the CIO in World War II* both explore the complicated and often troubled relationship between

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rank-and-file workers and union bureaucracies and both document the extraordinary syndicalist militancy of the American working class.[13]

However, after the War, when the Shachtmanites joined the UAW administration, Shachtmanite historiographical perspective changed as well. The great Shachtmanite labor book of the immediate post-war era was a very favorable portrayal of the president of the UAW, Walter Reuther. Written by New York-based Irving Howe and Detroit-based B.J. Widick, the Shachtmanites aligned themselves closely with Reuther's agenda in their 1949 book, *The UAW and Walter Reuther*.[14] Similarly, Nelson Lichtenstein's second major work, which includes his consideration of the post-war labor movement, was a *biography* of Reuther. Not surprisingly, this 1995 book, *Walter Reuther: The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit*, strays very little from the Shachmanite version of post-war history.[15]

The Unsilent Fifties, Revisited

In his 1973 book, *False Promises*, Stanley Aronowitz began the process of revising post-war labor history and social history in a chapter he entitled, "The Unsilent Fifties."[16] Indeed, I would suggest, following Aronowitz, that the image of the 1950s as a silent decade tells us quite a bit about the political perspectives of the

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[13] Glaberman (1980); Nelson Lichtenstein (1982) *Labor's War at Home: The CIO in World War II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[14] Irving Howe and B.J. Widick (1949) *The UAW and Walter Reuther*. New York: Random House.
[15] Nelson Lichtenstein (1995) *Walter Reuther: The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit*. New York: Basic Books.
[16] Stanley Aronowitz (1973) *False Promises: The Shaping of American Working-Class Consciousness*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

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narrators of this so-called "silent" picture, but illuminates very little about the rank-and-file rumblings that characterized the post-war era.

In order for the anti-Stalinist left to account for its decision to support bureaucracies -- or to abandon the question of labor relations altogether -- its the legitimizing narrative had to discount the potential militancy and "authenticity" of rank-and-file struggles. In his 1994 history of the Shachtmanites, *Max Shachtman and His Left: A Socialist's Odyssey Through the "American Century,"* Peter Drucker discusses this element of the Shachtmanite legacy, revealed most clearly in Max Shachtman's own suggestion that, "By 'the labor movement,' we must perforce refer today [to] the politically active officialdom."[17]

C. Wright Mills -- not himself a Shachtmanite, but a figure within the anti-Stalinist left, all the same -- added, "on occasion rank-and-file leaders have upset the rule of the big shots of the union world. Now, however, there is no general surge of rank-and-file revolt against labor leaders."[18] But he was forced to qualify this sweeping generalization. "Anyone who has watched a successful CP revolt knows that the CPers are not for rank-and-file democracy any more than the vested interests they replace." But the question was not whether CPers were well-intentioned in their labor movement interventions but whether there were any signs of rank-and-file revolt. Those who had "watched a successful CP revolt" might have been unhappy with what they saw. But could they have failed to notice that such a revolt was successful

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[17] Peter Drucker (1994) *Max Shachtman and His Left: A Socialist's Odyssey Through the "American Century"*. Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press International.
[18] C. Wright Mills (1948) *The New Men of Power: America's Labor Leaders*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co.

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precisely because, for better or worse, it was able to tap into the energy of rank-and-file revolt?

But the anti-Stalinist, socialist left did not simply repress those elements of the era which could not cram into their legitimizing story. Indeed, they did not see the militant market syndicalism of the rank-and-file because they were not *looking* for it. As Hardman had made clear as early as 1928, narrow market syndicalism -- even a militant syndicalism -- was, to a socialist, not a sign of radicalism at all. In his 1948 book, *The New Men of Power: America's Labor Leaders* (dedicated to his mentor, JBS Hardman), C. Wright Mills could claim with some authority that "in the left's view... the unionized workers would continually strive to encroach upon the functions now performed by owners of industry and their appointed managers... Within the company, the plant is to be taken over by the union to the fullest extent of its power. Ideally, if all management personnel did not show up for work, the plant could be effectively operated by the workers and their unions."[19]

When this socialist vision failed to bear fruit within the American working class in the aftermath of World War II, socialists of all kinds were surprised and -- more to the point -- profoundly discouraged. Had the anti-Stalinist left asked, "What do American workers aspire to in the post-war world?," it might have heard an earful. Instead, the anti-Stalinists returned repeatedly to the question, "Why no socialism in America?" In response to this, they developed an entire set of characterizations of the American worker.

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[19] Mills (1948).

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Chief among these are two competing versions of the same post-socialist narrative. First, because the working class proved uninterested in becoming the revolutionary vanguard of a new, rational, socialist political system and couldn't even muster sufficient political will to form a social-democratic labor party, it was viewed as essentially complacent. Daniel Bell, a leading anti-Stalinist socialist, captured the essence of this perspective in his 1960 book, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties.*[20] Second, because post-war prosperity left the socialists without a pauperized proletariat preparing for power, the post-war worker was dismissed as a mere consumer, distracted by bread and circuses.

Of course, socialists were essentially *correct* in their depictions of the post-war working class. Workers were not interested in socialism. And they were more committed to market relations than to political interaction. And, indeed, the rank-and-file enjoyed "stepping out" as playful, irresponsible, frivolous, compulsive consumers. But the socialists drew all the wrong strategic conclusions regarding the *significance* of these phenomena. I would argue that these qualities, while not compatible with socialism, are completely consistent with the aspirations of a self-valorizing movement for working class leverage within a capitalist labor market. Indeed, if the working class is, today, confounded in its capacity to achieve labor market leverage, it is certainly not because workers have been *too* market oriented, but because organized labor and the ideological left has devoted itself too little to the cultivation of working class leverage within a capitalist labor market.

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[20] Daniel Bell (1960) *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties.* New York: Free Press.

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A Foil to Materialistic Values?

The significance of the movement for a shorter work week in the post-war era is in danger of being completely lost. In recent years, several authors have begun to advocate a reduction of the length of the work week. The difficulty is that all of these authors reproduce the essential elements of Shachtmanite characterizations of the post-war era, notice that the shorter work week is missing, and declare that it was *because* of post-war prosperity that the movement for a shorter work week was abandoned. What follows from this explanation is a version of the shorter work week that would have been completely unfamiliar to its labor movement advocates during the post-war era.

The post-war movement for a shorter work week was a strategy for increasing market leverage through the withdrawal of labor supply in order to maximize the wages and enhance the working conditions of the rank-and-file wage earner. But with the publication of several recent books about worktime -- including Juliet Schor's 1992 surprise bestseller, *The Overworked American*; Jeremy Rifkin's 1995 book, *The End of Work*; Benjamin Kline Hunnicutt's 1996 study, *Kellogg's Six-Hour Day*; and Arlie Russell Hochschild's 1997 sociological blockbuster, *The Time Bind* -- the issue of the shorter work week has attracted the attention of communitarian social reformers committed to a program of economic austerity.

What is particularly disturbing about all of these authors is that, while each and every one is an advocate for the shorter work week, they each consider themselves, first and foremost, to be *consumer critics* (that is to say, they criticize consumers), all

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are quite skeptical about affluence, and all are defenders of family and community morality. Juliet Schor's newest book (forthcoming), is not about work so much as the evils of consumerism and a call to austerity, simplicity, and community. Benjamin Hunnicutt's earliest intellectual work considers the vision of the Catholic Church in advocating an anti-materialist doctrine and a program of maximum work hours *and* a maximum wage.[21] More recently, Hunnicutt told US News & World Report, "We envision a reawakening of the American dream of progress as more time for family and leisure activities -- not ever increasing wealth and consumption."[22] In *The Overworked American* Schor pins all hope for a renewed shorter hour movement on the possibility of people "giving up future income for time off."[23] Schor describes Americans as "giddy" with wealth, a nation of "shopping addicts" caught in an "insidious cycle of work-and-spend" in a *vain* effort to "keep up with the Joneses."[24]

It is interesting to note that the anti-consumerism literature is somewhat divided on the historic relationship between consumerism and the shorter hours movement. While Hunnicutt and Schor see the two as fundamentally antagonistic, Stuart Ewen, dean of consumer criticism, began his entire intellectual project, in his 1976 book, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture*, by explicitly linking shorter hours to the libertarian, Madison Avenue "school of freedom" and the rise of consumerism.[25] As a consumer critic,

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[21] Benjamin K. Hunnicutt (1983) "Monsignor John A. Ryan and the Shorter Hours of Labor: A forgotten Vision of 'Genuine' Progress" *Catholic Historical Review*, volume 69.
[22] *US News & World Report*, August (?) 1997.
[23] Juliet B. Schor (1992) *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure*. New York: Basic Books.
[24] Schor (1992).
[25] Stuart Ewen (1976) *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

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Ewen is, somewhat uncomfortably, also a critic of shorter hours. His politics, notwithstanding, Ewen is historically correct to identify a correlation -- rather than a contradiction -- between shorter hours and consumerism.

Hunnicutt, the historian in the group, and Schor, trained as an economist, have taken upon themselves the difficult -- but politically significant -- task of chronicling and explaining the *end* of the shorter hours movement. The burden of their effort is to demonstrate that the shorter work week must have ended with the Depression and could not possibly have found rank-and-file support amongst post-war consumers.

Hunnicutt's analysis leans heavily on a version of mid-century social history, described as a broad shift in American moral values: "[D]uring the Depression, free time took the form of massive unemployment. Instead of accepting labor's 30 hour week remedy, Roosevelt and the majority of Americans saw this free time as a tragedy that had to be eliminated... The concept of free time as leisure--a natural part of economic advance and *a foil to materialistic values*--was abandoned.... Since the depression, few Americans have thought of work reduction."[26] Juliet Schor, similarly requires that the movement end with the coming of prosperity. "Some time between the Depression and the end of the Second World War, [the] struggle collapsed.... The consumerism of the postwar era has not been without its effects on the way we use our time."[27]

In the case study that follows, I have tried to begin the process of reconstructing some pieces of the post-war shorter work week. If I have presented

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[26] Emphasis added. Benjamin Hunnicutt (1988) *Work Without End: Abandoning Shorter Hours for the Right to Work.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
[27] Schor (1992).

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plausible evidence to support my claim that the rank-and-file consistently supported the movement for a shorter work week during the peak of post-war prosperity, and thereby undermined the anti-consumer thesis undergirding the findings of Hunnicutt and Schor, then the study will have served its intended purpose.

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Methodological Introduction and Literature Review

Any examination of the post-World War II fight for a shorter work week in the American labor movement involves several different, intersecting but relatively autonomous tracks of history. The first is the history of the shorter hours movement, as a whole. This case study explores the history of the withdrawal of labor *within* the 'organized' labor movement of the United States. However, the cultural history of everyday struggles against labor illuminate *much* of interest to the question of worktime.[28] Similarly, international comparative work, while ongoing, demands more attention.[29]

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[28] For cultural studies of everyday life struggles against work within organized labor, see Stephen Norwood (1990) *Labor's flaming youth : telephone operators and worker militancy, 1878-1923.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press; Ben Hamper (1991) Rivethead : tales from the assembly line. New York, NY: Warner Books; Michael Seidman (1991) *Workers against work: labor in Paris and Barcelona during the popular fronts.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Studies attempting to meld social history and labor history which consider the struggle against labor include Herbert George Gutman (1976) *Work, culture, and society in industrializing America: essays in American working-class and social history.* New York: Knopf; Roy Rosenzweig (1983) *Eight hours for what we will : workers and leisure in an industrial city, 1870-1920.* New York: Cambridge University Press; Roy Rosenzweig & Elizabeth Blackmar (1992) *The park and the people: a history of Central Park.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press. David Nasaw (1985) *Children of the city: at work and at play.* New York : Oxford University Press; David Nasaw (1993) *Going out: the rise and fall of public amusements.* New York: BasicBooks; Lewis Erenberg (1981) *Steppin' out: New York nightlife and the transformation of American culture, 1890-1930.* Westport: Greenwood Press; Kathy Lee Peiss (1986) *Cheap amusements: working women and leisure in turn-of-the-century New York.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

This entire tradition owes some debt to the tradition of British cultural studies. See Selma James & Mariarosa Dalla Costa (1973) *The power of women and the subversion of the community: Women and the subversion of the community.* Bristol: Falling Wall Press; Paul E. Willis (1977) *Learning to labor : how working class kids get working class jobs.* New York: Columbia University Press; Dick Hebdige (1979) *Subculture, the meaning of style.* London: Methuen.

Finally, best tradition of counter-cultural studies never fails to illuminate the relationship between popular culture and the struggle for the affirmation of life against labor. See especially Tom Wolfe (1963) *The Kandy-Kolored-Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby.* New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux; Ellen Willis (1992) *No more nice girls: countercultural essays.* Hanover: Wesleyan University Press; Albert Murray (1976) *Stomping the Blues.* New York: McGraw-Hill; Robin D.G. Kelley (1994) *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class.* New York: Free Press.

[29] International comparative analysis, and case studies within countries other than the United States, has already begun in many quarters. Examples include: Gerhard Bosch, Peter Dawkings and

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Second, while the shorter hours movement has a history in many unions during this period, these movements and unions will only be discussed insofar as they became consequential for the progress of the movement within the primary object of this case study the history of the shorter work week movement within the United Automobile, Aircraft and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW-CIO).[30] This is not an arbitrary selection. The automobile worker was frequently viewed as the prototypical American of the post-War era.[31] If anyone represented the new *consumer prosperity* during this period, it was the autoworker.

Francois Michon, eds. (1993) *Times are changing: Working time in 14 industrialized countries.* Geneva: International Institute for Labor Studies; Gary Cross (1988) "Worktime in International Discontinuity, 1886-1940." Pp. 155-181 in *Worktime and Industrialization: An International History* edited by Gary Cross. Philadelphia: Temple University Press; Paul Blyton (1992) "Learning from Each Other: The Shorter Working Week Campaigns in the German and British Engineering Industries" *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 13:417-430. One essay, considered a minor classic within contemporary social movement literature in the United States and often appreciated for its theoretical contribution to debates within that field, actually takes the shorter hours campaign in the Netherlands, with important reference to Germany, as its empirical case. See Bert Klandermans (1984) "Mobilization and Participation: Social-Psychological Expansions of Resource Mobilization Theory" *American Sociological Review* 49:583-600.

[30] For an extremely abridged history of the post-war shorter work week in organized labor, see David R. Roediger & Philip S. Foner (1989) *Our Own Time: A History of American Labor and the Working Day.* New York: Verso.

For studies which situate the UAW within the history of the CIO, see Art Preis (1964) *Labor's Giant Step: Twenty Years of the CIO.* New York: Pioneer Publishers; Robert H. Zieger (1995) *The CIO: 1935-1955.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press; Nelson Lichtenstein (1982) *Labor's War at Home: The CIO in World War II.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

General studies of the UAW include, Nelson Lichtenstein (1995) *Walter Reuther: The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit.* New York: Basic Books; Jack Stieber (1962) *Governing the UAW.* New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.; Kevin Boyle (1995) *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press; William Serrin (1970) *The Company and the Union: The 'Civilized Relationship of the General Motors Corporation and the United Automobile Workers.* New York: Vintage Books.

[31] The automobile workers and the UAW has, for several reasons, received a disproportionate amount of scholarly attention relative to other workers and unions. While this historiography is extremely valuable, the neglect of other sectors may indicate a tendency, on the part of labor historians and many leftists, to romanticize industrial factory work as the locus of workplace immiseration and/or class struggle. This perspective is not only misguided and historically inaccurate, but unfortunate for its complicity in contemporary assumptions about the impossibility of effective labor struggle in other, "non-factory" workplaces.

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Furthermore, Walter P. Reuther, president of the UAW International Union, and later, also president of the CIO, was perhaps the leading post-War visionary of corporatist "social unionism" in the labor movement and is still revered by many as the most militant leader of his day (and many days since).[32] But Reuther *fought against* the 30 for 40 movement in the UAW. It would be of far less strategic value for any future movement to study a corrupt, conservative, disreputable and non-ideological labor leader who did not support 30 for 40. This would merely confirm the expected or provide a target for moral condemnation. Our interest extends beyond moral condemnation to the realm of strategic investigation. Inquiry is of most use to future action when it illuminates *unanticipated* obstacles. Walter Reuther, as an individual, but more significantly, as a personification of a relatively coherent corporatist logic of "social unionism" represents such an obstacle.

Within the history of 30 for 40 inside the UAW, we focus primarily on the history of Local 600 (at Ford Motor Co. River Rouge) and its relation to the International.[33] Local 600 was the site of a rank-and-file social movement for a thirty hour work week at forty hours' pay. It was not the only Local involved with the postwar shorter hours movement, but its history warrants careful examination, especially in light of the special attention it received during the period under investigation.

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[32] Nelson Lichtenstein (1995) *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor*. New York: Basic Books.

[33] The term "International" rather than "National" was used because the membership of the UAW at that time included Canadian autoworkers. Generally, members spoke of the "International" when referring to the officers and staff of the International Union and contrasted this with the "Local" when referring either to the officers and staff of the Local Union or to the rank-and-file membership of the Local Union.

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At the very least, what follows is a single case study in search of other studies which, together, would form the basis for comparative analysis. However, even standing alone, the history chronicled below is potentially crucial to understanding the history of the postwar labor movement. Local 600 was the largest local in the UAW (for a time, membership was reported to be 89,000[34]), and it claimed to be the largest local in the world. Its role in shaping the direction of the UAW was unique. No doubt, its history is a particular history--one movement within one local, in one union, in one country. This particularity proved pivotal within a larger history. Its fate is closely bound up with the rise and fall of an intense effort by rank-and-file workers to sever their dependence upon employers' demand for labor. The members of Local 600 constituted the front line of critical labor struggle, emerging from the largest local, in the flagship labor union of the singularly hegemonic capitalist country of the post-World War II era. Its history, while partial, should not be artificially ripped from its entanglements within this larger context. While the Rouge has attracted some attention from students of Communism and anti-Communism, the story which cuts through the heart of the more common Cold War narrative is that of a militant, rank-and-file, syndicalist labor struggle for a shorter work week. This latter story remains, as yet, largely untold.[35]

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[34] The membership figure is taken from the testimony of Shelton Tappes, Recording Secretary of Local 600 during the period of peak membership. For Tappes testimony, see United States House of Representatives, Committee on Un-American Activities (1952) *Communism in the Detroit Area.* Washington: US Government Printing Office.

[35] There are, surprisingly, several important secondary sources for analysis of UAW Local 600, especially considering that the object of inquiry is a single UAW Local. While the 30 for 40 movement was a dominant and persistent part of the life of the Local for approximately 17 years, from 1948 to 1965, the Ford workers at River Rouge in the pre-union era and the members of Local 600 after its chartering in 1938 and recognition struggle in 1941, created an extremely rich history of innovative and militant struggle on many fronts.

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A sociologically informed analysis of labor history, this case study seeks to illuminate the aspirations of post-war rank-and-file workers, while acknowledging that there is no way to approach this question without innumerable mediations. While some find "oral histories" -- recollections by participants in later years -- to be useful, the history under investigation here is so political charged and linked with charges and counter-charges of "moral infidelity" -- even traitorous and subversive activities! -- that even the usual problems with oral history are magnified in this case to the point where the method of inquiry fails to illuminate.[36]

I have chosen, instead, a set of mediations that are *less* direct, *more* politically charged, but -- for all that -- more instructive. As a second-order analysis, this study pretends to have no direct access to the rank-and-file. The interest, rather, is in what contemporaneous and competing political factions tried to discover about the aspirations of the rank-and-file. These efforts at inquiry were not at all unmotivated,

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Literature which is strong on the history of the Local, but with little or no mention of the 30 for 40 movement includes: William D. Andrew (1979) "Factionalism and Anti-Communism: Ford Local 600" *Labor History* 20:227-55; Robert Asher (1995) "The 1949 Ford Speedup Strike and the Post War Social Compact, 1946-1961." Pp.127-154 in *Autowork* edited by Robert Asher & Ronald Edsforth. Albany: SUNY Press; Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein (1988) "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement" *Journal of American History* 75:786-811; Nelson Lichtenstein (1986) "Life at the Rouge: A Cycle of Workers' Control." Pp. 237-259 in *Life and Labor: Dimensions of American Working-Class History* edited by Charles Stephenson & Robert Asher. Albany: SUNY Press; August Meier & Elliott Rudwick (1979) *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW*. New York: Oxford University Press; Judith Stepan-Norris & Maurice Zeitlin, eds. (1996) *Talking Union*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press; Thomas J. Sugrue (1995) "'Forget about Your Inalienable Right to Work'": Deindustrialization and its Discontents at Ford" *International Labor and Working-Class History* 48:112-130; Robert Zieger (1990) "Showdown at the Rouge" *History Today* 40:49-56.

Only one author has actually discussed, in some detail, the 30 for 40 movement in the UAW, with considerable attention to Local 600: Ronald Edsforth (1995) "Why Automation Didn't Shorten the Work Week: The Politics of Work Time in the Automobile Industry." Pp.155-179 in *Autowork* edited by Robert Asher & Ronald Edsforth. Albany: SUNY Press. It is an excellent, if abridged, study.

[36] Stepan-Norris & Maurice Zeitlin (1996) made an admirable effort in the oral histories collected for *Talking Union*.

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but were akin to market research. Political factions needed to find a way to resonate with the rank-and-file in their efforts to maintain a base of support in local union elections.

Thus, in this case study, the story of the movement for a shorter work week is told, for the most part, through the perspective of "political elites" and ideological camps. But while it disavows the idea of unmediated "social" history, it shares none of the assumptions of traditional institutional history (i.e., that power flows from institutional actors and officers). These "factional" parties were critical to the history of Local 600, not simply because they acted like political "machines" providing patronage posts to fellow workers, but because they were *ideological* parties or caucuses. These competing factions they were forced to *market themselves ideologically* to the rank-and-file, through the crafting of various policy programs. The ticket to success was *resonance* with the life-world of the workers. Thus, institutions produced ideological discourses, but in order to "float," such discourses had to flow through the rank-and-file.

These factional contests provided the membership with the opportunity to shop around for the program that was most impressive. Furthermore, this market competition kept elites on their toes. Failure to understand the shop-floor perspective of the worker in formulating policy could lead to the loss of one's political base of support. The combination of elites inclined toward ideological *visions* and competition requiring strategic assessment of popular desires on the ground created a political culture which rewarded *ideological opportunists*. While this difference

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created the space for opportunists to maneuver with *relative* autonomy as elites, it also demanded that elites inquire about and remain responsive to the aspirations of the rank-and-file.

It goes without saying that the rank-and-file does not "speak." But so long as a competitive political culture was sustained at Local 600, elites had to craft formulations -- productions of their own imagination -- and then ask the rank-and-file for *ratification*. Ratification votes are hardly the "authentic voice" of the rank-and-file. On the contrary, it is the combination of this ratification process and the elite construction of ideological visions that proves most instructive precisely because the *motivations* and *mediations* are utterly entrenched and altogether manifest.

Thus, as a method for analysis of the political sociology of Local 600, it is possible to study the programs offered by the various slates of candidates -- ideologues and opportunists alike -- along with election results, in order identify the programs which were most frequently rewarded by the rank-and-file. Looking at commodities (union "programs") and market share (election results) it is possible to reconstruct something about the underlying consumer market (the desires of the rank-and-file). The methodological assumption of the study should be clear enough: any distinction which academic sociology maintains between "disinterested" sociological inquiry and more "interested" market research only serves to recommend market research as the model for all future inquiry.

Political opportunists are the elites most interested in formulating programs designed *specifically* to articulate rank-and-file demands. However, the history of

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Local 600 is littered, not simply with opportunists, but also with committed political ideologues. From the perspective of method, this does not disturb out model since ideologues whose program is contrary to rank-and-file demands lose elections as easily as anyone else. Nevertheless, since considerations *other* than rank-and-file demands enter into the process of program *formulation*, and this, in turn, transforms the competitive playing field for all elites staking out positions along a political spectrum, we will have occasion to discuss these parties and their *distinct* political considerations so that their motivations -- ideological and opportunistic -- are rendered with specificity.

Specifically, the history of UAW Local 600 cannot be told without reference to at least five ideological groupings: the Communist Party (CP)[37]; the Association of

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[37] For general studies of American Communism, see Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes (1992) *The American Communist Movement: Storming Heaven Itself.* New York: Twayne Publishers; Philip J. Jaffe (1975) *The Rise and Fall of American Communism.* New York: Horizon Press; and Joseph R. Starobin, *American Communism in Crisis, 1943-1957.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; James Weinstein (1975) *Ambiguous Legacy: The Left in American Politics.* New York: New Viewpoints; Maurice Isserman (1987) *If I had a Hammer: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left.* New York: Basic Books; Edward P. Johanningsmeier (1994) *Forging American Communism: The Life of William Z. Foster.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

For studies of American Communism and the labor movement, see Max M. Kampelman (1957) *The Communist Party vs. the CIO: A Study in Power Politics.* New York: F.A. Praeger; David J. Sapppos (1959) *Communism in American Unions.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co; Harvey Levenstein (1981) *Communism, Anticommunism, and the CIO.* Westport: Greenwood Press; Bert Cochran (1977) *Labor and Communism: The Conflict that Shaped American Unions.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; James R. Prickett (1969) "Some Aspects of the Communist Controversy in the CIO" *Science & Society* 33:299-321; William Z. Foster (1947) *American Trade Unionism: Principles and Organization Strategy and Tactics.* New York: International Publishers.

For studies of American Communism and the UAW, see Roger Keeran (1979) "Communist Influence in the Automobile Industry, 1920-1933: Paving the Way for an Industrial Union" *Labor History* 20:189-225; Roger R. Keeran (1979) "'Everything for Victory': Communist Influence in the Auto Industry During World War II" *Science and Society* 43:1-28; Roger Keeran (1980) *The Communist Party and the Auto Workers Unions.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press; Edward C. Pintzuk (1992) "Going Down Fighting: The Michigan Communist Party After World War II" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Wayne State University); William D. Andrew (1979) "Factionalism and Anti-Communism: Ford Local 600" *Labor History* 20:227-55; Stepan-Norris & Zeitlin (1996).

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Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU)[38]; the Workers Party (WP) and its later incarnation, the Independent Socialist League (ISL)[39]; the Socialist Workers Party (SWP)[40]; and, to a lesser extent, the Socialist Union, which broke away from the SWP in 1953.[41] Each group acted -- with greater or lesser success and ideological power -- as something akin to a "brain trust" for a corresponding group of political elites within Local 600.

In addition to a thorough review of the relevant secondary literature already accumulated within the field of labor history, this study utilizes two distinct archival forms: union records and party newspapers. Election results, campaign leaflets, and other relevant archival material, are located in files at the Wayne State University Labor Archives in Detroit, Michigan, the Michigan State University Libraries Special Collections Division in Lansing, Michigan, and the Tamiment Institute Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives at New York University. The perspective of the various elected officers of Local 600 is presented in the official newspaper of Local 600, *Ford Facts*. Election results and campaign programs are also carefully detailed in the four "ideological" newspapers which reported events at Local 600. The

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[38] Steve Rosswurm (1992) "The Catholic Church and the Left-Led Unions: Labor Priests, Labor Schools, and the ACTU." pp.119-137 in *The CIO's Left-Led Unions* edited by Steve Rosswurm. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press; Levenstein (1981).

[39] Peter Drucker (1994) *Max Shachtman and His Left: A Socialist's Odyssey Through the "American Century"*. Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press International; Kent Worcester (1996) *C.L.R. James: A Political Biography*. Albany: SUNY Press; Paul Buhle (1988) *C.L.R. James: The Artist as Revolutionary*. New York: Verso; Alan M. Wald (1987) *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

[40] Jack Barnes (1976) *James P. Cannon As We Knew Him*. New York: Pathfinder Press; Wald (1987); A. Belden Fields (1988) *Trotskyism and Maoism: Theory and Practice in France and the United States*. Brooklyn: Autonomedia.

[41] Wald (1987).

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Communist Party newspaper, the *Daily Worker* provided considerable coverage of Local 600 and, after 1948, supplemented this reporting with a special, weekly *Michigan Edition* of the Sunday *Worker* newspaper. The Association of Catholic Trade Unionists published a bi-weekly newspaper, the *Wage Earner*, which became a monthly newspaper in 1949. These papers were in competition with two other weekly papers: the Workers Party (later, Independent Socialist League) newspaper, *Labor Action*, and the Socialist Workers Party newspaper, the *Militant*. In addition to these four newspapers, a monthly journal called the *American Socialist*, published by former-Socialist Workers Party leaders (Harry Braverman and Bert Cochran), devoted considerable attention to affairs at Local 600. While none of these publications are indexed, complete copies of all are available at the New York Public Library. Each of the publications provided original reporting and analysis of affairs at Local 600, including coverage of each other's efforts to win support within the giant organization.

Because these newspapers were published by group's seeking to influence events at the Rouge, the coverage of events is politically charged. But for the purposes of political reconstruction, this lack of "neutrality" is an advantage, not a disadvantage. In general, this study uses factional newspaper coverage in order to identify the political outlook of factions. Moreover, to the extent that these newspapers are used as sources of information, the information is almost always about the activity of factional *opponents*. Boastful self-portraits crafted by factions in their own newspapers are of little use for understanding the importance of specific factional

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efforts within the Rouge and beyond, but they do clarify political positions and factional missions.

Interaction between the Local Union and the International Union is documented, not only in the newspaper publications and the Reuther administration files at the Wayne State University Archives, but also in the official *Proceedings* of the UAW Conventions. Copies of these *Proceedings* are available at the Wayne State University Archives and the Science, Industry and Business Library of the New York Public Library.

The first step in the formal analysis is the identification, using records of election results, of the names of candidates associated with various election "slates" for each Local union election. Elections occurred annually between 1941 and 1951, with a special election in 1952, followed by bi-annual elections, beginning in 1953.

The next step in the analysis is the documentation of Local union election campaign programs. These "electoral platforms" are very loosely "coded" along a spectrum, with a thoroughly syndicalist program at one end, and a completely corporatist program at the other end.

Platforms will be considered syndiclist if they make special demands for skilled workers or apprentices; if they make appeals for the enhancement of the position of those sharing an identity (e.g., gender, race, etc. for such demands as access to apprenticeships, seniority lists, or differential wage increases); or if they argue *against* programs which grant the company or the union increased disciplinary power against direct shop floor action by the membership (e.g., "company security" clauses, etc.),

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minimization of contract duration, or withdrawal of labor supply through such strategies as a slowdown in the pace of production, early retirement, or the shorter work week.

Platforms will be coded as corporatist if they attack a syndicalist slate, if they support programs which grant the company or the union increased disciplinary power against direct shop floor action by the membership (e.g., company security clause, etc.), if they support in any way increasing the "responsibility" of the workers for increased work intensity (e.g., profit-sharing, piece rates, annual improvement factor, etc.), if they support company efforts to reduce voluntary turnover (e.g., support for increasingly long-term contracts, non-portable long-term pension benefits), or if they advocate programs which aim to aid the union membership only *indirectly* as an consequence of cooperation with and support for the growth and profitability of the company. Residual categories will include "political action" and any "other initiatives" which do not fall somewhere along the programmatic spectrum between syndicalism and corporatism.[42]

At times, programs crafted by candidates for office at Local 600 related to events whose significance extend beyond the immediate relations at Local 600, to include relations with the UAW International. These relations will be documented and discussed, especially as they feed back upon to the play of ideological forces within Local 600. For example, the relation of Local 600 to the International is significant, for our purposes, insofar as Local 600 candidates campaign for office on a platform

[42] The syndicalist and corporatist perspectives on political action and state regulation are not unimportant. Indeed, they are so significant that they warrant separate, more thorough consideration than is possible within the framework of the current investigation.

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either in support of or in opposition to the corporatist (or, as applicable, syndicalist) policies of the International administration.

Election outcomes will then be linked to campaign programs.[43] The aim is to document the degree to which candidates who advocated various programs were rewarded by the rank-and-file with election to office. Any effort to draw a connection between election outcomes and campaign programs must be considered illustrative rather than conclusive. The aim, in comparing programs and outcomes, is to determine whether it is *possible* to construct a plausible and consistent narrative through the linkage of campaign programs and election results. The *status* of such a narrative remains indeterminate. At best, the comparison of campaign programs and election results may help shed some light on the ideological sympathies and aspirations of the membership, especially as it relates to corporatist and syndicalist tendencies within the labor movement.

This is an empirical study intended to demonstrate the plausibility of a theoretical perspective. While the study stands on its own as an historical narrative, the more polemical engagement with contemporary historiography, written within the footnotes of the study, may demand some theoretical and political explication.

The principal theoretical inspiration for the study is my reading of the Italian Marxism of Mario Tronti and Antonio Negri, along with the essays produced by those American readers of Tronti and Negri who briefly published a journal called

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[43] Of course, any so-called "correlation" between a campaign program and an election outcome is altogether unstable. However, the frequent use of campaign literature would seem to indicate that, at a minimum, candidates themselves were convinced of some correlation between campaign program and electoral success.

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Zerowork.[44] The theoretical framework which emerged from this tradition is often called "Autonomous Marxism," although this signifier floats over a sea of interpretive contestation and uneasy cannon formation.

Nevertheless, if this empirical study of the shorter work week is of any interest at all, it is not because of the discovery of any formerly "repressed evidence," but because the theoretical framework provided by Tronti, Negri, and their acolytes asks *different questions* and, therefore, yields different stories, even when examining the most familiar "evidence."

In particular, Autonomous Marxism emphasizes the ongoing struggles *within* capitalism, rather than the struggle to *end* capitalism. But the concentration on capitalism, rather than socialism, has nothing in common a reformism motivated by the spirit of capitulation. Rather, Autonomous Marxism is *distrustful* of the liberatory potential of socialism. Thus, it does not shy away from political revolution as impractical so much as it renounces political revolution as essentially totalitarian. Moreover, this theoretical framework, which views socialism as merely a politically organized mode for the effective extraction of labor supply from workers, helps account theoretically for resistance to socialism among rank-and-file workers.

Autonomous Marxism also rejects historiographical traditions which uncritically presume that history is driven by a voracious Capital which brutally victimizes its helpless victim, the working class. Autonomous Marxism stipulates that

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[44] For an exceptionally good literature review which differentiates this theoretical perspective from the other branches within Marxist theory, see the "Introduction" in Harry Cleaver (1979) *Reading Capital Politically*. Austin: University of Texas Press. See also, the "Introductions" in Antonio Negri (1991) *Marx Beyond Marx*. New York: Autonomedia.

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the "soul" of Capital is its drive for profits and its own self-valorization. But this theoretical tradition is called "Autonomous Marxism" because its mode of analysis rejects the idea that the working class within capitalism is essentially a *dependent* variable. Rather, just as Capital seeks its own self-valorization, so too, the working class is engaged in its own struggle for self-valorization. As a mode of analysis, Autonomous Marxism seeks to examine the self-activity of the working class, not simply in its limited capacity to "react" to Capital and "conserve" its mode of existence, but in its self-affirming, expansive, pretentious audacity and its progressive role in movement of history.

There is an optimism at the heart of Autonomous Marxism. This outlook does not emerge from a teleological certainty in the triumphant future of the working class. Indeed, more than most Marxist traditions, Autonomous Marxism is interested in the particular, historically specific, victories and defeats in the manifold struggles between Capital and the working class.

Rather, I would argue that the optimism of Autonomous Marxist theory is based upon the somewhat undertheorized intuition that the working class can achieve significant *market leverage* if its own internal formation enables effective unity in struggle. In particular, Autonomous Marxism -- more than any other theoretical framework -- emphasizes that the *struggle against labor* is simultaneously a powerful strategy capable of creating tight labor markets within capitalism, as well as an immediate, popular, and *politically unifying* step toward freedom in everyday life.

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Chapter 1: Battle Lines, 1939-1945

In the earliest years of CIO activity at Ford's River Rouge factory, prior to the auto company's recognition of UAW Local 600 in 1941, the two most powerful political factions within the Rouge, the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU) and the Communist Party (CP), competed with each other for the support of the tens of thousands of workers at the giant manufacturing facility.[45] Percy Llewellyn, associated with the CP, and Paul Ste. Marie, one of the founders of ACTU in Detroit, worked together as early leaders of the local after it was given a UAW-CIO charter on August 25, 1938.

This period of friendly competition would not last. But during those early years, the CP was following a strategy of "Popular Front" collaboration with a broad spectrum, which included the reform-minded members of Norman Thomas's Socialist Party, New Deal liberals, and even maintained a working relationship with the more right-wing, social-democratic ACTU activists (commonly called "ACTists"). At the most literal level, the Popular Front was a coalition -- "popular" rather than, say, sectarian -- formed in a battle whose "front" line was the war against fascism. At another level, the Popular Front signaled a desire, on Stalin's part, to find a way to accommodate the persistence of world capitalism and to persuade the capitalist power

[45] Judith Stepan-Norris & Maurice Zeitlin (1996), pp.16-18; Paul Weber memorandum to Philip Murray, December 3, 1939, "Ford Local 600, 1946-50" file, box 24, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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centers of Europe and the United States that the Soviet Union meant the world no harm.

The importance of the Popular Front for the history of the movement for a shorter work week, is that, like all CP policies, the Popular Front would directly determine the nature of CP initiatives within the American labor movement. And the specific quality of CP activity in the American labor movement would, in turn, determine the relative distribution and spatial arrangement of an entire constellation of factional forces, all of which would take turns championing the cause of the rank and file, in general, and the shorter work week, in particular. The River Rouge plant became a kind of crucible for the labor politics of American Communism and anti-Communism. But to reduce the Rouge factional fights to a Cold War history would be to miss the fact that, at the Rouge, even the politics of Communism and Anti-Communism necessarily revolved around substantive labor politics, with the movement for a shorter work week at its center.

The history of the movement for a shorter work week begins, then, with the end of the Popular Front on August 23, 1939. It was on that date that Stalin and Hitler signed the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact. With the signing of the pact, the Soviet Union believed itself to be no longer threatened by Hitler's expansionist regime. The Communists withdrew from the "popular" coalition and retreated from the "front" against fascism. Moreover, the CP not only withdrew from the battle against fascism, but initiated a movement designed to stop the US war machine.

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Within the American labor movement, the CP adopted a policy of what the Trotskyist labor-writer Art Preis called "pseudo-militancy."[46] Preis was correct to note that the CP had become militant for reasons having nothing to do with the domestic situation of the American working class. With the CP, and all the ideological factions involved in the American labor movement which defined themselves in relation to the CP, it must be stipulated from the start that the "motivation" for the development of various labor policies had everything to do with Stalin and almost nothing to do with rank-and-file workers in America.

What is extraordinary, notwithstanding the intentions of the various factional parties, is to observe the agility of rank-and-file workers in response to factional gyrations. Workers demonstrated, not only a careless disregard for the extremely cynical "motivations" of the various factions, but an amazing capacity for promiscuity and infidelity. The rank-and-file workers adjusted their loyalties almost as quickly as the factions themselves. But there was a difference. While the factional reversals turned on the axis of Communism and Anti-Communism, rank-and-file predilections were propelled by a simple principle: militant syndicalism and the struggle for a shorter work week. The rank and file offered provisional support for the "faction of the day" most militant in its articulation of rank-and-file demands.

Thus, to the rank and file, there was nothing "pseudo" about the militancy of the CP during the Nazi-Soviet pact. The CP was selling militancy, and the rank and file bought it. It was a great period in the history of labor struggles at the Rouge.

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[46] Art Preis (1964) *Labor's Giant Step: Twenty Years of the CIO*. New York: Pioneer Publishers, p.121.

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Indeed, it is during the period of the Nazi-Soviet pact that a CP-led strike against Ford was successful in gaining official recognition for UAW Local 600 at the Rouge on May 21, 1941. The CP turn from a US foreign policy of "collective security" to anti-war activism may have alienated many Americans during this period. If so, there was no evidence for this in Local 600. The CP militants at the Rouge were immensely popular for their tireless efforts during the long struggle for recognition.

Similarly, the shift from the Popular Front to the Nazi-Soviet pact had consequences for the political formation of the UAW as a whole. In the late 1930s, the UAW president, Homer Martin, lost control of the International Executive Board to a Popular Front coalition.[47] The so-called "Unity Caucus" coalition included many CP activists, along with those aligned with the Socialist Party, including an up-and-coming UAW leader from Detroit, Walter Reuther.[48] It was as a member of this "Unity Caucus" that Reuther climbed to a leadership position within the UAW. As a member of the caucus, Reuther was appointed as the Director of the General Motors Department. With this appointment, in May 1939, Reuther had taken his place within the leadership of the International.[49]

But this coalition, too, would change dramatically with the signing of the Nazi-Soviet pact. At the level of factional struggles within the UAW, the shift toward anti-war militancy within the CP meant, for example, that the Socialist-aligned, up-and-coming UAW leader, Walter Reuther shifted gears. With the end of the Popular Front

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[47] Lichtenstein (1995) *Walter Reuther: The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit.* New York: Basic Books, p.123-131.
[48] Lichtenstein (1995), p.123.
[49] Lichtenstein (1995), p.132-133.

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era, Reuther abandoned the CP and its "militancy" and joined with ACTU, shifting into the opposition to become the new right-wing, opposition faction of the UAW. Moreover, as the CP was now leading the crusade against the US military machine, Reuther abandoned his former anti-war ideology and joined the ranks of liberals and Socialists who combined a militant anti-Communism with a defense of US involvement in World War II.[50]

At the Rouge, Reuther's ACTU allies were clearly on the defensive during the period of the Nazi-Soviet pact. Percy Llewellyn, a CP ally, was President of the local and had supporters in thirteen of the executive board seats, compared with six seats for Paul Ste. Marie, ACTist leader at the Rouge and a founder of ACTU in Detroit. Four months into this period of CP militancy, Paul Weber, President of ACTU-Detroit, wrote asking Philip Murray to support ACTU's failing opposition to the CP-machine in control at Local 600. Driving home the need for support, Weber told Murray, "This opposition is likely to be liquidated soon unless some aid is forthcoming."[51]

Weber could not have hoped for more support than he would receive. However, it came, not from Philip Murray, but from Adolph Hitler. On June 22, 1941, the German army crossed the border into the Soviet Union, and the CP abandoned anything even approximating pseudo-militancy. Adopting the slogan, "Everything for Victory," the CP joined the war effort to the *right* of almost every other political elite inside the trade union movement, enthusiastically and infamously

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[50] Lichtenstein (1995), p.156.
[51] Memorandum from Paul Weber to Philip Murray, "Local Union 600, 1939-45" file, box 24, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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supporting the no-strike pledge and incentive pay.[52] Renouncing what may have been a temporary proto-syndicalist line, the CP now embraced a corporatist model of politics, including Murray's ACTU-initiated Industrial Councils plan, which sought to remedy those managerial inefficiencies preventing maximum production. William Z. Foster insisted that working hours "should be the maximum possible" and that "in the matter of working conditions, the trade unions need to show real flexibility."[53]

This line did not find favor with the rank-and-file workers in Local 600, and the CP paid dearly for its abandonment of the membership. Early in the war, control of the Local shifted to Paul Ste. Marie and the ACTists. The exact sequence of political shifts during the war is difficult to reconstruct. A March 1946 article in the ACTU newspaper, *The Wage Earner*, noted that were the current president to win re-election it would mark the first consecutive-term presidency in the history of Local 600.[54] In the back-and-forth, a left-wing slate led by Percy Llewellyn won election only by repudiating the CP-line on incentive pay. In this 1943 victory, Llewellyn beat ACTist Paul Ste. Marie.[55] By early 1944, Joseph Twyman, not associated the CP, had assumed the presidency.[56] Under the circumstances, with the CP occupying the right

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[52] Roger R. Keeran (1979) "'Everything for Victory': Communist Influence in the Auto Industry During World War II" *Science and Society* 43:1-28. Keeran's defensive critique of Trotskyist oversimplifications regarding the CP line nevertheless acknowledges all that is essential.

[53] William Z. Foster (1947) *American Trade Unionism: Principles and Organization Strategy and Tactics*. New York: International Publishers, p.296.

[54] Newspaper Clipping, "Local 600 1945-46, Clippings" file, box 25, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[55] Roger R. Keeran (1979) "'Everything for Victory': Communist Influence in the Auto Industry During World War II" *Science and Society* 43:1-28. Meier & Rudwick (1979) report that Paul Ste. Marie was the incumbent president during the 1943 elections and that he lost to the Llewellyn slate (p.153).

[56] Although the Llewellyn slate won the 1943 Twyman was already the incumbent president during the 1944 elections. He may have won the vice-presidency in 1943--not on the Llewellyn slate--and then assumed the presidency when Llewellyn became coordinator of the West Side UAW region. As yet, no evidence has been found to support the idea that Twyman was a Trotskyist. It seems unlikely

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wing of the political spectrum, Twyman ran in 1944 with a program fully supporting rank-and-file militancy, including their wildcat strikes. Nevertheless, he lost to a slate led by a CP-supporter, W.G. Grant.[57]

It is significant that Twyman, rather than a CP-activist, may have been the first post-1941 leader to promote the 30 for 40 program at Local 600. The fifth point on his 1944 re-election program was for a "Guaranteed 48-hour work week for duration of war" (militant by CP standards) and the eighteenth point on his program was a "Six hour day, 5 day week at present weekly rates of pay after war." While Twyman was clearly not *leading* with the 30 for 40 line (the *eighteenth* program point), the political landscape made this program too tempting to neglect entirely, especially with no reason to fear that the CP would press the issue after the election.[58]

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that he was because his name rarely surfaces while those Trotskyists who did gain some power in Local 600 were celebrated by later Trotskyist historians, especially Martin Glaberman (1980) *Wartime Strikes: The Struggle Against the No-Strike Pledge In the UAW During World War II.* Detroit: Bewick Editions. Also, a May 1946 article in the *Wage Earner* notes that the Spring & Upset Department at the Rouge, from which Twyman emerged, was an anti-Communist strong hold. Newspaper Clipping, "Local 600 1945-46, Clippings" file, box 25, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. Nevertheless, details of Twyman's exact political affiliation remain unknown.

[57] This election victory by W.G. Grant, allied with the CP, may lend support to the idea that rank-and-file support for the no-strike pledge has been underestimated by historians who share a Trotskyist political perspective. See Joshua Freeman (1978) "Delivering the Goods: Industrial Unionism During World War II" *Labor History* 19:570-593. But, the events associated with his re-election bid, described below, may demonstrate the opposite.

[58] On Twyman, see Election Leaflet, "Local 600--clippings and bulletins" file, box 25, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. Keeran (1979) reports that Llewellyn beat Ste. Marie for the presidency in 1943, but an election document in the ACTU Collection file noted above shows Twyman running (and losing to left-wing candidate W.G. Grant, 10,000 to 15,200) as an incumbent in 1944. See Election Results, "Local 600--clippings and bulletins" file, box 25, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

The demand for a 30-hour work week at full pay was not only a demand of the March 1932 Ford Hunger Marchers, but also an early--and then neglected--demand of the GM sit-down strikers. On the Ford Hunger March, see a commemorative review in *Daily Worker*, March 17, 1946. On the sit-down strikes, see John Anderson's "The General Motors Sit-down Strike of 1937," located in the Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

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During September 1944, President Grant led the Local 600 delegation to the 9th Annual UAW Convention, held in Grand Rapids, Michigan.[59] Much of the sharpest debate at this convention revolved around a set of dueling resolutions regarding the no-strike pledge. President Grant, a supporter of the CP "all work, no-strike" line, spoke strongly in favor of the majority resolution which reaffirmed support for the no-strike pledge. A group of Trotskyist activists from Local 212 "whipped out small American flags, waving them wildly in derision" at Grant's remarks in support of the super-patriotic majority resolution.[60] This resolution was voted down, and then an alternative version, in support of the pledge, was carried. At the very least, this confusing series of votes shows that the rank and file was quite divided on the issue. Moreover, while the *delegates* ultimately gave verbal support to the no-strike pledge, rank-and-file actions may have spoken louder than these words. From 1941, when the first Ford contract was signed, until the end of the war, Ford workers struck 773 times.[61]

After Grant's performance at the September 1944 Convention, he and the CP faction faced a re-election campaign the next spring. But as the war victory approached, workers grew increasingly tired of appeals for patriotic sacrifice and more interested in action on neglected grievances and long-deferred desires. But the CP did not attempt to echo these militant desires. They did not join the competition among

[59] Because of its size, the Local 600 delegation was, for most of its history, the largest of all the delegations. It was always a major presence.
[60] Glaberman (1980), p.110.
[61] Keeran (1979), p.20.

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political elites working to articulate a vision adequate to worker demands. The CP had its eyes, not on the shop-floor, but the world stage.

Earl Browder, leader of the CP in the United States, proclaimed that a new era of class cooperation had been born in the war alliance between the Soviet Union, Britain, and the United States. He declared the November 1943 Teheran meeting between Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin--a meeting which projected a postwar peace between the three nations--to be "the greatest, most important turning point in all history." Browder embraced the idea that "capitalism and socialism have begun to find the way to peaceful coexistence and collaboration in the same world" and announced that "class divisions or political groupings" would "have no significance now" and socialism would no longer be a public aim of the Communists. "[M]anagement and labor working with government, have demonstrated that they have the ability to solve any and all technical problems."[62] This analysis, combined with continued enthusiasm for war mobilization, led the CP to support Roosevelt's 1944 proposal that wildcat strikers should meet with harsh punishment for their treason. Communists even supported the idea of extending the no-strike pledge after the war.[63]

At the Rouge, W.G. Grant and the CP slate ran on a corporatist Keynesian platform of labor-management cooperation, peaceful labor relations, and governmental pump-priming for maximum production. As a form of trade union logic, the war

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[62] Edward P. Johanningsmeier (1994) *Forging American Communism: The Life of William Z. Foster.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp.295-6, 302; Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes (1992) *The American Communist Movement: Storming Heaven Itself.* New York: Twayne Publishers, p.97. Browder's biographers provide a more sympathetic treatment. See Philip J. Jaffe (1975) *The Rise and Fall of American Communism.* New York: Horizon Press; and Joseph R. Starobin, *American Communism in Crisis, 1943-1957.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

[63] Johanningsmeier (1994), p.302; Klehr and Haynes (1992), p.97.

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certainly had its advantages. If tight labor markets result from a high demand for labor, relative to the labor supplied by workers, then war production is certainly one means of increasing the demand for labor. Thus the top demand in the CP platform was "support for the War and new War contracts for Rouge." In his President's column in *Ford Facts*, the Local 600 newspaper, Grant proposed a postwar reconversion program of "public works." He made no mention of working hours.

By this time, Walter Reuther, ACTists, and other anti-Communists in the UAW were moving more confidently into the militant positional void left vacant by Communist enthusiasm for the no-strike pledge. In 1944, Reuther supported a shorter work week strategy for the postwar era. Reuther, then a UAW vice-president, rallied his troops to the program, arguing, "I think it is better to have a 30-hour week and have all the people employed, all the people participating, than to have some people working 40 and 50 hours a week with great masses of unemployed..."[64] Reuther clearly *understood* not only the appeal of the program and its popularity among potential "constituents" within the UAW membership, but also the logic of the program. Reuther was explicit in situating the program within the *strategic* arsenal of the labor movement. The shorter work week, by definition, would increase leisure time. But, Reuther argued, it would also increase labor movement bargaining power by tightening labor markets. Moreover, Reuther understood that economic output was not simply a matter of labor input, but also the result of the technological organization of production. In a 1944 debate with the president of the Chamber of

[64] Quoted in an article, published in *Ford Facts*, November 6, 1954, which recalls Reuther's various positions on the shorter work week. *Ford Facts* is the weekly newspaper of UAW Local 600.

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Commerce, Reuther made this precise point. "We can in America," he argued, "on the basis of a 30-hour week create all of the wealth that we could create before the war on the basis of a 40-hour week. We have made that much technical progress during the war."[65]

At Local 600, the ACTists seized the opportunity and presented a program which was considerably more militant than the CP program. Fear of postwar unemployment was common, but the ACTist program was to respond, not by joining in a pact with Ford and the military for maximizing production and demand, but by turning to the partial (i.e., partial, rather than impartial; and, partial, rather than totalistic) and syndicalist program of reducing the supply of labor relative to the

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[65] Quoted in John Darnell (1954) "Economic Security -- Plans and Ballyhoo" *American Socialist* 1:16-19.

Lichtenstein (1995:290) has correctly noted that Reuther's shorter hours analysis did, nevertheless, include a "repudiation of American labor's traditional view: that high wages and shorter hours themselves encourage capitalists to invent and buy new machinery." Reuther's position in 1944 confirms this assessment. Even at his most militant, Reuther simply refused to accept this view of labor's progressive, if mediated, role in the *initiation* of technological innovation. The extreme labor shortages which accompanied wartime production may well have boosted the drive to reduce corporate reliance on living labor. But Reuther saw the "technical progress during the war" as a unmotivated *event* to which labor would *respond*. No *initiative* would be taken to shorten hours in order to further increase technical progress after the war. Rather, Reuther suggested, "If we find that we can keep our people -- that is, all the people who want a job -- gainfully occupied on a basis of a 30-hour week and then people want more goods, we can gradually step it up." But this policy of increasing hours in response to low unemployment might, according to labor's "traditional view," actually have the effect of *slowing* the pace of technical progress and, potentially, reducing the wealth of the economy, measured in terms of productivity.

This repudiation should not be understood as an *ignorance* on Reuther's part. Rather, the repudiation is a consequence of Reuther's entire worldview. The "traditional view" on technological innovation was one element within a syndicalist strategy whereby labor struggle and capitalist counter-offensive created an historically progressive reciprocal interaction. Progress was born in the heat of struggle. Reuther's socialist dreams and corporatist strategies, in contrast, were not grounded in traditional imagery of labor struggle so much as the more (or less) ambitious and totalistic vision of labor as either one element of, or all of, the *managerial* process. This vision seeks to manage social production directly and with technical precision, whereas the traditional syndicalist (but not socialist) labor movement vision seeks to initiate progress indirectly through labor struggle.

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demand for labor, whatever that demand might be. Labor supply would be reduced by a reduction in the hours supplied in a standard work week.

In 1945, the pro-Reuther ACTists, with Joseph Fitzpatrick, then chairman of ACTU at the Rouge, as campaign manager, ran and won on a program which *led* with the hours issue. Their election leaflet boldly announced the top item of their program:

> Change Standard Work-Week: This program advocates and will work to change the present standard 40-hour week to a standard week of four 8-hour days, with overtime beginning after the 32nd hour. The enormous advance in labor-saving devices, developed during the war, makes this an absolute imperative if the United States is to provide employment for all of its citizens who are willing and able to work and who need a job.[66]

The winning slate was led by Joseph McCusker, who had emerged as an activist from the Tool & Die unit, had become first-vice-president of the Michigan State CIO, and was then elected President of Local 600. In the primary, Grant won 11,102 votes and McCusker won 12,762. After a run-off election, McCusker defeated the CP-backed incumbent, 10,411 to 9,395.[67] It was a tremendous victory for the Reuther-ACTU caucus. The *Wage Earner* triumphantly announced that "the victory smashed the control which the Communists have been gradually building up for several years."[68] The McCusker slate did not simply take the Presidency, they took control of

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[66] "Local 600--clippings and bulletins" file, box 25, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. On Fitzpatrick's involvement with ACTU, see Stepan-Norris & Zeitlin (1996), p.218.

[67] Elections were conducted on the basis of multi-candidate "primaries" for each post. Under union election regulations, 51% of the ballots cast were required for each office. If no candidate emerged with a 51% victory, then a run-off election was conducted in which only the top two vote-winning primary candidates remained on the ballot.

[68] *Wage Earner*, June 8, 1945.

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the entire executive board, and even the enormous General Council -- the highest authority in the Local. Of the 25-member executive board, comprised of Local officers and the elected presidents of the departments at the Rouge, McCusker now controlled 17 seats, while CP-members and allies controlled only eight. Grant was turned out, as was Shelton Tappes, incumbent recording secretary of the Local and a leading black activist from the Foundry Building whose prestige at the Rouge dated at least to his membership on the negotiating committee from the '41 strike.[69] In the Departments, ACTists now controlled Transportation, Spring & Upset, Maintenance, Motor, Rolling Mill, Aircraft, Miscellaneous, Foundry Machine Shop, 'B' Building, Open Hearth, and Axle. The only major office which the McCusker slate did not win was the vice-presidency. In this race, James O'Rourke was defeated by the incumbent vice-president, Tommy Thompson.[70] Fitzpatrick was appointed editor of *Ford Facts*.

During these war years, the ACTists fought to position themselves to the left of the Stalinists. That was not difficult, considering the CP wartime position. But the real challenge which kept the ACTists on their toes came from a more independent,

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[69] Meier & Rudwick (1979), p.84. After many great years of service to the Local, Tappes (and so many others...) eventually accepted an invitation to leave his leftist, dissident ways behind, and join the Reuther staff at the International headquarters. Having been betrayed by the CP often enough, his decision is not difficult to understand. Stepan-Norris & Zeitlin (1996), p.105, 147, 206-207. A document in Reuther's files provides a list of International staff hired from Local 600. It is a veritable "who's who" of ACTists who had failed in their political careers at the Rouge and former CP supporters who had accepted a job with Reuther. See folder 23, Box 249, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[70] The election results and political analysis are found in "Local 600 1945-46, Clippings" file, box 25, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. Information about the left-wing slate can be found in "Local 600--clippings and bulletins" file, box 25, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. Although many of the elections were close, one reason why Thompson's contest tipped in his favor may have been because he was not generally known as a leftist. Rather, he was a "middle-of-the-road" opportunist who would often join in coalition with the party that looked likely to control the board. Still, there is no doubt that he was then in a coalition with the leftists. See the comments of Saul Wellman, CP national coordinator of the autoworkers, in Stepan-Norris & Zeitlin (1996), p.179.

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militant force which emerged as an offshoot of the Trotskyist movement in the aftermath of the Popular Front. When the Popular Front era broke down in 1939, the parties of the "grand" left-center coalition dispersed in many complicated directions. The CP temporarily shifted left, while the Socialist Party moved right. But the Trotskyist movement -- whose socialism was unquestionably revolutionary -- persisted in a tortured world where "critical support" for the Soviet Union mixed uncomfortably with unmitigated antipathy toward Trotsky's political foe (and executioner), Joseph Stalin.

The 1928 expulsion from the CP of James Cannon and Max Shachtman, two socialist leaders attracted by Trotsky's critique of and dissent within the Stalinist-led Soviet Union, marked the beginning of Trotskyist history in America. After some tangled alliances with Norman Thomas and the reformist Socialist Party, Cannon and Shachtman formed the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) which continued to provide critical support to the Soviet Union, in line with Trotsky's argument that Stalinism was a temporary political problem in the midst of a still-radical social revolution. This left the SWP, and its small band of labor activists in Detroit auto plants (including the Rouge), with a somewhat contradictory labor policy during the crucial years of the war. Less rigid in their abandonment of wartime labor militancy, the SWP was nevertheless committed to the defense of the Soviet Union, and thus to wartime production requirements. The result was a policy of caution during the war years.[71]

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[71] Glaberman (1980), p.76.

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As a result, the SWP did not compete to articulate the most militant demands of workers during the war.[72]

Max Shachtman, in a pre-war break with Cannon and the Trotskyist line, formed the Workers Party (WP) as an alternative to the CP and the SWP. Shachtman found no reason for defense of the Soviet Union, and thus, he and the labor activists who broke away from the SWP found no reason for caution in competing for the support of wartime workers. However, this competition was constrained by the fact that *very few* labor activists actually did join Shachtman.[73] However, in the summer of 1942, a tiny group of "colonizing" young activists joined the *single* Detroit-based WP member and began actively competing on an anti-CP, anti-war, program supportive of militant workers.[74]

This small group became associated with C.L.R. James, Raya Dunayevskaya and the Johnson-Forest tendency within the WP.[75] They met with some limited success during the war. The most prominent aspiring member of the political elite in the Rouge to champion the Trotskyist line was the charismatic Aircraft Unit worker,

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[72] In the postwar years, the SWP worldview put it in a surprisingly interesting position, discussed below.

[73] Shachtman's support was much stronger in New York City than in Detroit and stronger among younger, middle-class radicals with ties to academia than among autoworkers. See Maurice Isserman (1987) *If I had a Hammer: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left*. New York: Basic Books.

[74] It must be said that the model of elite competition and rank-and-file militancy fits extremely well in the case of the WP. The WP had almost *no* material resources, and *no* historically organic links with the workers. Moreover, like sales agents going door to door, WP activists sought to capture a market of interested buyers. In particular, they were aided by the fact the Detroit newspapers published the names and addresses of auto workers disciplined for wildcat activities. A cold-call from a neighborhood WP agent would likely follow. See Glaberman (1980), p.80.

[75] James was also known by the name Johnson; Dunayevskaya by Forest. Hence, Johnson-Forest. See Kent Worcester (1996) *C.L.R. James: A Political Biography*. Albany: SUNY Press.

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Larry Yost.[76] On March 7, tensions in the unit reached breaking point when two workers, caught smoking on the job, were fired by a Ford labor-relations agent. A disturbance followed and escalated. More workers were disciplined. One historian has reported the events of March 14, 1944 this way:

> On the following Monday, 75 percent of the 5000 workers in the aircraft unit walked off the job half an hour early. They attempted to block the main highway leading to the plant with their cars, but most of the midnight workers (from the other division) crossed the 'picket line.' The workers finally withdrew the barricade the next morning and the active phase of the strike ended.[77]

Larry Yost was one of the workers who led the effort to expand the strike. For his militancy, he was rewarded by his co-workers with the position of vice-president in the 10,000 worker Aircraft Unit. Yost had led a dramatic wildcat strike on March 14, 1944, and had proposed a city-wide conference in Detroit to begin a movement to rescind the wartime no-strike pledge. He was also selected by his Department to be a delegate to the 1944 UAW convention.[78] In 1945, when the ideological space for a

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[76] Glaberman, while not a UAW member, worked closely with Yost, describing him as "a natural mass leader," "a moderate socialist, more or less affiliated with the Socialist Party, but [with] no great depth of principle or belief," "a popular figure," "a bitter anti-Communist," and "not one able to do consistent organizing." Glaberman (1980), pp.102 & 113. Ideological opportunism must be seen as the rule, rather than the exception. It need not connote moral rebuke.

[77] The entire incident is presented as a case study by Ed Jennings (1975) "Wildcat! The Wartime Strike Wave in Auto" *Radical America* 9:77-113. The passage quoted is from page 92. What does this say about worker support for wildcats? On the one hand, 75% of 5,000 workers is considerable support. On the other hand, the fact that the midnight workers, less familiar with the *particular* grievances, broke the strike might imply that worker resistance was not based on any abstract anti-war or socialist position. Rather, "pure and simple" working conditions were the legitimating basis of struggle.

[78] Glaberman (1980), p.100.

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Nevertheless, the UAW-wide program of the WP-backed Rank and File Caucus was quite militant during the war years and its nine-point program -- expanded from an earlier narrow focus on the repeal of the no-strike pledge -- did include a call to "fight general unemployment by instituting a thirty-hour week at a livable wage."[80] The Caucus intended to function as "a major contender for power in the UAW."[81] This was not to be the case.

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immediately the present levels of weekly take-home pay as hours of work are reduced from forty-eight to forty hours per week." The resolution was passed unanimously. For coverage of the event, reported by Martin Harvey (Martin Glaberman), see "Ranks of Ford Local 600 Take Action on Cutbacks," *Labor Action*, May 14, 1945.

[80] Glaberman (1980), p.114.

[81] Glaberman (1980), p.115.

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Chapter 2: Shachtman's Choice, 1945-1947

The year 1945 proved to be crucial in the formation of the postwar plane of political activity at the Rouge. The 1945 election did not lead to sustained support for McCusker, ACTists, or the Trotskyists and the CP quickly regained control. This occurred for two distinct historical reasons.

First, for reasons having *nothing* to do with the election events at the Rouge, the CP once again reversed course. This reversal, occasioned by an essay called the "Duclos article," resulted in a series of prolonged intellectual attacks upon Browder and "Browderism." The era of US-Soviet alliance was over and the Cold War had begun. While many have noted that the alternative to "Browderism" within American Communism was not always clear, there can be no doubt that the renewed strength of William Z. Foster's leadership during this period had important implications within the Rouge.[82]

At the ideological level, this meant some kind of alternative to Browder's corporatism. Foster had strong roots as a leader within the revolutionary syndicalist movement in the United States.[83] With his rise to power in the post-Browder period, Foster's *revolutionary* rhetoric, especially with respect to the imminence of capitalist crisis, was more pronounced than his *syndicalist* appeal. Also, political action was at least as prominent on the postwar CP agenda as was trade union action. Nevertheless,

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[82] Johanningsmeier (1994), pp.304-313; Klehr and Haynes (1992), pp.102-109; Edward C. Pintzuk (1992) "Going Down Fighting: The Michigan Communist Party After World War II" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Wayne State University).
[83] Johanningsmeier (1994).

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the Foster line did embrace a mild shift toward militancy within the labor movement. This turn was most pronounced within CIO unions that the CP did not control.[84] Within the International Union of the UAW this meant a policy of advocating for a program somewhat more militant than competing anti-CP elites, while joining in "Popular Front"-style electoral coalition with relatively cooperative elites like R.J. Thomas, George Addes, and Richard Leonard.

In 1946, Walter Reuther, in an anti-CP, anti-CIO leadership coalition with ACTists and ex-CIO unionists like David Dubinsky of the AFL's International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), made a strong play for power. He won the presidency, by an extremely narrow margin,[85] based upon perceptions that his leadership of GM workers in the major strike-wave of the postwar era had been militant and successful.[86] However, his base of support was not yet broad enough to secure Reuther control of the International Executive Board (IEB). At the first IEB meeting of Reuther's new administration, the left-led board introduced and won adoption of a full bargaining program, in opposition to the spirit of Reuther's program. While Reuther had advocated a Trotskyist-inspired "ability to pay" program calling on

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[84] Even critics like James Weinstein acknowledge that "Foster had a gut commitment to the class struggle as he understood it and an instinctive revulsion of Browder's vision of domestic class harmony." See James Weinstein (1975) *Ambiguous Legacy: The Left in American Politics*. New York: New Viewpoints. p.99. Postwar CP political action is symbolized, of course, by support for the disastrous presidential candidacy of Henry Wallace. However, state and local electoral political activity was conspicuous.

[85] Reuther 4,438; Thomas 4,320. The basis of Reuther's famous victory has been thoroughly explored. For critical perspectives on the failures of the left-led caucus, see an oft-reprinted article by George Morris, labor editor of the CP's *Daily Worker*, first published in the Sunday *Worker*, April 7, 1946. Also, careful analysis of voting patterns can be found in Martin Halpern (1988) *UAW Politics in the Cold War Era*. Albany: SUNY Press, pp.106-108.

[86] Halpern (1988), pp.86-93; Lichtenstein (1995), pp.228-251. Both Halpern and Lichtenstein raise questions about the accuracy of the perceptions of Reuther's militancy and success in the strike.

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corporations to "open the books," the executive board rejected this policy in favor of a CP-backed line. Primarily a factional document filled with jibes at Reuther, the CP-based program also included mild hints of syndicalist leanings. This included a program, *added alongside immediate demands*, for "widespread education for our long range goals such as...the 30-hour work week with 40 hours pay."[87]

The renewed CP commitment to militant struggle left an even more pronounced mark on the shop floor at the Rouge than it did at the International. During the war, Browder had not only dissolved the Communist party as a political party, renaming it the "Communist Political Association," but he had dissolved the factional groups and "plant clubs" within the trade unions, including the Rouge clubs which had been in existence for 18 years.[88] In the Fall of 1945, this period of liquidation ended and the militants reconstituted themselves in order to compete, once again, for support among the Rouge workers. After three years away in the Pacific, William Allan, Michigan labor correspondent for the *Daily Worker*, began working with Paul Boatin, the leading CP activist working in the Rouge, to develop a new militant line that would be attractive to Ford workers.[89] The *Wage Earner* kept a careful eye on these events, reporting that

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[87] On the claim of Trotskyist inspiration for the "open the books" demand, see Preis (1964), p.265. On the executive board program, see a copy published in the *Daily Worker*, April 20, 1946. One cannot say that the left-led coalition was *leading* with the hours demand. The significance of its inclusion in the program is that the left had now adopted the issue as one of its own, however hesitantly.

[88] Johanningsmeier (1994), p.296. See an article by George Morris, labor writer for the *Daily Worker*, which describes the dissolution and reconstitution of the clubs. A copy of the article, undated, is found in "Local 600--clippings and bulletins" file, box 25, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[89] *Wage Earner*, October 12, 1945; *Wage Earner*, December 7, 1945.

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> William Allan, Daily Worker correspondent...was commissioned a month ago to reorganize Communist Forces at the River Rouge plant and to martial the 'fractions' for the all-out fight against the regime of President Joseph McCusker.[90]

However, there was a second, relatively distinct reason for the shifting sands of political fortune at the Rouge: the actual policies of the McCusker administration. Having *campaigned* and won office on a militant, and proto-syndicalist line of shorter hours at standard pay, McCusker's term of *governance* was guided by an extreme version of the ACTist corporatist logic. In contract negotiations, Ford demanded and got McCusker's approval for the introduction of a "company security" clause which gave *union* support for company-imposed penalties against any workers involved with or supportive of wildcat strikes.[91] This was a major concession which, because of its unpopularity among Rouge workers, opened McCusker to attack from more militant camps.

At the Rouge, the CP made the 1946 election a referendum on McCusker and the company security contract clause. The CP-slate ran against both. Proclaiming themselves advocates for "workers' security" rather than "company security" the CP-

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[90] *Wage Earner*, December 21, 1945.

[91] Ironically, the company security proposal was actually proposed on December 10, 1945 by Richard Leonard, then Ford Department Director and a leader in the "left-wing" faction, and was approved by the CP's other allies, UAW President Thomas and Secretary-Treasurer Addes. But on the ground at Local 600, it was ACTist Joe McCusker who was the chief officer. Arguably, the Ford workers punished all of these elites to varying degrees for their collaboration with Ford management. Not only was the incumbent administration thrown out at Local 600, but the same transpired at the UAW Convention when Thomas was defeated and Reuther rode to victory. A CP-introduced resolution against the company security clause was not debated at the International Convention (Halpern 1988:103). Indeed, with CP-coalition partner Leonard so completely implicated in the development of the company security clause, the CP was understandably restrained in its fight against the clause. This certainly worked to Reuther's advantage since it meant he was not assaulted by the opposition for his own support for the clause. However, the CP did lead a prolonged campaign against the clause at Local 600 and so McCusker paid more heavily than any other elite who supported the clause. On Leonard's convention liabilities, see *Labor Action*, March 25, 1946.

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led "Progressive" candidates represented the company security clause as "the means for firing and penalizing active, aggressive union members for acts provoked by the company." Moreover, they noted that, in contrast to the reaction of many workers, the *Wall Street Journal* had approved of the contract clauses, arguing that they accomplish through mutual contract agreement the mission of several pending anti-labor bills.[92] Larry Yost ran on a line critical of company security but also critical of the CP, leaving ambiguous his position on McCusker. But this was an awkward position. His commitments were revealed when, having lost the primary, Yost threw his 4,682 votes behind McCusker.[93] While Yost's support was not enough to rescue McCusker, it was significant for what it communicated about the awkward Trotskyist position in the postwar years. On the one hand, their ideal program was one of militant labor action. On the other hand, their other major passion was opposition to the "Stalinist" CP and they were enormously wary of CP strength at the Rouge. Once the CP had moved away from Browderism, the issue of Communism became dominant and the cold war began in earnest. The ideological space was exhausted by the binary terms: Communism and Anti-Communism. With the "Communist issue" determining and *narrowing* the field of possibilities, the various anti-CP parties (Reutherites, ACTists, and especially the followers of Max Shachtman) began to lose the specificity of their vision, forming instead a more general *anti-Communist* coalition.[94] Indeed,

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[92] Election leaflets, "Local 600--clippings and bulletins" file, box 25, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[93] On primary election results, see "Ford Local 600, 1946-50" file, box 24, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. On Yost's post-primary support for McCusker, see *Daily Worker*, April 8, 1946.

[94] For the narrowing of the ACTU focus from one that had its own anti-Capitalist vision to one dominated by the program of *anti-Communism*, see Steve Rosswurm (1992) "The Catholic Church and the Left-Led Unions: Labor Priests, Labor Schools, and the ACTU." pp.119-137 in *The CIO's*

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the Shachtmanite Workers Party was noticeably self-conscious about the changed political landscape. First, it understood that the monopoly on militant leadership that they had enjoyed during the war was now slipping away. As one WP writer noted, Reuther had "bowed to the pressure of the rank and file" while the "Stalinist supporters of Addes, reacting to the needs of the rulers of Russia in its conflict with the United States and Great Britain...appeared to become 'radical' once again." Thus it was "not surprising" that rank-and-file support was "temporarily flowing back into the channels of the two big and powerful Reuther and Addes factions." The political landscape had become "blurred over and unclear to the rank and file." More to the point, the direction and mission of the WP had become blurred and unclear.[95]

After the war, the Shachtmanite Workers Party faced a profound dilemma that would split the party, affect the shape of the postwar labor movement, and help explain the history of Local 600. What was more urgent for the Workers Party? To support militant rank-and-file movements within unions like the UAW? It would be difficult to compete with the CP for the defense of rank-and-file militancy without simultaneously lending support to the CP factions. And beyond the problem of standing too near the CP on the political spectrum was the WP desire to *crush* the Stalinist menace. The WP (which became known as the Independent Socialist League after abandoning socialist vanguard party activity in favor of social democratic political work) understood its predicament perfectly. In places like Local 600, it had to choose between, on the one hand, "a weak Stalinist regime, which in order to maintain its

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Left-Led Unions edited by Steve Rosswurm. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. Yost's own "bitter anti-Communist" passions are described by Glaberman (1980), p.102.

[95] "UAW Convention Issues Blurred," *Labor Action*, March 11, 1946.

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power has been forced to conduct a militant policy and operate in a relatively democratic manner," and on the other hand, "a powerful, reactionary and totalitarian labor bureaucracy."[96]

In the UAW, the Shachtmanites acted decisively, throwing themselves into the Reuther administration caucus, certain that in Reuther they faced less of a reactionary than in many other unions. Indeed, during these years, Reuther and the Shachtmanites agreed on the dual course of anti-Communist red-baiting and social democratic political activity. The question of the rank and file disappeared as the Shachtmanites joined the administration.[97] The product of this policy was two-fold. First, the Shachtmanites, including powerful and articulate intellectuals, published glowing treatments of Reuther's leadership. New York-based Irving Howe and Detroit-based B.J. Widick aligned themselves closely with Reuther's agenda in their 1949 book, *The UAW and Walter Reuther*.[98] Second, Shachtmanites and those close to the WP milieu

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[96] The quote appears in Peter Drucker (1994) *Max Shachtman and His Left: A Socialist's Odyssey Through the "American Century"*. Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press International, p.46.

[97] "Our party and *Labor Action* have consistently taken the position that the militants in the UAW should support (or continue to support) the Reuther group against the Addes group." Shachtman considered the Reuther camp to be "unmistakably the *left wing* of the UAW."

Business Week was not so confident in Reuther's militancy. They were, however, confident that Reuther's triumph would mean the "Hillmanization" of the UAW with Hillman representing "the prototype of the radical tamed by the responsibilities of running a large union... In the end, the Hillmans and the Reuthers manage to split their personalities. As trade union operators, they look a lot like their more conservative brethren. But on the slogan front, they are as radical as ever."

Nevertheless, Reuther's own position, be it revolutionary, reformist, or conservative, was largely irrelevant to the policies of the Workers Party. The WP was willing to subordinate all labor movement radicalism to the more important task of crushing the CP. "Our party decided, years ago, to support unhesitatingly the authentically reformist and even conservative labor leadership for control of the labor organizations as against the Stalinist leadership."

For the Shachtman quote, see Max Shachtman, "Two Policies in UAW" *Labor Action*, December 8, 1947. The Hillmanization of the UAW is described in *Business Week*, November 15, 1947.

[98] Irving Howe and B.J. Widick (1949) *The UAW and Walter Reuther*. New York: Random House. Widick had published within the WP press under the name Jack Wilson.

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in New York decided that any notion of rank-and-file militancy was foreclosed. Arguably, this perspective was clouded by the fact that within the UAW, the WP saw "red" whenever they saw anti-Reuther militancy.[99] Nevertheless, throughout the next decade or so, the Shachtmanites declined to compete to articulate the desires of the rank and file. Shachtman simply remarked, "By 'the labor movement,' we must perforce refer today [to] the politically active officialdom."[100]

But, facing the choice between support for the opportunistically militant Stalinists and retreat to the oligarchic labor bureaucracy, the Shachtmanites were not all in agreement about which way to turn. The Detroit group known within the WP as the Johnson-Forest tendency, mentioned above, chose the road less taken. Always more closely linked with the rank and file, and adopting a powerful critique of labor bureaucrats arising from the experience of internal union repression during the wartime wildcats, the group began to have problems with the Shachtmanites almost immediately after the war. In contrast to the view of many Shachtmanite critics who conveniently claimed that their own withdrawal from radical labor activism was paralleled by the increasing conservatism of the working class, the Johnsonites argued

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[99] Writing during the same period, C. Wright Mills recalled that "on occasion rank-and-file leaders have upset the rule of the big shots of the union world. Now, however, there is no general surge of rank-and-file revolt against labor leaders." However, he qualified this conclusion with a non-sequitur: "Anyone who has watched a successful CP revolt knows that the CPers are not for rank-and-file democracy any more than the vested interests they replace." But the question to which Mills had tried to address himself was not whether CPers were democrats but whether there were any signs of rank-and-file revolt. Those who had "watched a successful CP revolt" might have been unhappy with what they saw, but they could not have failed to notice that such a revolt was successful precisely because, for better or worse, it was able to tap into the energy of rank-and-file revolt. C. Wright Mills (1948) *The New Men of Power: America's Labor Leaders.* New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., p.66.

[100] The quote appears in Peter Drucker (1994) *Max Shachtman and His Left: A Socialist's Odyssey Through the "American Century".* Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press International, p.242.

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that the Shachtmanites and others had merely lost their sense of *where* to look for militancy. Focusing less on "political" positions, the Johnsonites kept a keen eye on shop-floor grievances and popular culture. Facing the scorn of Irving Howe and others, this group broke from the WP.[101]

The SWP, which had adopted a less militant stand than the WP during the war, faced a similar set of dilemmas in the postwar era. The party would also face some splits. The leadership most closely associated with James Cannon joined the Reuther parade and *derided* the campaigns of Local 600, mocking SWP members who were sympathetic to these struggles.[102] Cannon's party, like Shachtman's, was torn apart by the dilemma's of the postwar political landscape.[103] Bert Cochran, the leading wartime trade union strategist within the SWP, opposed this support for Reuther and eventually split with the party in 1953 along with George Clarke and Harry Braverman. Cochran, had been a UAW organizer in the 1930s, and Braverman, who would later become a minor legend within sociology for his attention to the shop-floor grievances of workers, considered it an error to abandon the rank and file over Trotskyist hostility toward the CP.[104] Similarly, SWP activists and journalists,

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[101] Kent Worcester (1996) *C.L.R. James: A Political Biography*. Albany: SUNY Press, p.88.
[102] See the book of essays collected by Jack Barnes (1976) *James P. Cannon As We Knew Him*. New York: Pathfinder Press, especially p.147.
[103] Shachtman was quick to expose SWP squirming. "The SWP... has more than one position and it does not seem to have found the time to try to bring them into harmony with one another. If it has one policy... it is the policy of localized, unthought-out, unanalyzed, haphazard opportunism, from which a heavy dose of adventurism is not absent. In some unions, it opposes the Stalinist group and supports conservative and even chauvinistic groups. In other unions, it supports the Stalinist groups against the anti-Stalinists." *Labor Action*, December 8, 1947.
[104] Alan M. Wald (1987) *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, pp.298-300. Cochran's wartime trade union leadership is noted by Glaberman (1980), p.142n4.

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including labor reporter Art Preis, were supportive of Local 600's militancy, despite the opportunistic leadership of the CP.[105]

Shortly after the war, a hesitant merger occurred, combining the Johnsonites and some supporters of the Johnsonites, within the SWP.[106] Included in this group were activists from Local 600, including Art Fox.[107] The SWP could not hold the group for long, but it was a temporary sanctuary in a difficult time. Eventually, each of the break-away groups of trade union militants concluded that "Stalinophobia" within the SWP had diverted attention from labor movement imperatives, including rank-and-file, anti-Reuther, shop-floor struggles within the UAW.[108] In the late 1940s and early 1950s, these Johnsonite and SWP groups continued to compete for the support of the rank and file, alongside and in the shadow of the CP.[109]

And yet, the remarkable fact of the post-war era was that so many elites walked away from the rank and file for political reasons unrelated to shop-floor trade

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[105] For supportive discussion of Local 600 militancy from a once SWP-aligned perspective, see Bert Cochran (1977) *Labor and Communism: The Conflict that Shaped American Unions*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Also, Preis (1964).

[106] Paul Buhle calls the merger a "marriage of convenience." See Paul Buhle (1988) *C.L.R. James: The Artist as Revolutionary*. New York: Verso, p.88; Drucker (1994), p.165; Worcester (1996), p.88.

The marriage ended in mid-August, 1951 when the Johnsonites split from the SWP. See *Labor Action*, August 27, 1951.

[107] Art Fox was an SWP activist for some time. His connection to the Johnsonites is noted in a short "biographical" sketch available from the Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division, where Art Fox's papers are located.

[108] A. Belden Fields (1988) *Trotskyism and Maoism: Theory and Practice in France and the United States*. Brooklyn: Autonomedia, pp.144-45.

By 1947, the "Program of the Workers Party" included ten demands relating primarily to political action. Missing from the program was the Worker Party wartime fight for a 30 hour week at 40 hour's pay, the battle against the company security clause, or the struggle against the speedup. *Labor Action*, April 21, 1947.

[109] The SWP proximity to the CP would lead Shachtman to quip, "It seems there are some 'Trotskyists' who are not sure whether they are writing for the *Militant* or for the *Daily Worker*." *Labor Action*, December 8, 1947.

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union issues. They walked away, *not* because they failed to attract rank-and-file support for militant positions, but because they lost interest in the labor movement.[110]

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[110] Arguably, the rank-and-file always disappointed socialists interested in using unions as a base for political revolution. These socialists, correctly noting the failure of this dream to excite the imagination of workers in the United States, incorrectly concluded that the workers had lost all sense of militant struggle only to become fully integrated as stable elements within the capitalist order. This conclusion proved a convenient, but unwarranted, excuse for shifting toward the social democratic perspective, in the form of either cold war liberalism, neo-conservativism, or various brands of loud, angry, and agitated (but, for all that, still social democratic) "socialist" political action. All these political tendencies share a will to "transcend the confines of traditional trade unionism... face the necessity for... political action... That is our task right now. We must subordinate all other tasks to this" (*Labor Action*, March 25, 1946). This "transcendence" and subordination of trade unionism meant *de facto* withdrawal from the labor movement as attention became increasingly focused on the question of state power. "The only way out is for LABOR TO MOVE INTO WASHINGTON: into the White House, into the Capitol, into every government department and bureau" (*Labor Action*, March 25, 1946; emphasis in original).

An exemplary articulation of this tendency is Daniel Bell's breathtaking assertion that labor movements face a choice between taking power and sharing power. Either way, the vision of labor is that "labor will rule." What is lost in this distinction without a difference (the choice between taking power and sharing power) is the "traditional trade union" vision of *exercising power* without becoming sovereign, responsible *managers* of production. Daniel Bell's false problematic continues to plague the left to this day. See Daniel Bell (1960) *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*. New York: Free Press, p.212.

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Chapter 3: Communists on the Run, 1945-1947

Even as many ideological elites lost interest in the rank and file, the rank and file did not lose interest in militant trade unionism, and elites which offered militant programs were rewarded for their efforts. After Yost lost his election bid in the 1946 primary round, the run-off election led to a major victory of the CP-led "Progressives" against the incumbent pro-Reuther President, Joe McCusker. Tommy Thompson, who as a vice-presidential candidate in 1945 was the only member of the "Progressive" coalition elected to office, now captured the top spot as president. W.G. Grant, whom McCusker had beaten for President in 1945, was Thompson's campaign manager. The left-led group, searching for a new, viable program in the early days of post-Browder trade unionism, at first wandered a bit aimlessly. In January of 1946, just as the Local 600 election cycle was beginning, and only a month after the CP had reconstituted itself in the plant, Paul Boatin produced a leaflet which favored a 30% wage increase, called for the "return of our soldiers," protested against a 10-cent street car fare, and bemoaned high prices.

It was not until McCusker backed the company security clause for the new Ford contract that the CP campaign found its footing. McCusker signed the contract in March of 1946, right at the peak of the campaign season. Thompson and the "Progressive" slate fought, not simply for the removal of the McCusker administration, but for rejection of the contract and its company security clause. They campaigned for the 18-cent hourly raise to be paid immediately, and suggested that the contract not be ratified by the membership until the company security clause was

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removed.[111] The contract may well have decided the outcome of some of the races. William Johnson, a CP-aligned black leader who replaced Shelton Tappes as the perennial "Progressive" candidate for recording secretary, emerged after the primary with fewer votes than incumbent Wise Stone. But the primaries ran from March 11-29, while the run-off election did not begin until April 22, with voting continuing through May 10, 1946. In these latter weeks of the campaign, as the CP increased the intensity of the campaign against the company security clause, Johnson was able to pull ahead of Stone to win the office. And while Trotskyist Larry Yost might have tried to help McCusker, it was Thompson who benefited from the narrowing of the election to a two-candidate race. During the primaries, Thompson polled 10,872 votes, while Yost received 4,684 and McCusker 8,280. But the May run-off election resulted in 16,604 votes for Thompson and 9,053 for McCusker.[112]

The McCusker "Unionist Slate" of incumbents (plus a new vice-presidential candidate, Edgar Lee, who replaced Jim O'Rourke, the only loser from the 1945 McCusker slate of top officers) ran a campaign which tried to counter the attacks of the left with a more conservative agenda that diverted attention from larger debates about the future of labor relations. One leaflet candidly declared, "Unionist candidates offer no pie in the sky programs. We rather confine ourselves to practical, workable programs for Ford Workers." This decidedly anti-utopian tack would be a common theme among the self-proclaimed "right-wing" slates that opposed the CP-led

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[111] "Local 600 1945-46, Clippings" file, box 25, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives; *Daily Worker*, May 18, 1946.

[112] On primary election results, see "Ford Local 600, 1946-50" file, box 24, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. For run-off results, see *Daily Worker*, May 18, 1946.

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"Progressives" at Local 600. But this "end-of-ideology" program was not successful for McCusker. In 1946, the left-led attack on the company security clause led to upsets in all of the top local-wide offices. One danger of the CP campaign was that, rather than promoting new programs, it was primarily a campaign *against* the 1945-46 leadership and the company security clause. In the units, there were several electoral upsets, some of which were losses for CP-backed incumbents.[113]

While this militant anti-company security clause position had been successful for the CP at Local 600, Reuther won the presidency of the International during the period between the primary and the run-off at Local 600. The left-aligned delegates from Local 600 voted against Reuther, but there was not a comparable battle around the issue of the company security clause at the 1946 Convention where Reuther was elected. Why did the CP fail to champion rank-and-file resentment? Unlike the case of Local 600, where McCusker could be held responsible, the CP-aligned coalition at the International level were themselves incumbents who had supported the company security clause. The "Popular Front"-style electoral coalition against Reuther was still associated with the wartime bureaucratic efforts to dampen the militancy of the rank and file. Moreover, even though the CP had moved to the left on the ground at Local 600, the International coalition was not based upon a united program so much as a common ambition to maintain control of the bureaucracy. The CP's own self-critical analysis after Reuther's victory in 1946 concluded that the Communists "often

[113] "Local 600 1945-46, Clippings" file, box 25, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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relegated their role to merely support of the coalition" rather than pressing "the fight on 'company security'" and other important rank-and-file issues.[114]

Back at Local 600, the "Progressive" ticket ran again during the 1947 election season, without significantly adjusting their political position. In the units, they ran on a record of support for worker fights against shop-floor speedups.[115] At the top, the left was able to squeeze additional mileage from the campaign against the 1946 company security clause if only because they did not have to take responsibility for presenting a new contract to the membership. The next round of contract negotiations had not even begun before the Thompson slate swept the primary elections. Thompson himself won an impressive 20,075 votes, while his nearest competitor, ACTist Mike Magee, polled a mere 6,915 votes. The only run-off was for the position of financial secretary where James Couser, the Thompson-slate incumbent, faced a challenge from Paul Taylor, who had served that post during the McCusker administration.[116]

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[114] *Daily Worker*, April 7, 1946.

[115] The workers at Local 600 found ways around the company security clause. For example, Neil Rice, the CP-aligned president of the Open Foundry, led a wildcat strike against the fast pace of production demanded by the company. However, the workers learned to avoid the charge of leading an "unauthorized" stoppage by finding a way to articulate their case in the language of health and safety concerns. The CP championed such cases. For the example of Neil Rice, see *Daily Worker*, October 7, 1946; *The Worker*, October 13, 1946; *Daily Worker*, October 31, 1946. Paul Boatin, the leading Communist in the Rouge plant, led a successful campaign against the introduction of what he called "a robot time-study machine" intended to monitor the pace of work at crankshaft grinders in Boatin's Motor Building. It is interesting to note that Boatin, in describing the new machine, speculated that the "new mechanical stool pigeons" would be less costly to the company that the live ones who were expensive not only directly, through wages, but also through their corporate infidelity. Boatin notes that Ford was burned when its own shop-floor "stool-pigeons" were so "sickened by what they were forced to do" that they testified against the company before the NLRB. See *The Worker*, August 11, 1946. For the interesting history of resistance among foremen at Ford Motor Company, see Nelson Lichtenstein (1989) "'The Man in the Middle': A Social History of Automobile Industry Foremen" Pp. 153-89 in *On the Line: Essays in the History of Auto Work* edited by Nelson Lichtenstein and Stephen Meyer. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

[116] *Daily Worker*, April 5,, 1947; *Labor Action*, April 21, 1947.

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The 1947 race came at the beginning of the most serious episode of anti-Communist red-baiting to emerge since the break up of the wartime coalition between the US and the Soviet Union. Indeed, in March of 1947, just before the Local 600 election, the US Secretary of Labor proposed that the United States outlaw the Communist Party. This would become a source of considerable difficulty for the CP-aligned leaders at Local 600. Indeed, it was also during the Spring of 1947, just after the Local 600 election, that Representative Fred Hartley of New Jersey, and Senator Robert Taft of Ohio introduced their infamous legislation which threatened to withdraw "bargaining rights" from any union which did not expel its Communists. At Local 600, this would begin to create problems for at least two of the leading members of the "Progressive" caucus, the legendary Bill McKie and John Gallo (a leader within the CP-led American Youth Congress), both *self-proclaimed* members of the Communist Party.[117]

The CP was caught off its guard at Local 600. Other than opposition to the company security clause, the CP did not have any major *creative, rank-and-file* campaign with which to distinguish itself. Indeed, rather than trying to divert attention away from the red-baiting assault of the ACTists, the CP attended primarily to its own direct defense. But their own Communist Party activity was their least defensible position. They *did* defend the interests of the Soviet Union, even when it meant deserting the interests of the rank and file (i.e., during World War II). The rank and file favored the CP activists with electoral success after the War, but they did so

[117] On Schwellenbach, see *Daily Worker*, March 14, 1947; On Mckie and Gallo, see *Daily Worker*, April 5, 1947; For early CP reaction to Taft-Hartley, see *Daily Worker*, April 11, 1947.

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because they cared more about the CP's defense of rank-and-file interests than about Communism *as such*. But if the right wing could turn attention to the question of Communism itself, then the CP was doomed. Whenever the CP allowed attention to shift from the shop floor to the Communist Party, the right wing could beat the CP without alienating the rank and file.

To his credit, Walter Reuther and his coalition understood the political landscape quite well. While Taft-Hartley was condemned by some labor leaders for its many anti-labor components, Reuther understood that the law's attack on the CP might prove useful in destroying his most serious factional enemies within the UAW. While Reuther, UAW President, was often critical of the Taft-Hartley Act, Reuther, UAW Political Opportunist, opted out of a major Detroit walkout and downtown march organized in protest against the bill when it was first introduced.[118] The anti-Reuther majority on the International Executive Board led the rally without Reuther's participation. Percy Llewellyn, Regional Director for the Westside and the leading CP-aligned International Executive Board member explicitly put forward the "Communist issue" as the central concern of the protest against the legislation.[119]

By late 1947, Tommy Thompson began to notice that the CP was losing its base of support. Not only did the CP follow the ACTist red-baiting lead in effectively setting the terms of debate, but the CP was also paying a price for its support of a faction which was transparently about bureaucratic control, and for some disastrous

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[118] "Clippings, 1941-58" file, box 1, Richard T. Leonard Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[119] *Daily Worker*, April 19, 1947.

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programmatic weaknesses that were considered indefensible on the ground at Local 600.

These deficits proved particularly debilitating with the formation of electoral slates of International officers running for the November UAW Convention. While black activists had been heroic leaders in the history of the UAW, and a substantial portion of the black membership fought against the segregated and hierarchical labor process assignments in auto production, the International Executive Board remained an all-white panel.[120] In contrast, not even the right-wing political factions at Local 600 *dared* to put forward all-white electoral slates. Thus, Local 600 (and the CP) frequently boasted about its "progressive" record of black officers fighting for militant positions on local-wide issues and shop-floor issues within black-led units.[121] Shelton Tappes, then a left-aligned leader within the Production Foundry at Local 600 and, as Recording Secretary of the local for several years, one of the most powerful black unionists within the UAW, decided to make a courageous run for one of the two vice-presidential positions on the International Executive Board, boldly challenging the tradition of all-white leadership at the top of the UAW. But favoring its coalition slate of incumbent officers, the CP at Local 600 broke ranks with Tappes and the entire militant tradition at Local 600 by refusing to support the Tappes campaign. This CP betrayal did not split Local 600 in two so much as it ripped the CP apart from the Local. Under the banner of the "Rank and File Committee" in support of the Thomas-Addes-Leonard all-white coalition slate, the CP sought to find its way without Local

[120] Meier & Rudwick (1979).
[121] Korstad and Lichtenstein (1988).

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600.[122] While all of the traditional "Progressive" Convention delegates from Local 600 voted for Addes and Thomas, they also *all* voted for Tappes rather than Leonard -- all, that is, except for Patrick Rice and Percy Llewellyn, the two Convention delegates with *direct* links to the CP. They voted for Richard Leonard.[123]

The events surrounding the November Convention affected the political scene at Local 600 in several critical ways. First, the CP decision to put top-level coalitions of convenience ahead of shop-level positions of militancy isolated those local leaders historically linked with the CP. This included, but was not limited to, the significant block of black rank-and-file activists at Local 600. Once again, the CP had walked away from the opportunity to speak for the militant rank and file, thereby creating, yet again, a political opportunity for the articulation of an independent, non-CP program more militant than that of the CP itself. The CP had moved to the right of the rank and file.

Second, Reuther's successful Convention red-baiting enabled the adoption of an anti-CP resolution. During the Convention the rank and file had been presented with two resolutions, both of which opposed the Taft-Hartley Act. One resolution, introduced by the Communist-aligned IEB faction, opposed "the signing of the so-called loyalty anti-Communist affidavits" and one resolution which "instructs incoming officers and Executive Board members to sign, under protest, the anti-Communist,

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[122] The anti-Reuther "Rank and File Committee" included more than 25 Local presidents, but Tommy Thompson, President of Local 600 refused to endorse the Committee or its slate. See "Michigan struggle for trade union unity, 1943-51," file 24, box 1, Ganley-Wellman Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[123] The other three Local 600 leaders most closely identified with the CP during this period -- Bill McKie, John Gallo, and Paul Boatin -- were not even elected as delegates to the Convention. For the Local 600 delegate voting record at the Convention, see *Proceedings of the Eleventh Convention, UAW-CIO, November 9-14, 1947, Atlantic City, NJ*, pp.408-413.

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loyalty affidavit."[124] In his introductory remarks, Reuther took aim at the CP, proclaiming his commitment to fight "anyone in this Union or in this country who attempts to sell the membership, the Union, or our country down the river to any foreign power in the world."[125] With this Reuther scored a direct hit. The anti-CP resolution was adopted. This created a crisis of "conscience" for the political elite of local Communists at the Rouge who would face the choice of either abandoning their designs on holding political office or effectively participating in the process of delegitimizing the CP itself. To a considerable degree, the resolution accomplished its mission by forcing Local 600 leaders to declare *primary* loyalties, rather than continuing to comfortably accommodate the coincidence of their commitments.

Finally, the Convention saw the defeat of a number of anti-Reuther regional directors, including Local 600's Percy Llewellyn. While several of these faction leaders opted to join Reuther, rather than return to the shop, Llewellyn went back to work at the Rouge.[126] But Llewellyn had been a major political figure, as a Detroit-based regional director and ideological representative of the CP on the IEB, and was not long for the shop-floor. Instead, the "Progressive" slate set about to find a suitable way to hail the conquered "hero."

In the months following November 1947, the ground shook and the political landscape at the Rouge was transformed. Coming away from the Tappes vote, Tommy Thompson stood out as the independent leader of the shop-floor militants.

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[124] For the resolutions and floor discussion, see *Proceedings of the Eleventh Convention, UAW-CIO, November 9-14, 1947, Atlantic City, NJ*, pp.77-111.
[125] *Proceedings of the Eleventh Convention, UAW-CIO, November 9-14, 1947, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.17.
[126] Halpern (1988), p.238.

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However, he simultaneously used this opportunity to *break away* from the CP by *joining Reuther* in a campaign to enforce the affidavit signing by Local officers. A local vote, held in February 1948 in order to allow the rank and file to take a stand on the issue, resulted in a low-turnout victory (7,654 to 4,740) for Thompson's pro-affidavit push.[127]

In the scramble to choose sides after the November Convention, all of the other "Progressive" officers who had been elected on a left-led slate with Thompson stated that they would refuse to sign. But following the Local vote in support of the affidavit requirement, James Couser, financial secretary, William H. Johnson, recording secretary, and Art Speed, trustee, all agreed to sign. Only John Gallo and Bill McKie resigned in protest, unwilling to disavow the CP. But Couser, Johnson, and Speed did not stay in office long; they were defeated in their reelection bid, notwithstanding their willingness to bend before the red-baiting offensive.[128]

Thompson himself was not supported by the CP in his reelection bid. It is highly unlikely that they would have broken with him simply because of his support for Tappes. But the CP was disgusted by Thompson's moves in support of the affidavit. Furthermore, Llewellyn was looking for a job. So the left challenged Thompson, running a slate that included Johnson and Couser, with Llewellyn at the top. Llewellyn's political liabilities, however, were serious, resulting not only from his status as a well-known fellow-traveler, but more significantly, from his refusal to support Tappes. The only remaining question was whether the right-wing Reutherites

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[127] *Daily Worker*, February 2, 1948; *Ford Facts*, February 7, 1948.
[128] *Ford Facts*, February 21, 1948; Halpern (1988), p.241.

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would join with Thompson or put forth a candidate of their own. Responding to rumors that Reuther himself had joined with Thompson, the local right-wingers wrote to Reuther looking for guidance, as they had already prepared to run Gene Prato for the top job. Reuther responded,

> [I] regret that the forces around the Prato slate and the Thompson slate were unable to reconcile their differences in order to present a united slate which would have insured the defeat of the Llewellyn slate, whose basic trade union loyalty is certainly subject to serious question.
>
> In view of the three-way choice confronting the Ford workers, I would, if I were a member of Local 600, cast my vote for the Prato slate.[129]

In fact, there was no need create a united slate in order to insure Llewellyn's defeat. In the three-way race, it was Llewellyn who was eliminated in the primary. Thompson beat Prato in the run-off election.[130] Nevertheless, not every race in all the shops included a three-way split and the CP beat the right-wingers in several of the Rouge

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[129] "Local 600 September 1946-March 1948 Factionalism/Political Policy," file 16, box 249, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. The CP and the WP reported that the split may also have represented some tension between Reuther and his secretary-treasurer, Emil Mazey, with the former originally backing Thompson and the latter supporting Prato. *The Worker*, February 29, 1948; *Labor Action*, March 15, 1948.

[130] There is general agreement that the affidavit signing issue was the central campaign issue. Andrew (1979:238) argues that it was the affidavits which "precipitated a realignment within the local." Romano attributed his own success in engineering the 1948 anti-CP sweep to Taft-Hartley. "In 1948, or rather by the latter part of 1947, we were able to start a middle-of-the-road, or what they call a mugwump caucus which broke way from the progressive caucus...I might add on the Taft-Hartley thing, that we were successful in the election...In that sense, the Taft-Hartley Act gave us a little success, let us put it that way. But from that point on, after defeat in local 600, no longer did the party adopt the policy of having members refuse to sign the affidavits...many of its members resigned from the Communist Party, officially resigned from the Communist Party, in order to keep in office and still sign the affidavit." United States House of Representatives, Committee on Un-American Activities (1952) *Communism in the Detroit Area*. Washington: US Government Printing Office, pp.3048-3049.

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building elections.[131] But the force of the shift was obvious and often noted. Indeed, for the first time, but not the last, observers would mistakenly conclude that Reuther had, once and for all, beaten back the Stalinist menace at Local 600.[132]

The CP passed through a round of introspection and self-criticism following the November 1947 Convention and the triumph of Reuther over the Addes-Thomas-Leonard faction. The period from late 1947 through late 1948 is generally known for the CP's political strategy, i.e., the disastrous CP-backed Wallace Presidential campaign against Truman's cold war foreign policy. This experience would be instructive in its own way. But in late 1947, the CP was forced to review its labor movement strategy, especially in auto.

Saul Wellman, National Auto Coordinator within the Communist Party crafted a December 1947 report entitled "The Party and the Trade Unions."[133] Wellman argued that CP failures did not signify a rank-and-file retreat from militancy so much as a CP retreat, now in need of correction. Reflecting on the coalition that the CP had supported, Wellman reported,

> In auto, the Addes-Thomas-Leonard top coalition is dead and should remain decently buried... Fearful of breaking the coalition, self-conscious over our numerical weakness, we... tended to measure Party trade union strength by top relations

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[131] The Communists reported the results of the primary election, noting that Thompson, "who deserted the progressives after gaining past elections with their support, got the plurality, but his voting strength was shaved in half." *The Worker*, April 25, 1948; Ford *Facts*, July 31, 1948.

[132] "Ford Local 600, long under Stalinist leadership, gave a majority to Reuther." Howe & Widick (1949), p.169. Actually, Local 600 gave a majority to Thompson, against Reuther's candidate, Prato. *Labor Action* (August 16, 1948) considered it safe to declare that "the CP is pretty much through in auto."

[133] "Michigan Communist Party, 1946-47," file 29, box 31, Nat Ganley Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. Wellman had been appointed National Auto Coordinator in the summer of 1946. See Pintzuk (1992).

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> and neglected work down below with the rank and file... [There was] too little identification with struggles of workers on shop problems and general economic and political issues affecting immediate well being of workers (from speed-up, to high cost of living, to police brutality).

Furthermore, Wellman pointed to the "hostility of A-T-L [Addes-Thomas-Leonard]" and the way this hostility had persuaded the CP to "limit our correct fight for a Negro vice-president."[134] Nor was this analysis merely the position of Wellman alone. It was a new CP line. George Morris put forward an almost identical perspective on the coalition. He wrote,

> The tragedy was that the lack of principles, power deals and 'practical' considerations of the top caucus bosses had most often sidetracked the declared progressive objectives of the group. No less tragic was the fact that for a long time, the real progressives allowed themselves to be hamstrung or restrained in that coalition.[135]

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[134] Wellman is referring to the failure to support Tappes. It is unlikely that this is merely after-the-fact rationalization of a white supremacist tendency within the CP. The CP had, when convenient, fought hard for racial justice in the past. It is more likely that Wellman correctly points to the willingness of the CP to scuttle the interests of black trade unionists, and all trade unionists, when it served "other" interests to do so. Halpern (1988) does not mention the position of the CP on the Tappes campaign. Rather, he comments that "Tappes's candidacy represented an assertion of independence by Black delegates and *the left wing of the Thomas-Addes-Leonard coalition*" (Halpern 1988:232). This is false if by "the left wing" Halpern means the CP. Moreover, Halpern (1988:212-215) offers a defense of the coalition's position on questions of racial justice. Wellman's own sense of frustration *in 1947* is somewhat more persuasive. Moreover, Addes, the coalition member most clearly identified with the left (Leonard had jumped from an alliance with Reuther to a coalition with Addes) was not always viewed as hostile to segregationist positions. After his November 1947 defeat, Addes went into business as the owner of a small beer garden. In an account of racial division within the UAW, Charles Denby mentions the Addes tavern: "The Negro unionists say that Negroes can't go in to be served." Even if this was *not* the case, the mere mention, from an anti-Reuther militant, of a *rumor* to this effect makes it highly unlikely that, just months before, he was *perceived* by blacks as a *champion* of racial justice. See Charles Denby (1989) *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, p.148.

[135] "Clippings, 1947-58" file, box 1, Richard T. Leonard Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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But the shared analysis of the failures of the coalition does not immediately indicate the direction of a new line. Having noted past errors, Wellman declared, "A new realignment of progressive forces must emerge out of the developing struggles of the workers, not as a new 'anti-Reuther faction' but a grouping of forces for a *positive program*...."[136] But *what* would form the substance of a positive program? What would the new *line* be other than a rejection of the already-defeated coalition?

The question was actually left somewhat open-ended by a nearly desperate top leadership. John Williamson, who had taken over trade union responsibilities in 1946, published a major article setting forth the new program. The article was relatively unique within the literary tradition of the CP theoretical journal, *Political Affairs*, for its *lack* of an already-formulated program. It had the feel of a *request for proposals.* Insofar as there was a substantive line presented, Williamson argued, first, that the unions needed to decide on a wage policy. Second, he called for the "adoption of a fighting policy by the trade unions." However, in this, he was no more specific than to note that such a "fighting policy" could not afford to be "gentlemanly." Third, in a testament to the relationship between opportunism and CP militancy, Williamson all but acknowledged the CP's loss of a viable base among the rank and file and the need to develop a militant program in order to reconnect with desires of the workers. He called for the "adoption of demands that will arouse the full support of the workers" and prescribed the selection of "those demands that will win the maximum support of the workers and make it possible for the entire labor movement to adopt a militant

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[136] "Michigan Communist Party, 1946-47," file 29, box 31, Nat Ganley Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. Emphasis in original.

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fighting policy." His final policy was to "combine the struggle on the economic and political field," which is simply a traditional CP reminder that labor movement struggles are only *truly* significant insofar as they preserve the interests of the Soviet Union and defend, within the United States, the political strength of the CP itself.[137]

In Williamson's article, this amounted not so much to a new line as the *desire* for a new line. It is during this period of searching that the CP stumbled upon the fight for a shorter work week.[138]

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[137] John Williamson (1948) "The Imperative Need for United Labor Action" *Political Affairs* 27:514-528.

[138] The CP also began working, almost immediately, to resuscitate its reputation as a progressive force for racial justice within Local 600. This effort included significant attention to Detroit community issues (especially housing and police brutality), celebration of black history, and defense of the particular concerns of black workers in the River Rouge foundries. In the 1948 round of contract negotiations, the Progressive Caucus at Ford called for a 30-cents an hour wage increase of Ford workers, plus "10 cents an hour additional for Foundry Workers." *Worker*, June 13, 1948. It also included the appearance of a powerful new black organizer, James E. Jackson, assigned to the Dearborn Section of the Communist Party. For an excellent example of CP attempts to rehabilitate their reputation with black workers, see the special *Worker Magazine* edition devoted to "Negro History Week" in *Worker*, February 8, 1948. Also, the CP promoted the work of its resident "Negro history" scholar, Herbert Aptheker. See *Daily Worker*, February 12, 1948. On Jackson, see *The Worker*, April 10, 1949; June 27, 1948. This campaign continued, with increased intensity, in after the July 1949 UAW Convention when Local 600 supported Bill Johnson, a black leader from the Rouge, for vice-president of the UAW. See *Worker*, August 7, 1949. See also, Pintzuk (1992). The

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success of the campaign is evident in the restoration of the CP's relationship with Shelton Tappes in early 1948.

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Chapter 4: Thirty Hours Work for Forty Hours' Pay, 1947-1949

While Wellman had charged the membership with the task of developing a *positive* program, he actually began by launching a negative program. Wellman's December 1947 report ended with several familiar policy recommendations (opposition to Taft-Hartley, wage increases, and support for Reuther's proposed guaranteed wage program), but also included a new priority, listed second behind the fight against Taft-Hartley: a fight "against increasing the work week to 45 hours."[139] This was the first serious mention of worktime in CP literature, but it emerged not so much as a positive program for reducing worktime, but a program for refusing to increase the length of the work week. An initiative -- for increasing the work week -- had sparked the possibility that the CP could lead a protest movement.

The CP was bequeathed the "hours" issue as a priceless gift sent from the good offices of Charles Erwin Wilson, president of General Motors. On October 12, 1947, Wilson had proposed that expanded production targets could best be met if the legal work week were extended to 45 hours from 40.[140] On November 9, 1947, as Reuther prepared for his UAW convention election, he presented his opening remarks to the convention delegates, lashing out at Wilson and assuming a militant posture.

> They want to take away overtime up to 45 hours a week. They cannot give us 40 hours, let alone 45 hours. I want to say to Mr. Wilson and N.A.M. [National Association of

[139] "Michigan Communist Party, 1946-47," file 29, box 31, Nat Ganley Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[140] *New York Times*, December 6, 1947; *Wall Street Journal*, January 23, 1948.

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> Manufacturers] we are not going back, the Auto Workers don't believe our future and the future of America lies in going back. With the advanced technology we have -- we are on the threshold of the atomic age; let us mobilize that power, let us mobilize that technology, let's not go back to the 45-hour week -- we are planning on a 30-hour week, with higher pay and higher living standards than we ever had, and we can do it.[141]

It was at this 1947 Convention that Reuther assumed a militant position as champion of the fight for the "30-hour week, with higher pay," and was swept to re-election. Significantly, the 1947 Convention delegates also rewarded Reuther with control of the IEB for the first time. However, almost immediately after the Convention, Reuther changed his tune. While remaining critical of Wilson's campaign for legislation to establish a 45-hour week at straight time, Reuther quickly abandoned the syndicalist program for a 30-hour week with higher pay and higher living standards. In response to Wilson's offensive, Reuther resolved to fight fire with water, rather than fire. Reuther now backed away from a militant program of struggle and instead sought a return to the wartime era when labor leaders were considered important for their "statesmanship" in the face of rank-and-file militancy. He withdrew to his corporatist mode, arguing for a new harmony of interest between auto manufacturers and auto workers. In an article published in a January 1948 issue of *United Automobile Worker*, the International's official newspaper, the Reuther administration lectured General Motors on how to extract surplus value from the sweat of its workers. Assisting GM's accounting department, the UAW argued that with stable administrative, marketing, and depreciation costs, profits could be significantly

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[141] *Proceedings of the Eleventh Convention, UAW-CIO, November 9-14, 1947, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.16.

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increased by pushing workers beyond the 40-hour week, even after factoring in the cost of overtime rates.[142] Within the next few days, William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, parroted Reuther's strategy, making an identical argument in testimony before the Senate Banking Committee.[143]

On January 17, 1948, Paul Boatin, Motor Building committeeman at the Rouge, took up Reuther's now-abandoned militant Convention challenge to GM's Wilson. At least on the shop floor, Communists like Paul Boatin were prepared to take advantage of the opportunity to speak to the atmosphere of rank-and-file syndicalism. In an article in *Ford Facts*, Boatin launched a new campaign for the Rouge "Progressive Caucus." As the top demand of a new program, Boatin wrote, "To all the Big Shots we say: 1. We won't let you abolish overtime! We say: place the benefits of science and new invention at the service of the people. Let's have the 6-hour day -- and get paid for 8." Reuther had created an opening for militancy on his left wing, and Boatin stepped right up. Reuther's reversal was soon to become even more public, and Boatin's appropriation of the syndicalist line would be rewarded at the Rouge.

On February 4, GM's Wilson repeated his proposal at a news conference announcing the opening of a new assembly plant in Wilmington, Delaware. The next day, Reuther was scheduled to be a witness before the concluding day of Senate Foreign Relations committee meetings on the proposed European recovery program. The *New York Times* reported that as he testified, Reuther spoke extemporaneously,

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[142] The *United Automobile Worker* article was so striking that it was itself a newsworthy item. See *Wall Street Journal*, January 12, 1948.
[143] See *Wall Street Journal*, January 23, 1948; *Business Week*, January 31, 1948.

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"disregarding a long, prepared statement of his organization's views on the Marshall Plan." He linked his support for the Marshall Plan to three central themes.

First, Reuther spoke about the foreign policy implications of the program, advocating support for the Marshall Plan as a tool for combating the strength of the Communist Party in Europe, especially in France and Italy. He argued that "the men in the Kremlin... know that they can't beat us, but they hope to take over all Europe by default."[144]

Second, Reuther embraced the possibilities of domestic abundance based upon expanded production for European markets. "There is nothing wrong with the American economy, or with the situation in Europe that cannot be remedied and saved by American production."[145] Reuther attacked the "intentional" bottlenecks in the monopolistic steel industry, but his own productivist ethic was based on a similar strategy of maintaining a seller's market in American core industries in order to enable core-industry workers to benefit from the monopoly pricing -- hence, profits and wages -- thus produced. Reuther was well aware that this was a strategy of core industry workers joining in a capital-labor pact against downstream workers and industries (i.e., against workers and industries which were *buyers* of goods sold by monopolistic sellers). Reuther's awareness of the dynamic came not only from his own cleverness, but also from the discomfort autoworkers experienced being in an

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[144] *New York Times*, February 6, 1948; *Business Week*, November 22, 1947.
[145] *Washington Post*, February 6, 1948.

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industry that was *downstream* of Murray and Lewis in their similar pacts with the mining and steel monopolies.[146]

Third, Reuther combined these two strategies of anti-Communism abroad and productivism at home with his corporatist strategy of longer hours in the factories. In a complete reversal of his Convention commitment to fight for the 30-hour work week at 40 hours pay, Reuther now found an appreciative audience in the Senate hearing room for his promise that auto workers would be "ready to work longer work weeks whenever management... can supply the materials and the work" since "there is no present limitation on the work week." Furthermore, Reuther calculated, under a 44 hour week, the extra 4 hours "will cost the employer only 4.4 percent more in hourly wages while he gets 10 percent more production."[147]

The hours debate clearly pointed to a potential weakness in Reuther's reputation as a militant leader. Boatin had responded to this opportunity. But the *coincidence* of Reuther's flagging commitment to shorter hours and his increasing commitment to the anti-Communist Marshall Plan gave the CP leadership, first in Michigan and ultimately in New York, exactly the kind of program issue for which they had been searching. Immediately after the Convention, Wellman had mentioned opposition to Wilson's plan, but he knew that he was simply joining Reuther in opposing the call for longer hours.[148] In fact, Wellman did not even go so far as

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[146] During his Senate testimony, Reuther limited his criticism to the industries, leaving aside his criticism of the industry labor leaders. *New York Times*, February 6, 1948.

[147] For quotes, see *The Militant*, February 16, 1948; and an article by Nat Ganley found in "Michigan struggle for trade union unity, 1943-51," file 24, box 1, Ganley-Wellman Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[148] Indeed, Keeran's book (1980:287) closes with some comments on Wellman's article, arguing that the CP had few original programs left with which to articulate a viable alternative to Reuther. Keeran lists several of Wellman's program points (Taft-Hartley, speed-up, etc.) but the hours issue did not

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Reuther to *link* opposition to the Wilson plan with support for a 30-hour week. But when Reuther switched sides and linked his longer hours plan to his anti-Communism, Nat Ganley and other Detroit-based CP leaders slowly began to make the issue their own.[149]

Thus, the early days of 1948 marked, not the death of the CP in the UAW, but a moment of new promise and opportunity.[150] All the angles fell into place. The CP

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even catch Keeran's eye. Indeed, had it not been for Reuther's about-face (which occurred after Wellman's article was written), it is possible that nobody, including Boatin, would have noticed.

[149] Interestingly, the SWP took notice of Reuther's testimony. See "Reuther Echoes NAM On Longer Hours" *Militant*, February 16, 1948. The *Militant* also reported on a meeting of UAW leaders who "expressed vigorous opposition to the inference of President Walter Reuther in his statement to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee." The SWP-aligned, anti-Reuther leader from Hudson Local 154, Tracy Doll chaired the meeting and argued, "Reuther's proposed 44-hour week appears to us to be the opening wedge to shatter the contract provisions which require overtime rates after 40 hours per week." However, in terms of a positive program, the group simply went on record "to reiterate its support of the wage program" previously announced. They did not pick up the 30-40 banner at this time. See "Reuther's Views on Longer Week Protested by 200 UAW Leaders" *Militant*, February 16, 1948. This group would link with Richard Leonard to try unsuccessfully to rebuild an anti-Reuther caucus without the support of the CP. The CP argued that the new Leonard faction was falling into the same trap as the CP, putting factional coalition unity above "leading the struggle for the demands of the auto workers." On the CP critique of the caucus, see *Worker*, August 22,1943; September 26, 1948; December 19, 1948. Leonard eventually got a "better offer," taking a full-time CIO post. *Worker*, December 3, 1948.

The WP somehow managed to have missed Reuther's testimony. *Labor Action* did not report on his new hours position. However, William Green's testimony was *closely scrutinized* for its betrayal of the fight for shorter hours. An article castigated Green for the longer hours line he stole from Reuther. The WP writer protested, "It took decades of painful, bloody struggle to establish the forty-hour week. Now this so-called leader of over seven million workers wants them to throw that hard-won gain overboard... The mere fact of overtime pay does not wipe out the terrible precedent such contracts would establish. What a weapon in the hands of the bosses when labor itself agrees to a longer work week! What a short step from Green's idea to the forty-five or forty-eight-hour week at regular pay!" Ironically, the articulate polemic appeared not in the week following Green's testimony, but in the week following Reuther's testimony. WP allegiances were now crystal clear. *Labor Action*, February 9, 1948.

[150] The reconstruction of a militant program also included new CP organizers, shipped in to "colonize" and promote a new "concentration" and revitalization of activity in the Rouge Local. Among others, Phil Schatz now appeared on the scene, as a writer for the new "Michigan Edition" of the Sunday *Worker*, replacing the older Michigan CP paper, the *Michigan Herald*. This special regional edition began publishing local-interest stories on February 15, 1948, with Nat Ganley and William Allan as editors. For the new "concentration" see Andrew (1979), p.231. See also the testimony of an ex-Communist, Lee Romano (who helped Thompson make his break from the CP in 1948) in United States House of Representatives, Committee on Un-American Activities (1952) *Communism in the Detroit Area*. Washington: US Government Printing Office, pp.3060-3061.

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was totally opposed to anti-Communist political intent of the Marshall Plan. Reuther supported it. When Reuther linked his support for the Marshall Plan to his support for longer hours, William Allan and Nat Ganley used the opportunity to promote CP foreign policy couched in the terms of militant trade unionism. Allan published a "first draft" of the CP response to Reuther's longer hours program. Noting the coincidence of recent Detroit layoffs and Reuther's hours testimony, Allan sought to emphasize a guarantee of work in the face of layoffs. In response to Reuther's claim that "there's no present limitation on the work week," Allan responded that "the auto workers here are talking in different terms. They want a full work week and a guaranteed 40 hours pay."[151] But when Ganley rewrote the article for use in his the Michigan Edition of the *Worker*, he recalled for his readers how, in his Senate testimony, "[Reuther] explained to the Senators how a 44-hour work week is very beneficial to management and the Marshall Plan... But the auto workers are talking in a different language. At present they demand the guaranteed 40 hours pay and in the days and months to come they will think more in terms of a basic 30 hour work week, without reduction in weekly earnings, and with double time for all overtime."[152] The 30-40 campaign had begun, as the CP slowly and tentatively embraced the syndicalist line emerging from the Rouge.[153]

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[151] *Daily Worker*, February 10, 1948.
[152] *Worker*, February 15, 1948.
[153] The CP never actually embraced a thorough syndicalist logic. Rather, they deployed it opportunistically, since it served to build legitimacy among the rank-and-file while simultaneously undermining support for abundance based on Marshall Plan spending. Corporatist logics were never completely abandoned. For example, there was never any hesitancy in embracing this productivist logic when arguing that US *trade* with the Soviet Union would increase production and create jobs. Ganley wrote that "the opportunity for increased foreign trade, and hence hundreds of thousands of additional American jobs, depend on settling the 'cold war' and getting down to some mutually profitable trade agreements with the anti-imperialist sector of the world led by the Soviet Union.

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Thus was the CP leadership initiative begun: in the future tense. While Ganley made the link to 30-40, his language is filled with hesitancy more than militancy. The "guaranteed pay" proposal was Reuther's, not Allan's or Ganley's, but at least this demand was issued in straightforward language. But the anti-Reuther syndicalist element, 30 for 40, was directed toward "*the days and months to come*" when workers will not demand, but "*think more*" in terms of 30-40. Ganley seemed more pleased to catch Reuther in the act of reversing himself than he seemed intent on launching a new program. Perhaps it was Ganley and Allan who would have to "think more" in the "days and months to come" before fully embracing the program. Ganley did not even include Boatin's *progressive vision* of struggling over the fruit of technological invention.

The 1948 Local 600 election was, as noted, dominated by the question of the non-Communist affidavits, not the demand for shorter hours. Defense of the CP, not of the workers, was the CP's own top priority. But Paul Boatin, certainly more capable than Ganley in speaking to shop floor issues and rank-and-file desires, began pressing the hours issue at Local 600, even before Llewellyn and the members of his slate were defeated. Boatin actually seemed to have given some consideration to the *significance* of the issue in somewhat broadened terms, seeing the opportunity to build

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Worker, February 6, 1949. This corporatist trade demand remained a part of the CP program, sometimes appearing right alongside the 30-40 demand. See *Worker*, January 15, 1950.

However, ACTU's ideological program acted as a counterweight which brought out the syndicalist line within CP ideology. The CP took notice as ACTU became increasingly bold in its advocacy of cooperation and the need for workers to submit to "efficiency." *Worker*, August 15, 1948. In his "Autotown Alley" column, the "Old-Timer" took advantage of the weakness of the Church's corporatist ideology, mocking one religious leader who used the occasion of a CIO convention invocation to advocate, "Let each of us be ready to do a little more, rather than a little less," in what he called "a fair day's work." *Worker*, July 4, 1948.

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long-term rank-and-file support. Moreover, while Ganley, business agent of Amalgamated Local 155, was never very close to the Rouge workers, Boatin had years of familiarity with the issues facing workers at the Local 600.[154]

In mid-February 1948, a dispute between Ford Motor Company and the Local led to an "umpire" ruling which found in favor of the company's plan to eliminate the paid 20-minute lunch period. Workers were outraged, and the issue was frequently in the headlines of *Ford Facts* in March 1948. Ed Lock, president of the Plastic Unit and a leading member of the Progressive Caucus, led a campaign requesting strike authorization "necessary to save the lunch period."[155] But Boatin took the fight one step further, linking the lunch issue to the more general questions of capitalist speedup and stretchout. The company, Boatin argued, had effectively saved itself $8,000,000 per year in wages by adding a new unpaid 20 minutes to the work day. Boatin campaigned for and won a unanimous vote in the Motor Building, for the maintenance of the eight-hour day, as before. "Everyone knows that if we decide to work only eight hours -- the company just couldn't fire everyone." The *Worker* reported that Percy Llewellyn had also favored the policy.[156]

The Progressives, including those who served as members of the National Ford Bargaining Committee for the new contract negotiations, did not include the 30-40

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[154] An amalgamated local is one which covers more than one company. Local 155 was a local of tool and die makers.
[155] "Local 600 Sep 1946-Mar 1948 Factionalism/Political Policy," file 16, box 249, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[156] *Worker*, April 11, 1948.

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proposal in their list of demands.[157] However, they did keep considerable heat under the contract negotiators in an effort to win back the lunch period.[158]

The anti-CP campaign in Detroit accelerated in May of 1948 when several Rouge left-wingers were questioned about the shooting of Walter Reuther.[159] But as the year progressed and Thompson moved closer to Reuther, the CP-activists *at Local 600* increasingly shifted attention from their own self-defense, to the defense of workers on the shop floor. Indeed, the lunch period marked the start of an enormous struggle at the Rouge over Ford's effort to speed up production. While GM's Wilson was on the stump for the longer work week, Ford more quietly sought to get more work within a given work week. The Local 600 militants, in turn, led a combined struggle to shorten the work week and slow down the pace of work for Ford employees. Most of the publicity in the Michigan Edition of the *Worker* was devoted to the issue of the speed-up at Ford, rather than the fight for 30-40. But Boatin and others made a concerted effort to link the two fights. Moreover, the struggle against the speed-up helped the militants develop a syndicalist logic and vocabulary that would prove equally useful in the campaign for shorter hours. For example, Reuther's classic response to the speed-up was to match Ford's time-study engineers with UAW-trained time-study experts. Behind Reuther's policy was a model of codetermination wherein the Union and the Company would co-manage the pace of production. The problem with this strategy, according the CP, was that it made the speed-up look like a

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[157] *Worker*, June 13, 1948.
[158] *Worker*, July 11, 1948. The campaign for restoration of the 20 minute paid lunch period included mailing 10,000 postcards to the union negotiating committee, lobbying for the paid lunch.
[159] The leading black Communist in the Rouge, Nelson Davis of the Production Foundry, was held by Detroit police. He was eventually released and cleared of the charges. *Worker*, May 2, 1948.

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technical matter, rather than the power struggle that it was. In an article entitled, "Ford's Speed-up Plans Can Crash on Rock of Real Union Militancy," Ganley argued, "Experience shows you can't beat speed-up with a union stop-watch, with Reuther's won efficiency engineers. The only way to beat this bosses' game is to slow down the speed-up to normal work through the militant, united action of the workers!"[160]

In the 1948 negotiations, the UAW National Ford Bargaining Committee had agreed to the company's demands for a 25 percent increase in the pace of production as part of a contract provision granting "the right of the company to establish and determine and to maintain and enforce standards of production."[161] In response, the CP began to champion the fight against the speed-up, documenting its development and its consequences for workers. In late October, the Michigan Edition of the *Worker* announced a "friendly contest conducted by the Michigan *Worker* for the best Ford worker's letter on speedup in the plant."[162] The campaign against the speed-up was an enormous success. The *Worker* was filled with letters and stories about working conditions in the plant.[163] This included taking up the cause of one worker fired for not keeping up with the pace of work. When he was re-instated, the CP took credit for leading the crusade.[164] The letters printed in the *Worker* repeatedly made

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[160] *Worker*, August 8, 1948. The anti-time-expert theme emerged again in December when a letter appeared in the *Worker* under the headline, "Union's Time Study Men Ape Company Experts: Stop Watches Are The Bunk." *Worker*, December 21, 1948.
[161] *Worker*, October 17, 1948. The CP had opposed the settlement, and although it was ratified, Ford workers refused to grant Ford's request for a two-year contract. *Labor Action*, August 8, 1948.
[162] *Worker*, October 31, 1948. The contest offered a $25 prize for the best letter. While many letters were printed, no names were used in order to avoid recriminations. There is no way to know whether the letters were even written by Ford workers. However, the letters were published and, even if imagined, they described shop floor tendencies which struck a chord with workers.
[163] The campaign also included "3 x 5 anti-speedup leaflets of the Dearborn Section of the Communist Party." *Worker*, November 28, 1948.
[164] *Worker*, November 14, 1948; November 21, 1948.

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two points about the speed-up. They argued that the pace of production was too hard on workers in the plant, causing accidents and destroying health. But they also made an argument that the speed-up was a way of getting more production out of each worker, thus reducing the total number of workers needed. In this way, the fight against the speed-up was targeted to appeal *simultaneously* to the immediate self-interests of workers and to the strategy of keeping tight labor markets from being undermined by growing ranks of the unemployed.[165]

The Communists were so effective that Thompson, put on the defensive by the campaign, lashed out against the "political drums" beating on the banks of the Rouge. "'Speed-up,' 'Speed-up,' 'Speed-up,' they pound out in ever-increasing crescendo. Mass Meeting...their pip-squeak piccolos pipe. Strike...their big-brass drums will soon be booming."[166] The article appeared under a banner, front page *Ford Facts* headline, "Speed-Up Must and Can Be Solved by Team Work." The corporatist and syndicalist logics stood in stark contrast. In November, Thompson produced another front page, with a red banner headline proclaiming, "Members Claim 'Daily Worker' Falsified Speed-Up Charges."[167] Thompson was in some trouble as he agreed to the demand for a Mass Meeting to discuss the issue.[168] Moreover, Thompson did not have an easy time red-baiting on this issue. Rather than being defensive, the CP took a bold position and was rewarded for it. In fact, they took note of the fact that their campaign was making it difficult for right-wingers to ignore the issue.

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[165] *Worker*, November 14, 1948.
[166] *Ford Facts*, October 23, 1948.
[167] *Ford Facts*, November 20, 1948.
[168] *Ford Facts*, December 4, 1948.

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> Thompson says speedup is a Communist issue. Communists don't deny they are fighting speedup. But look at this: Mike Donnely, a right-winger who is president of B Building unit [final assembly], last week issued a leaflet entitled, 'A Call to Arms,' in which he says: 'We are appealing at this time to all the B Building workers to cooperate with the committeemen in our fight to break down the efforts of the company in its program of all-out production.'[169]

By January 1949, Thompson could no longer duck the issue by criticizing the Communists instead of the Company. The mass meeting had voted down a red-baiting resolution introduced by Lee Romano and increased the heat on Thompson. In response, Thompson made what the Communists called "a complete turnabout." Adopting the CP syndicalist line on the speedup, Thompson sent a letter to the Ford workers declaring that, "all time-study men, both Union and Company should be eliminated from the bargaining procedure and that direct on the job negotiations between the union committeeman and company supervisions offers the only real, fair solution to this problem."[170] Interestingly, the CP credited Thompson with this "complete turnabout" in order to point to the significant influence of their own efforts to force the issue. And yet, Thompson's turnabout did not include any overture to the CP activists. Indeed, the CP was stung by the continuation of Thompson's red-baiting campaign. The *Worker* complained that notwithstanding the turnabout, "the Local

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[169] This quote appeared in a weekly Michigan Edition *Worker* column called "Autotown Alley" which was attributed to "The Old-Timer." While the actually authorship might have varied, the "Old-Timer" was a phrase usually used to describe Bill McKie, the "legendary" Ford Communist who had led the union in the years before Ford recognition. *Worker*, November 28, 1948.
[170] *Worker*, January 2, 1949.

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officers cannot stay on the issue of speedup and the need for uniting all workers to fight it. They must introduce the divisive red-herring of 'outside groups.'"[171]

January 1949 marked not only a CP victory at Local 600, but also a major triumph for Paul Boatin's emphasis on the issue of shorter hours. A full year after Boatin had recognized the opportunity to capture the ground of the 30-hour work week at full pay, the top CP leadership followed through by making the issue a top priority. The chance to combine cold war politics and trade union militancy was too good to miss. John Williamson, in a major *Political Affairs* article, announced a new program of struggle, designed explicitly to exploit a weakness in the Reutherite camp. The new "concerted plan of action" would take into account "the militant rank-and-file and progressive-led locals of the Right-led internationals."

> The following are the key lines of daily struggle in the period ahead: (1) Develop mass struggles from below around such urgent economic issues as wages, speedup, layoffs, the 30-hour week, etc. In the course of such struggles, help the workers draw lessons as to the relationship of the 'cold war,' the Marshall Plan, increased armaments, and the domestic growth of reaction, to the struggle for their economic demands. A propaganda campaign must be launched around the issue of the 30-hour week, discussing the issue itself, and the concrete way in which it can be raised, particularly in industries where layoffs and speedup are being felt the most.[172]

Other key lines of struggle included a concrete wage proposal, the fight for "additional, special demands of the Negro worker in industry and within the union

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[171] *Worker*, January 2, 1949.
[172] John Williamson (1949) "Two Conventions of Labor: The Situation in the Trade Union Movement" *Political Affairs* 28:23-44.

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itself," and repeal of the Taft-Hartley Act. The first step in the 30-hour week "propaganda" campaign was the reproduction, in pamphlet form, of Williamson's article.[173]

At Ford, the new year was greeted with a wave of layoffs and the CP took note of a Company newsletter proudly announcing Ford's ability to produce more cars with fewer workers.[174] On January 23, 1949, the first major announcement of the "new" program came in the form of a large, front-page *Worker* cartoon which showed a worker holding a placard calling for a 30-cent raise and a 30-hour week without pay cuts in '49. The accompanying article noted a rise in unemployment, warning,

> these layoffs may not be temporary. Even if for a time production increases... the rising speed-up means that Ford will try to get fewer workers to the job... The threatened workers, confronting a contracting job market, are looking for help from their union. That is why, in the UAW, the demand is rising for a real determined fight for a 30-cent wage increase and for a guaranteed 30 hours work at 40 hours pay.[175]

The same placard appeared on the front page of the next edition of the *Worker*, and Ganley, in his column, made much of the new demand for "30-30 in '49 (a 30 cent raise and a 30-hour week without pay cuts). This sudden devotion to the 30-hour week was well-timed to prepare for a February 19, 1949 UAW "National Conference on Economic Objectives" for the next round of contract negotiations. Reuther had announced that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the demands "as formulated

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[173] "Michigan struggle for trade union unity, 1943-51," file 24, box 1, Ganley-Wellman Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[174] *Worker*, January 9, 1949.
[175] *Worker*, January 23, 1949.

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by the International Executive Board."[176] The IEB had argued that negotiations should focus on the creation of a pension plan for retiring workers. The CP could not beat Reuther on this demand. Rather, they were forced to "agree" that pensions were important.[177] The administration at first ignored the CP-led campaign. Ganley shot back that auto workers "can't understand why their top UAW leaders should use pensions to knife the demands for a 30-cent raise, for a 30-hour week with 40 hours pay and for curbing speedup and layoffs."[178]

By the time the February conference was called to order, Reuther was forced to confront the popularity of the 30-hour week demand. Reuther's report began with a corporatist demand for economic planning and union support for auto industry attempts to get more steel at lower prices. Then Reuther presented the IEB proposal for company health insurance and a $100 minimum monthly pension for those over age 60 with 25 years of service.[179] Having put forward his own positive program, Reuther

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[176] *Worker*, February 20, 1949.

[177] The CP clearly believed that Reuther and Thompson had crafted a winning program in the pension scheme. When Thompson called for an industry-wide pension plan, the CP responded, as so many had done with bold CP initiatives, by trying to portray the program as unrealistic and over ambitious. The *Worker* was on the defensive when it argued for "local initiative on the pension matter -- before contemplating anything so *grandiose* as Thompson's industry-wide conference" on pensions. *Worker*, February 6, 1949 [emphasis added].

[178] *Worker*, February 6, 1949.

[179] While a popular demand among older workers nearing retirement, the pension plan -- linked to 25 years of service -- lead to dramatically increased job security concerns among autoworkers. In the past, autoworkers exercised their bargaining leverage through incredibly high turnover rates. While company security clauses made wildcat strikes against grievances illegal, the simple act of quitting remained a viable labor market strategy for confronting grievances and bidding up wages. However, non-portable pension plans dramatically cut down on turnover rates, leaving autoworkers without a way to utilize this form of bargaining power. One conference delegate, Gerald Harris, asked Reuther how this would affect workers "who move around from company to company, and from one plant of a company to another plant of a company...[the current plan] will not probably tie into a man's life in the industry, and might leave him short of what we are seeking." Secretary-Treasurer Mazey agreed, noting that a company pension was no substitute for solving the problem "on a federal basis so we can tie this thing together for all the people, not only in our industry, but people who migrate between industries."

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turned next to confront the programmatic challenge led by the Communists. Reuther lifted up a copy of the Michigan Edition of the *Worker* and listed the "30-30" demands.[180] Reuther knew that the CP had tapped a rank-and-file desire. He had tapped it himself, most recently at the November 1947 Convention. "That's not bad -- if you can get it. The 30-hour week demand is a popular demand," he acknowledged. But, Reuther now turned against the demand, arguing that he was not withdrawing from a fight for a good demand. Rather, he was making a principled fight against a bad demand. He warned the delegates, "If you have a 30-hour week... you get a reduction in over-all production of 25 per cent... so you have a 25 percent decrease in production energy and activity... Now does anybody think there is a Santa Claus comes down from the North Pole with all these things in a big red bag and dumps them in the distribution channels?... [O]ur basic fight is to get the purchasing power to buy the things we make. Not to make less things, but to make more things and to get more money to buy the more things we make... We don't want more leisure. We want more goods, and when we have enough goods, then we will fight for more leisure." Finally, Reuther was certainly clever enough to recognize that the shorter hours demand was wrapped up with the cold war interests of the Communist Party. "But you see" he argued, "this is a political demand. If you can sabotage the American

[180] Reuther, arguing that the CP was trying to "sabotage" IEB demands, did not mention CP support for the pension plan. When he listed the demands, one delegate shouted at him, "How about pensions?" Reuther shot back, "The pension thing came late in life." It was indisputable. On pensions, the CP had merely followed Reuther's lead. "National Conference on Economic Objectives," file 1, box 56, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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economy, reduce its production output, you weaken the position of America in the total world picture at a time when that happens to be the most important objective."[181]

[181] "National Conference on Economic Objectives," file 1, box 56, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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Chapter 5: Deals and Steals: The Rise of Carl Stellato, 1950

Reuther was not challenged from the floor of the conference. Nobody defended the 30-hour week program.[182] At the same time, the initial push for the 30 hour week died down at Local 600. Something was changing within the CP. There seemed to be a growing gap between the CP-activist leadership of shop-floor struggles against the speed-up and a withdrawal from electoral creativity and energy. In the Local election campaign, the CP put forward a slate with Virgil Lacey for president, Percy Llewellyn for vice-president, Bill Grant for financial secretary and Shelton Tappes for recording secretary. The progressive ran a campaign with the 30-cent wage increase as the top demand, followed by Reuther's pension plan, a continued attack on the company security clause, a call for "union democracy" instead of red-baiting, and, finally, the 30-hour week with 40 hours pay.[183] However, after the February conference, the 30-hour demand was not mentioned at all in the *Worker* coverage of the campaign. Instead, greater emphasis was placed on the wage demand. The Reuther administration's "escalator clause," which tied wages at GM to a cost of living index, may have seemed like a liability as temporary cost index reductions, combined with a closed two-year contract, created the scenario of wage *cuts* at GM.[184]

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[182] The CP seemed aware that they would not be able to make a showing at the conference. "The Old-Timer" argued that the meeting "has been stacked to prevent the voice of the rank-and-file from breaking through." Actually, UAW conventions were, almost by definition, limited to representative delegates elected from the local unions. The more important point is that in early 1949, there were almost no anti-Reutherites elected as delegates. *Worker*, February 20, 1949; February 27, 1949.

[183] *Worker*, February 27, 1949. Election Leaflet, Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

[184] Preis (1964), p.355. Even Williamson was not a consistent advocate of making 30-40 the primary emphasis. Indeed, he gave some encouragement for making wages the top demand. The February

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Moreover, by the February conference, Reuther had given up promoting *longer* hours, but had called for moderation in wage demands. Following a Ford announcement of plans for a further 22% increase in production output, the progressives returned to the speed-up campaign, but the CP had already acknowledged Thompson's militant turnabout on this issue. Finally, while Thompson and Reuther promoted their new pension program demand, Lacey devoted considerable energy to pronouncements against the Marshall Plan and against the "free enterprise system." One story in the *Worker* noted these positions and added, as a final after thought, that the progressive program also "deals with the union issues."[185]

When the election was held in late March, the progressives went down to a humiliating defeat. Thompson won another sweeping victory, taking 21,432 votes to Lacey's 13,344. Lee Romano, the ex-Communist who engineered Thompson's break with the CP on militant grounds, beat Percy Llewellyn for vice-president, 19,668 to 12,824. Moreover, while Joe Hogan and Art Speed won office as progressives in the Axle Building and the Maintenance Building, respectively, the progressives suffered an upset in the Tool and Die building.[186] While this election round was an electoral failure for the CP, the militant position of the CP on the speed-up had met with enough support from the rank and file to force the politically astute Thompson to make a sharp, militant turn in time for election season.

1949 issue of *Political Affairs* opened with a statement, issued by the National Committee of the Communist Party on January 5, 1949, which proclaimed, "Labor Must Take the Offensive to Win Substantial Wage Increases!." The statement was signed by Eugene Dennis, General Secretary, and John Williamson, Labor Secretary.

[185] *Worker*, March 27, 1949.

[186] Election Returns, file 2, box 1, Percy Llewellyn Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. *Worker*, April 10, 1949.

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But, following the election, Thompson had an increasingly difficult time maneuvering between his militant position at Local 600 and his alliance with Reuther. Reuther had not joined Thompson in his turnabout on speed-up. In January 1949, the Reuther administration had continued to argue that Ford militants "exaggerated the extent of the speed-up."[187] In late April, however, Thompson was forced to accommodate a decision by the General Council to choose strike action rather than arbitration in a speed-up dispute.[188] Then, when Reuther sent Mazey, Joe McCusker and Thompson on a tour of the Assembly building to "investigate" Local claims of speed-up, the Local shop leadership considered the investigation to be a snub, aimed to publicly bolster Reuther's skepticism about the speed up. The investigation sparked a walkout which, in turn, became an almost legendary 24-day plant-wide strike.[189]

The *Worker* gave the strike enormous coverage, documenting the many grievances workers faced and championing the unity displayed in the walkout.[190] Reuther had granted authorization for a strike at the smaller Ford Lincoln plant, but was considerably more wary of shutting down the massive Rouge plant. At first, he refused strike authorization. But after Thompson was forced by the Ford General Council to set a strike deadline, Reuther, in turn was forced, reluctantly, to authorize the strike.[191] But he also decided to intervene in negotiations, ending the stoppage with an arbitration agreement, approved by Thompson's executive board, which the

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[187] Preis (1964), p.390.
[188] *Worker*, April 17, 1949.
[189] *Worker*, May 8, 1949. The details of the strike are well documented in Asher (1995).
[190] Pintzuk (1992), pp.36-38. The *Worker* published *dozens* of speed-up articles, in an almost continuous stream, beginning in mid-1948, and considered itself a "strike paper" during the actual walk-out.
[191] For a summary of these events, see the *Militant*, March 27, 1950.

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CP charged was a "Strike Betrayal." The "Progressives" issued a CP-crafted pamphlet which scrutinized the Reuther-Ford agreement and detailed its shortcomings. Moreover, they explicitly and articulately connected the speed-up strike to the historic fight for shorter hours and higher wages, arguing, "A halt to speed-up will help stem the growing army of the unemployed and protect the health and safety of the workers." In the accompanying "Program to Put the Guts Back in UAW-CIO," the 30-40 was once again featured prominently, and the pamphlet argued that the "fight against speed up is on par with the historic fight of laboring men and women to win the 6-hour day."[192]

The CP took notice again, as Thompson was once again moved toward a militant position during the course of the strike.[193] But this occurred as some strains emerged in his relationship with Reuther. Reuther did not appreciate Thompson's concessions to the Ford militants nor was Thompson's prior history with the progressives easily forgiven or quickly forgotten. Reuther refused to support Thompson's bid to lead the Ford National Bargaining Committee. Instead, the

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[192] "Strike Betrayal" Pamphlet, file 16, box 88, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. A manuscript version of this pamphlet can also be found in "Ford Strike vs. Speed Up: Ganley notes and articles, 1949," file 4, box 5, Nat Ganley Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

The inclusion of "women" in this passage is a new addition. While never making women workers a very prominent constituency, the left did attempt to give some voice to their concerns. The "Strike Betrayal" program included a call for "better job opportunities for Negro and women workers, and for youth." Moreover, a major front-page *Worker* article was attributed to a woman, Helen Simon. *Worker*, January 23, 1949. Joe Hogan, progressive leader in the Gear an Axle building led work stoppage when Mary Olszewski was fired for "careless workmanship." The CP gave the full coverage to the story. *Worker*, January 23, 1949. Finally, the CP, in an article attributed to Faye Gingold, noted the active participation of 5,000 women among the 62,000 workers involved in the speedup strike. *Worker*, May 22, 1949.

[193] To the credit of the CP, they attacked Thompson for his failures, but gave him positive coverage for his strengths. *Worker*, May 15, 1949.

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Reutherites backed the ever-loyal ACTist, Gene Prato, for the post.[194] Thompson was torn in two, pulled between the militant rank and file of Local 600 and the labor "statesmanship" of the Reuther administration . During the strike, Thompson had argued forcefully against the use of arbitration. "Remember the paid lunch period," he wrote in *Ford Facts*, "That's what arbitration of an issue did for the Local 600 membership a little over a year ago. Shall we burn our fingers twice? Of course not."[195] But then he switched sides, supporting Reuther's arbitration plan to end the strike.

In the month *prior* to the July 1949 UAW Convention in Milwaukee, the CP continued to push the 30-40 demand. Ganley used his June 19 column to advocate for shorter hours in the face of recession layoffs, and the *Worker* ran a pre-Convention front-page article which asked, "Will the convention tackle the question of looming layoffs in auto? Will it press for a shorter work week at 40-hours' pay?"[196]

But this militant posture in the *Worker*, and militant leadership of shop-floor struggles, did not find a parallel at the Convention, where the CP-aligned delegates, at some distance from the rank and file, adopted an entirely different mode of operation. The Communists returned almost completely to the older mode of self-defense against resolutions intended to parallel continuing CIO assaults on Communist influence in the unions.[197] Paul Boatin, elected as a delegate, led a caucus in support of Local 600's

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[194] *Worker*, May 8, 1949.
[195] *Ford Facts*, May 21, 1949.
[196] For Ganley's advocacy, see *Worker*, June 19, 1949. For the Convention issue, see *Worker*, June 26, 1949.
[197] For the CIO purges, see Max M. Kampelman (1957) *The Communist Party vs. the CIO: A Study in Power Politics*. New York: F.A. Praeger; Levenstein (1981); James R. Prickett (1969) "Some Aspects of the Communist Controversy in the CIO" *Science & Society* 33:299-321; David J. Sapppos (1959) *Communism in American Unions*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc. For CP self-defense by

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Bill Grant in his run for president against Reuther. Grant did not campaign on the hours issue, and Boatin, while giving Reuther a hard time from the floor of the Convention, did not even mention the shorter hours demand. Bill Johnson, a black leader from Local 600 who ran for vice-president on a slate with Grant, made 30-40 a Convention campaign issue in the *Worker*, although even he did not mention the demand in his speech from the floor of the Convention.[198] The CP-aligned delegates from Ford seemed too frightened to mention the demand after Reuther had effectively red-baited the issue in January of 1949. Rather than shifting the ground back to the hours debate, the CP once again allowed Reuther to make Communism the central issue. The only CP-aligned delegate to speak out in support for 30-40 was Hilliard Ellis, a black militant unionist from the Cicero, Illinois Amalgamated Local 453 (the first local of the UAW to elect a black president).[199] Even Ganley, who had mentioned 30-40 *before* the Convention, was quite inconsistent. He failed to mention the demand in his July 10 column in the *Worker*, issued during the Convention. A banner *Worker* headline in September of 1949 listed the three top CP demands as higher wages, civil rights, and world peace. The CP was losing interest in the shorter hours demand.

Boatin, see *Proceedings of the Twelfth Convention, UAW-CIO, July 10-15, 1949, Milwaukee, Wisconsin*, pp.76-77.

[198] Grant and Johnson both gave speeches emphasizing the need to put an end to red-baiting within the UAW. They received no support from the Thompson administration delegates. Of the 76 Convention delegates from Local 600, only the 21 "Progressive" caucus members backed Grant and Johnson. Reuther received 8,021 votes to Grant's 638. While Reuther administration vice-presidential candidates Richard Gosser and John Livingston each polled close to 8,000 votes, Johnson polled 875. See *Proceedings of the Twelfth Convention, UAW-CIO, July 10-15, 1949, Milwaukee, Wisconsin*, pp.304-305; 400-402.

[199] Ellis, who also joined Boatin in defending the CP against the red-baiting resolution, was responding to a Reuther administration "Full Employment" resolution which called for greater unemployment compensation benefits, increased public assistance, an increase in the minimum wage, and increased governmental spending on housing construction and freight car construction. The resolution made no mention of shorter hours. *Proceedings of the Twelfth Convention, UAW-CIO, July*

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The Communists were remarkably inconsistent in their support for 30-40. By early November 1949, the Communists had almost completely abandoned the 30-40 campaign. While the campaign had made an impression among Packard workers, where Communists had a shop paper called the *Packard Worker*,[200] the Michigan CP made no mention of 30-40, even when announcing a special "Program to Fight the Layoffs." Indeed, this program, far from embracing a syndicalist logic, called for extended state jobless benefits, increased welfare appropriations, more jobs through trade with Soviet-bloc nations, the vague call for "a program for unemployed" within the trade unions, and an end to repression of the Communist Party.[201] Nevertheless, later in November, as Ford workers faced layoffs, the CP recalled how they had "warned" of layoffs months ago and how they had "raised the issue then of a 30-hour work week with 40 hours pay. Reuther sneeringly termed it 'idealism.'"[202] The CP was clearly stung by Reuther's attack, but the campaign did crop up in a few more *Worker* articles.[203]

The CP, however, had not walked away from the competition to champion the shop-floor interests of the Ford workers, nor had the Ford workers become complacent. Rather, the membership was caught up in struggles not directly

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10-15, 1949, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, pp.38-43. For Ellis and Local 453, see *Worker*, August 19, 1951; *Daily Worker*, October 12, 1951.

[200] The Packard Local 190 support for 30-40 received some attention in the *Worker*, October 30, 1949.

[201] *Worker*, November 6, 1949.

[202] *Worker*, November 20, 1949.

[203] Hugo Beiswinger and Nat Ganley mentioned the campaign, Beiswinger in relation to the advantage of a program which benefits the employed and the unemployed, and Ganley in response to the miners' fight for shorter hours without pay cuts. Ganley hoped that a miner victory would "transform the long-standing goal of the UAW for a 30-hour week with 40 hours pay into a practical immediate demand so urgently needed now when unemployment is growing in the auto industry." *Worker*, December 4, 1949 (Beiswinger) and December 11, 1949 (Ganley).

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associated with the 30-40 demand, but struggles whose outcome would dramatically affect the future of the 30-40 movement at Local 600. Saul Wellman's "Program" prepared by the CP for the 1949 UAW convention did include, not only the 30-40 program, but also a proposal to "outlaw company security clauses by Convention mandate."[204] This proposal proved popular enough to be adopted by Thompson's executive board.[205] Even more significant was the adoption by the delegates at the 1949 Convention, of just such a mandate, instructing all UAW negotiators to refuse to sign any contract which included a company security clause.[206]

But when UAW-Ford negotiations concluded toward the end of 1949, the Ford contract included the company security provisions, along with a 17-1/2 month wage-freeze.[207] It was clear that the contract was considered a fraud by many at Local 600 and, like Joe McCusker's 1946 contract, the deal placed a heavy burden on those who advocated its ratification. The CP advocated against the deal, and the "Old-Timer" enjoyed watching Thompson "in a real sweat" over whether his support of the package "may not mean defeat in the next election." Thompson's vice-president, Lee Romano, took the lead in advocating ratification.[208] Ultimately, Thompson did back the contract. It was reportedly Thompson who swung the majority of National Ford Council members in favor of the contract. Thompson was forced to admit that the

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[204] "Labor--UAW Convention '49" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[205] *Worker*, July 3, 1949.
[206] Preis (1964), p.389.
[207] *Worker*, October 16, 1949.
[208] *Worker*, October 16, 1949.

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contract was deeply flawed, but argued that workers had no other practical choice but to accept the pact.[209]

Like the anti-incumbent election cycle of 1946, which had ousted the ACTists from Local office and had kept them from power since that time, the 1950 round of elections put Local 600 incumbents at risk. Critics of Thompson's "middle-road" caucus were provided with avenues for attack on two fronts, the speed-up and the contract. Early in the election campaign, the CP took advantage of both opportunities to hammer away at Thompson. First, the *Worker* repeatedly reported details of the continued speed-up at Ford. Bolstering their argument with many specific cases, the CP demonstrated the failure of the Thompson-Reuther arbitration agreement. For example, in the assembly building, where the speed-up strike had begun, the *Worker* reported that production had increased from 300 cars per eight-hour shift at the time of the May strike to 400 cars in January 1950, with plans to increase the pace to 480 cars per shift.[210] Second, the CP effectively cultivated a wave of resentment against the contract and channeled anger toward vice-president Lee Romano who had led a "Yes" vote campaign.[211]

But the election would quickly turn from an opportunity to a crisis for the CP. The problem was actually obvious to all. An anti-incumbent sentiment against a self-proclaimed "middle-road" administration could just as easily shift to the right as it could to the left in the 1950 elections. The *Worker* described, with some uneasiness, "how fluid things are around Ford Local 600." Early in the election cycle, most

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[209] Preis (1964), pp.389-390.
[210] *Worker*, January 22, 1950.
[211] *Worker*, October 9, 1949; October 16, 1949.

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observers noted that, for all his efforts to accommodate the Reuther administration, Tommy Thompson would not be supported by Reuther in the 1950 elections. Thompson had flip-flopped too many times in the past. Moreover, Joe McCusker and the ACTists, still stung by Thompson's CP-aligned victory over their administration in 1946, had never warmed to Thompson.[212] Now, implicitly recognizing Thompson's post-contract vulnerability, even the ACTists who crafted the contract deal tasted blood. So much so that the "Old-Timer" reported, as "Joke of the Week" at Local 600, that "Joe McCusker... together with John Fitzpatrick... [will soon] ask the left wing for a united front with the right wing to 'beat Thompson.'"[213]

Late in 1949, the CP, recognizing that the once mighty, red-baiting Thompson was now in a more desperate position, sought to undermine Reuther and the ACTists by reconstructing its old center-left "unity" coalition with some of the more mainstream members of Thompson's crumbling center-right coalition. The first "deal" with a member of Thompson's administration was Bill Hood, a popular black "renegade from the Communist and progressive movements" who had been publicly renounced by the "Old-Timer" for joining Thompson's 1948 breakaway group.[214] But

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[212] ACTU's *Wage Earner* reported that it was "no secret that Thompson and McCusker were violently opposed to one another" because of the 1946 election and Thompson's historical tendency to "make political deals" with the Communists. *Wage Earner* article, undated clipping, in "Local 600 1950-52, Clippings" file, box 25, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[213] *Worker*, January 15, 1950.

[214] The "Old-Timer" accused Hood of "playing a double game" by trying to appear "friendly" to the left-wing while backing Thompson. But it was not the CP that broke up this game. Hood is reported by the "Old-Timer" to have taken the floor in support of a red-baiting resolution introduced by Lee Romano at a December 1948 mass meeting on the speed-up. It was alleged that he attacked the CP and even implied that the had shot Reuther. He was reported to have said, "What we are fighting is an ideology, a subversive group. Remember what happened to Walter Reuther!" *Worker*, December 19, 1948.

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less than a year later, Hood, the recording secretary in Thompson's "do-nothing" administration, was featured in a flattering *Worker* piece for his support for Rev. Charles Hill, a black Detroit community leader and long-time defender of the progressives at the Rouge, in Hill's run for the Detroit Common Council.[215] Hood was soon back in an alliance with progressives. But having "rehabilitated" Hood, the CP went even further. After nearly two years of relentless and solid critique of Tommy Thompson's "sell-out" Local policies, the *Worker* quite suddenly and dramatically warmed up to Thompson, as he desperately sought to renew his link with the militants. The price of Thompson's re-admission was a *Worker* headline, "Thompson on T-H." "Thomas Thompson, president of Ford Local 600, this week declared that 'united labor action...to defeat the Taft-Hartley law' is the main task of labor's political action in 1950." For good measure, Thompson is reported to have mentioned that the union should "seriously think of doing something on a program of the 30-hour week with 40-hour pay as one of the ways to ease developing unemployment."[216] The article quoted Thompson at length about his new Taft-Hartley position. The 30-40 mention, which was not a quote of Thompson, was a small crumb thrown to the rank and file to help workers forget the record of betrayal that the CP had so thoroughly documented.

Reuther must have enjoyed watching the CP embrace Thompson and shift uncritically to the right. Far from seeing in this an impassable "united front" against his administration, Reuther correctly saw a potential opportunity to *shift left* in order

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[215] *Worker*, November 13, 1949.
[216] *Worker*, January 15, 1950.

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to win control of Local 600. Of course, Reuther himself could not actually shift left at this point, nor could well-known Reuther loyalists Joe McCusker, John Fitzpatrick, Gene Prato, or Lee Romano. But McCusker had a staff member in his Regional office who appeared perfect for the job of capturing the Rouge for Reuther by running as a militant.

Carl Stellato never received a formal education beyond the eighth grade, but he was nobody's fool. In the eight years that he spent working at Ford's River Rouge, from age eighteen to age twenty-six, Stellato was employed as a machine-setter and devoted his energy to building a union at the Rouge. After the recognition victory, he became the first Chief Steward in the Motor Building. He worked his way out of the plant, riding on the political coat-tails of Percy Llewellyn as Llewellyn was elected Regional coordinator at the 1943 UAW Convention. When Stellato had last been seen on the shop-floor of the Rouge, he was aligned with the progressives. When Llewellyn lost his elected post to Joe McCusker during Reuther's triumphant 1947 Convention, he and others were offered jobs on the International staff. Llewellyn declined the offer, but his assistant, Stellato, chose to keep his office job and work for McCusker.[217]

The rumor at the Rouge was that McCusker actually had to threaten to return Stellato to the shop before the latter agreed to leave his staff post and make a run for the presidency of Local 600.[218] Not only did Stellato agree to run, but he was able to

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[217] For biographical information on Stellato, see Andrew (1979); Jack Stieber (1962) *Governing the UAW*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., p.144; Election Leaflet, file 18, box 249, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives; Election Leaflet, Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[218] *Worker*, March 5, 1950.

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convince Pat Rice to join his slate. Rice had been associated with the progressives for many years. In a strategic play of Rice's own opportunism, Stellato invited Rice to run for the vice-presidency and Rice accepted. In one final coup, Stellato picked-off the incumbent right-wing financial secretary from Thompson's center-right coalition. Paul Good agreed to join the Stellato ticket, as did right-winger James Brown, selected to take on Thompson's center-left recording secretary, Bill Hood. Reuther had not *asked* the left wing for a united front with the right wing to 'beat Thompson.' He went ahead and *manufactured* a left-right, anti-Thompson coalition slate.

Stellato's ticket campaigned against four years of "Thompsonism" and asked workers to join a campaign "to end company-unionism, to end speed-up, to end job movement, to restore militant union leadership in Local 600."[219] Perhaps most significant was the fact that Stellato refused to engage in red-baiting.[220] He went one step further, joining the progressives (and Tommy Thompson) in signing a leaflet demanding the reinstatement of Press Steel committeeman, Art McPhaul, a black militant who had been fired for speaking out in the lunchroom of the building, arguing for a fighting campaign against the speed-up.[221]

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[219] Election Leaflet, file 18, box 249, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[220] The "missing" red-baiting, so common in prior Local 600 campaigns, was well noted. *Ford Facts*, April 21, 1950; *Militant*, May 29, 1950; *Wage Earner* article, undated clipping, in "Local 600 1950-52, Clippings" file, box 25, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[221] *Worker*, April 9, 1950. The leaflet was issued during the run-off campaign, not the primary, but it is indicative of Stellato's attempt to align himself with the progressives. Even more striking is the fact that Stellato signed the leaflet while McPhaul, a progressive, was in a run-off for the vice-presidency in Press Steel. Thus, the leaflet was practically a campaign endorsement of McPhaul. McPhaul was rewarded for his militant efforts when his unit elected him to office. *Worker*, April 23, 1950.

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Going into the primary election, the CP did not actually endorse Thompson. While the *Worker* had transformed him miraculously into a militant fighter, the CP had obligations to fulfill at Local 600. Percy Llewellyn, Stellato's old mentor, had not met with much political success since he lost his Regional Coordinator post in 1947. The CP tried to get him elected to that post again in 1949, but in the face of likely defeat, Llewellyn withdrew his candidacy before the 1949 Convention.[222] Eventually, Llewellyn was put on the CP slate for president of Local 600 in 1950. Going into the primaries, the CP "developed a bold, new approach by entering into the race a list of the best fighters, regardless of caucus affiliation."[223] What this actually meant was that the CP endorsed Llewellyn and Grant from its own caucus, Hood from the Thompson slate, and Pat Rice from the Stellato slate.[224]

The CP reversal on Thompson was so unpopular with the rank and file that, for the first time since Larry Yost's candidacy in the primary of 1946, the progressives at Local 600 split. A group of independent militants[225] broke with the CP and formed a group referred to in the *Worker* as the "Broom Slate," presumably so-named for its intent to sweep Thompson from office, or for its intent to make a clean sweep with a new progressive caucus. The group probably backed Lee Orsage, a left-wing, speed-

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[222] The campaign was announced in the *Worker*, June 26, 1949. John Orr, rather than Llewellyn, was the progressive Regional director candidate at the 1949 Convention. *Proceedings of the Twelfth Convention, UAW-CIO, July 10-15, 1949, Milwaukee, Wisconsin*, pp.476-477.

[223] Phil Schatz clipping in "Ford Material, 1947-52," file 9, box 3, Ganley-Wellman Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[224] *Worker*, April 9, 1950.

[225] These militants were "independent" of the CP. However, the CP claimed that they were "Trotskyites." This may have been so, but the SWP's *Militant* took no notice of the election, providing newspaper coverage to Trotsky-aligned electoral campaigns in much smaller UAW Locals. There was no mention of the Local 600 election in the *Militant* until May 29, 1950, when a "Letter to the Editor" provided an analysis of the election results. That "letter" noted the importance of the election, although made no claim for a Trotskyist role in the campaign.

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up strike leader from the Assembly building, for president and included several other militants with close historical ties to the CP-progressives.[226]

The CP made desperate attempts to expose Stellato and to heal the split on the left. Johnny Gallo, one of the two Communist activists at Local 600 who refused to sign the non-Communist affidavit in 1948, issued a leaflet which declared,

> I charge that the Reuther-McCusker Right Wing Ticket is trying to present itself to the militant Ford workers as a 'Progressive' ticket. For example, they are running Pat Rice for vice-president, who has long been associated with Progressive policies in Local 600.[227]

Similarly, Ganley argued,

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[226] The CP had publicly floated the idea of Walter Quillico, CP activist from Assembly, for president in order to ride a wave of new-found militancy and celebrity in the Assembly building. However, the independent candidacy of the Assembly building's independent leftist, Lee Orsage, may have been one of the factors which led the CP to bump Quillico, who would be competing for the same votes as Orsage, putting Llewellyn in the top spot instead.

Joe Hogan, leader from the Axle unit, was identified by the *Militant* as an independent leftist. It is quite likely that Archie Aciacca, who had been a CP member and remained a leader in Press Steel, was similarly aligned, at least during this period. The *Worker* did not include Aciacca in a list of progressives, but did note that he acted "with support of progressive forces." While his relations with the CP were quite hostile, he did oppose the Reuther-arbitration deal in the 1949 speed-up strike. Associated at that time with left-wing militant, Joe Hogan, he was elected president of Press Steel in 1950. He abandoned the militants at the Rouge during his tenure as president.

Orsage may have been joined on an independent left-wing ticket by someone named Spagnol, a candidate for financial secretary. Not only did Spagnol receive support from some left-wing strong holds, but neither Hogan nor Orsage endorsed Bill Grant's CP-backed run for financial secretary.

For the idea of a run by Quillico, see *Worker*, February 26, 1950. For Orsage as a leftist candidate, see a February 1950 clipping in "Local 600 1950-52, Clippings" file, box 25, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. For Joe Hogan as an "independent" left-winger, see *Militant*, March 13, 1951. For Archie Aciacca, see *Militant*, May 29, 1950; Keeran (1980), p.286; *Worker*, April 2, 1950.. For the election bid of Orsage and Spagnol, see Election Results, file 22, box 249, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. For endorsements (and missing names) for Bill Grant's campaign, see "UAW, Local 600 Elections - 1950," file in Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

[227] "Ford, 1948-50," file 32, box 4, Nat Ganley Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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> Reuther knew his name was 'mud' among the Rouge workers because of his betrayal of the anti-speedup strike last year and his 2 1/2 year company security freeze this year for Ford workers. Hence he had to sneak into the elections, backing a ticket headed by a renegade left-winger.[228]

The split among the historically united bloc of progressives only increased CP fears that Stellato would win support from some anti-Thompson militants. One *Worker* article sent out an order to CP troops, "Say: Fight Ford -- Not Each Other," and called on the "Broom Slate" and the "Progressive Slate" to unite in a fusion slate. While there was no fusion slate for Local-wide offices, there were few three- or four-way races in the individual buildings. Independent progressives and CP-activists did not challenge each other in these races.

Two events at Local 600 during the first months of 1950 may have helped shape the election. First, it was in January of 1950 that Ford workers first became alarmed by a "decentralization" plan whereby Ford would gradually shift production away from the Rouge to areas with lower wage rates and, presumably, a less militant work force. The threat was most immediate for the Motor building, Press Steel, and the Foundry, where Ford plans were well underway. Militants in all three major buildings -- together representing about 30,000 workers, or half the Local 600 membership -- began campaigning for a quick and powerful response to the threat. CP-activists Paul Boatin and Nelson Davis, leaders in Motor and the Foundry, respectively, along with the independent leftist, Archie Aciacca in Press Steel, forged a

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[228] *Worker*, April 9, 1950.

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common campaign to fight decentralization. Boatin effectively pushed the Motor building's right-wing leader, James O'Rourke, to take a strike action resolution before Thompson's executive board.[229]

In the face of this emergency, Thompson refused to call for some form of direct, militant action. Instead, he wrote a letter to Detroit's Mayor Albert Cobo requesting that he call upon the Governor to establish a committee of labor, industry, public officials, and small business to discuss the question of decentralization. Ordinarily, the *Worker*, in reporting this, might have included a critical remark from its presidential candidate, Percy Llewellyn. No critical remarks were published. Thompson's response was reported with a straightforward tone of respect.[230] In recognition of the militant opposition to Thompson's administration, the CP addressed itself to its former allies; to those leaders "who fought the terms of the strike settlement and ratification of the present contract." The CP asked them to forget the past in favor of "the outstretched hand of unity."[231]

The second event, timed perfectly to the beginning of the election at Local 600, was the announcement of a new "clarified" agreement between Ford and the UAW. The clarification concerned the pension deal. The Ford workers had been sold the original agreement on the understanding that the wage freeze would be agreed to in return for Ford's commitment to put 8 3/4 cents per hour per worker into a pension trust fund. However, the clarification stated that the fund would only be created if and only if there was no intervening increase in Federal Social Security. Reuther

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[229] *Worker*, February 19, 1950.
[230] *Worker*, February 12, 1950.
[231] *Worker*, January 22, 1950.

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reportedly announced, "All these private pension plans can just evaporate as far we are concerned when we get the kind of Federal Social Security we want."[232] Workers, who had to contribute to Social Security, were not pleased with this clarification.

When the elections were held, between March 21 and March 23, 1950, the building elections were an extraordinary triumph for the progressives. Many independent progressive incumbents and CP activist incumbents were re-elected without the need for a run-off. These included victories by Joe Hogan in Axle, Ed Locke in Plastic, Art Speed in Maintenance & Construction, Archie Aciacca in Press Steel, and Jack Poole in Casting. John Orr ousted John Fitzpatrick, ACTU spokesman and incumbent president of the Tool and Die unit. There were run-off elections necessary in several buildings, including Boatin's Motor building and Bill Johnson's Foundry building. Moreover, all of the top four local-wide offices required run-off elections. In the primary, Lee Orsage got 1,466 votes, 495 coming from his own unit. Llewellyn polled 6,068. That left Thompson and Stellato headed for a run-off, with 12,516 votes to 11,883 votes, respectively.[233]

It was at this point, after Llewellyn had been eliminated, that the CP actually went ahead and not only endorsed Thompson, but at least some progressives even included Lee Romano on their "unity" slate.[234] Bill McKie issued a leaflet which warned the membership about Stellato's connection to Joe McCusker while

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[232] *Militant*, March 27, 1950; Preis (1964), pp.389-391.
[233] Primary Election Results, file 22, box 249, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives; *Worker*, April 2, 1950; *Militant*, May 29, 1950.
[234] See Progressive Slate Election Leaflet, file 18, box 249,

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simultaneously endorsing Thompson.[235] In an unusually positive reference to the dreaded days of "Browderism," Phil Schatz, assigned by the Party to steer CP activity at the Rouge, likened the run-off campaign to the "progressive atmosphere in the union characteristic of the anti-fascist war years." As Schatz recalled,

> Communists and progressives advanced a minimum unity program as the basis for alliances with former political opponents, including candidates running on Right-wing and Center slates... It was not the full, advanced program usually put forth by the progressive coalition at Ford's...
>
> Many progressive caucus leaders opposed any electoral united front. They charged Communists with 'unprincipled deals'...While rejecting a united front on a minimum program to stop the Reuther-ACTU bid for complete control, some progressives were in favor of an electoral alliance with these forces, to 'get Tommy Thompson'...
>
> Such attitudes were exploited by Trotskyites, who sought to drive a wedge between the Communists and their progressive allies.[236]

Schatz conceded that "progressive forces were split in their estimate of Stellato. In the run-off, some supported him. His militant promises, convincing personal manner, and his plea for a chance to prove that 'I really am an independent' was effective. Many progressives and some Communists were confused and uncertain."[237]

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[235] Election Leaflet, file 1, box 1, Percy Llewellyn Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[236] Phil Schatz (1950) "Some Lessons of the United-Front Victory in the Ford Elections" *Political Affairs* 29:79-86.

The mention of Trotskyists almost certainly refers to activists aligned with the Socialist Workers Party. To judge from its newspaper coverage of Local 600, the SWP itself was not very interested in the Rouge at this time. The *Militant* did not cover the 1950 campaign season at Local 600. However, there were almost certainly members of the SWP working within Local 600 at this time. Independent progressives, frustrated with the CP's "unprincipled deals" would have found enthusiastic allies in SWP members.

[237] Phil Schatz clipping in "Ford Material, 1947-52," file 9, box 3, Ganley-Wellman Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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Stellato beat Thompson, the incumbent, in the run-off, 15,317 to 14,758. Rice also beat incumbent Romano, 15,902 to 12,249. Bill Hood, who received more votes than any other local-wide candidate in the primary election, kept his job by out-polling Stellato's right-wing candidate, James Brown, and Bill Grant beat the incumbent right-winger, Paul Good, who had switched from Thompson administration to the Stellato ticket. In run-off elections in the buildings, progressives Paul Boatin and Bill Johnson were elected to top office in the Motor and Foundry buildings, respectively. Both beat Reuther-backed, right-wing candidates.[238]

The *Wage Earner* exclaimed, "A right wing president with a left-wing executive board!...What will happen at 600 with the changes in office?"[239] All that was certain coming away from the election was that the Ford rank and file had once again rejected the labor statesmanship that had bound them with company security clauses and deserted them in contract negotiations and in the face of the speed-up, stretch-out, and unemployment through decentralization.

And yet, the CP preached reconciliation to the ranks, rather than responding to their militancy. Perhaps the friendly reference to Browderism was no mere accident. In the aftermath of the election, Schatz warned the independent militants and any "confused" Communists,

> Any attempts to build an 'anti-Stellato' caucus... will defeat everyone but Stellato. Such a fatal mistake was made by the Addes, Thomas, Leonard group in 1946 after Walter Reuther

[238] Run-off Election Results, "Ford Local 600, 1946-50" file, box 24, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[239] *Wage Earner* article, undated clipping, in "Local 600 1950-52, Clippings" file, box 25, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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> won the presidency without winning the International Executive Board. Workers are disgusted with factionalism.[240]

This analysis is remarkable for several reasons. First, it makes clear the emergence of a "revisionist" line within the Communist Party. When the Addes, Thomas, Leonard group died in late 1947, Saul Wellman had expressed relief since it liberated the CP to embrace a *more* militant position and to craft a *more* militant program. The lesson learned at that time was certainly not that Reuther should not have been opposed! Now, in 1950, the CP was once again embracing such coalition politics, with "a minimum unity program as the basis for alliances... including candidates running on Right-wing or Center slates."

Second, it draws an incredible conclusion from the election. In late 1949 and early 1950, the CP had made overtures to the "do-nothing," unpopular administration of Tommy Thompson. This shift to the center had led to a rank-and-file rejection of such compromising labor politics. But the CP "lesson" was not to draw closer to the rank and file, but to look ahead to more compromises through support for Stellato. Schatz concluded,

> *The united front from below remains the main base for all activities.* In the new situation, however, the united front from below takes on a new aspect. It becomes a front of struggle in support of activities of progressive leaders, instead of a front of struggle to initiate activities to move and pressure leaders."[241]

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[240] Phil Schatz clipping in "Ford Material, 1947-52," file 9, box 3, Ganley-Wellman Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[241] Schatz (1950), p.86.

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Rather than initiating activities to move and pressure Stellato, the CP scaled back its agenda in search of *his support*, rather than the support of the rank and file. In fact, there was now very little on the CP agenda. Reuther was to be exposed and unmasked primarily for selling the workers "'capitalism with improvements,' anti-Communism, allegiance to the Democratic Party and Truman's reactionary war program, as well as hostility to the Soviet Union."[242] The CP had begun a process of retreat.

Wellman and Williamson's call for a militant *trade union* program was a last gasp before a period of extreme repression in which the Michigan party was driven "underground." Wellman recalled, "We had a Ford Party section office... By 1950 we abandoned all that. We abandoned it not because we were rejected but because of the attacks on us and the political line we had."[243] Moreover, Williamson and 10 other party leaders were tried and convicted of advocating the overthrow of the government. Indeed, Schatz's reference to the continuity between Browderism and the present struggle fits comfortably with the "political line" of the Communist leadership defense which *denied* the reversals associated with the Duclos article and claimed a *continuity* of Communist party policy, all of which, it was now argued, roughly approximated Browder's social-democratic program.[244]

The CP activists at Local 600 did not disappear. Far from it. However, they increasingly searched, not for the immanent tendencies within rank-and-file sentiment,

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[242] Schatz (1950), p.86.
[243] Quoted in Pintzuk (1992), p.30.
[244] Klehr & Haynes (1992), p.127. John Williamson, who published the call for the CP to embrace the 30-40 program in January of 1949 did not even consider the program significant enough in the history of the CP to deserve mention in his memoir, published twenty years later. See John Williamson (1969) *Dangerous Scot: The Life and Work of an American "Undesirable."* New York: International Publishers.

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but for friends in high places who would defend the CP and oppose the cold war as it unfolded at home and abroad. These issues, more than rank-and-file militancy on the shop floor, became the nearly exclusive measure used by the CP to guide its strategy of top-level alliances. While this had been the basis of their Convention defeat in late 1947 and their Local 600 defeat in early 1948, the CP had nevertheless returned to this strategy by the 1950 election round.

The parallel extended into the new Stellato administration. Like Thompson, Stellato was an opportunist looking to unburden himself of the Communists while trying to maintain rank-and-file support. Stellato proceeded along an almost identical path to that taken by Thompson in 1948. His first move was to make sure he had the support of the rank and file. He offered an appropriately militant analysis of the meaning of the election outcomes.

> This is definitely a rejection of Thompson's stand on the speedup, which he said didn't exist. We are going to unify the local and campaign to stop the company from taking Ford workers' jobs to other cities.

Moreover, Stellato announced, in his acceptance speech before a meeting of the General Council, that he favored a six hour day with eight hours' pay. Stellato's embrace of the 30-40 program was a dangerous venture. Undoubtedly aware, both of the program's support among Local 600 militants and its repudiation by Reuther, he nevertheless decided that, for the moment, his reputation among the membership was more precarious than his relationship with Reuther. He made 30 for 40 a centerpiece

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of his program for fighting unemployment. The program was immediately welcomed by the ranks. In an extraordinary show of unity for the Rouge, the 30 for 40 program was endorsed by all but two members of Local 600's ruling body, the General Council.[245]

Almost immediately, the Communists started to cuddle up to Stellato. The "Old-Timer" conjured up some wishful thinking when he described "a reported conversation" between Carl Stellato and *Detroit Times* labor reporter, Jack Crellin.

> **Crellin:** 'Is Paul Boatin...a card carrying member of the Communist Party?'
> **Stellato:** 'I don't know.'
> **Crellin:** 'Will you work with him?'
> **Stellato:** 'The workers in the Motor Building elected Boatin. They elected me. Yes. I will work with him.'

Stellato may have even played along for a month. The *Worker* issued a banner, front-page article which reported that Bill Hood produced a petition "to stop the H-bomb" and initiate a "return to the Roosevelt policy of international cooperation and... negotiations with the Soviet Union." But the story also featured a respectful drawing of Stellato (presumably because he wouldn't provide a photograph), with his name attached, and celebrated the endorsement of the petition "by all top leaders of the local both past and present."[246]

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[245] Andrew (1979), p.240. *Labor Action*, May 29, 1950; *Worker*, May 21, 1950.
[246] *Worker*, May 14, 1950.

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Chapter 6: The Limits of Anti-Communism, 1950-1951

After his election victory, Stellato shifted gears almost immediately and dramatically turned against the CP activists. The first blow came when Stellato and "independent" progressive Archie Aciacca, president of Art McPhaul's Press Steel building, began to back-peddle on the effort to reverse McPhaul's firing.[247] McPhaul warned, "The results of the recent plant wide elections in Ford showed how workers vote out of office those who fail to fight."[248] This was Stellato's first mistake. Unlike Thompson, who successfully attacked CP-activists in 1948 for *being Communists* before militant trade unionists, Stellato tried to get rid of McPhaul (and two other Press Steel militant officers who had been fired) by giving aid and comfort to Ford in its assault on workers and the leaders punished for fighting the speedup.

Perhaps it took a little while for Stellato to review the history of Local 600 and learn how Thompson had managed to beat the Communists. On July 1950, he got it right. He decided to take on the Communists *as Communists*. The timing was perfect. The cold war heated up considerably in the summer of 1950 as Truman ordered an escalation of the conflict in Korea. When the Communists at Local 600 distributed leaflets opposing Truman's policy, Stellato took a page from *Ford Facts* history and ordered a non-Communist loyalty pledge. Having already won the allegiance of several officers, including Aciacca and the CP's recent candidate for President of the UAW, Bill Grant, Stellato managed to win approval for the pledge

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[247] *Worker*, May 21, 1950; May 28, 1950.
[248] *Worker*, May 28, 1950.

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from the General Council. Sixty-two delegates voted against the pledge, but it passed by 12 votes. The pledge was distributed and Stellato called on the rank and file to urge officers to make the pledge or resign. Perhaps Stellato expected the CP-activists, including John Gallo, to stick to the 1948 script and resign from office. But this time the Communists simply signed the pledge.[249]

Stellato became even more aggressive. In August, he proceeded to prefer charges against five officers. To his credit, he named many of the best CP militants, but left untouched the more independent militants like Bill Hood or Joe Hogan. Stellato selected John Gallo and Paul Boatin from Motor, Ed Lock, the Communist president of Plastics, Dave Moore, the popular black vice-president of the Axle Building, and Nelson Davis, the devoted black Communist and militant vice-president of the Production Foundry.[250]

Stellato's timing was not good and nor his touch light. He scheduled a trial to begin in early October 1950, but between August and October, a new contract would be negotiated. In 1947, Tommy Thompson had success in his purges because he was able to take a more militant line than the Communists at the 1947 Convention. But his support among the rank and file evaporated in 1949 when he shifted from movement leader to labor statesman, as he backed Reuther in "selling" the arbitrated speed-up agreement and the unpopular contract deal to the workers. In contrast to this timing, Stellato was faced with the nearly impossible task of simultaneously purging

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[249] "We Accuse" (a single-issue newspaper/leaflet produced by the Ford Communists) in "Labor -- UAW Ford" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division. Also, see Andrew (1979), pp.240-241.

[250] "We Accuse," in "Labor -- UAW Ford" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division; Andrew (1979), p.241.

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Communists *and* helping Reuther "sell" a contract. Moreover, in 1948 Thompson's legitimacy was enhanced by the fact that he forced the "loyalty" issue and then beat the communists in an election cycle. Stellato, on the other hand, had misfired in his loyalty pledge campaign and then *overruled* the democratic electoral will of the rank and file in removing duly elected officers of the Local.

The five accused Communists were acutely aware of Stellato's uncomfortable position and made the most of it. They launched a militant campaign, not exclusively or even primarily in their own defense, but in defense of the rank and file *against* Stellato's program reversals as the contract negotiations unfolded. Hence the title of their brilliant, four-page campaign "newspaper," "We Accuse." They turned the tables on Stellato, putting him on the defensive for abandoning the rank and file in contract negotiations.

The CP-activists were aided in no small measure by the actual course of negotiations. Reuther and Ford provided considerable grist for the critical mill. The contract included a renewed company security clause, a new waiver clause which the CP described as an agreement to "allow" Ford to get a speedup with the same human effort. Within two years, Ford would give this process a name: automation. And finally, the proposal was to extend the contract for five years. In the past, Reuther had not even been able to win support for his proposals for two-year contracts at the Rouge.[251]

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[251] Preis (1964), p.412; "We Accuse," in "Labor -- UAW Ford" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

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Stellato did the best he could to talk out of both sides of his mouth and appease both Reuther and the ranks. In the pre-contract, public discussions with building representatives, Stellato took a stand against an escalator clause (in which wages would fluctuate according to the dynamics of a consumer price index) and against the five-year ban on new wage negotiations. Stellato also voted with the building representatives to fight for a 25-cent an hour wage increase. After private negotiations with Ford, however, Stellato reversed himself on all the above issues and began the effort to sell these contract concessions to the membership. On the wage front, Stellato retreated to an 8 cent raise *with* the escalator clause he had formerly repudiated.[252]

Finally, one further issue put Stellato in an extremely awkward position. In the 1949 negotiations, Reuther had reacted to a move by Ford to remove premium pay for weekend work for Rolling Mill workers by establishing a union-management committee to study the question of wages for steel workers. The committee passed the question on to the umpire for an arbitrated decision. He noted that steel industry wages were lower than auto industry wages for Rolling Mill workers. Reuther then did Ford's bidding when he warned a membership meeting that if Rolling Mill workers at the Rouge did not accept lower pay, Ford would shut down the Rouge Mill and seek other steel sources. Rather than making a solidaristic effort to fight for higher wages among workers in the steel industry, Reuther tried to sell a concessionary contract that dragged the auto workers down to the level of the steel industry.

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[252] "We Accuse," in "Labor -- UAW Ford" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

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Not only did a reported 12,000 Rouge workers cast ballots *against* the contract, but workers from the Rolling Mill began a wildcat strike to prevent the premium pay concession.[253] The walkout started on the first shift, then spread to the second. Stellato then condemned the wildcat and ordered the workers back to the Mill. The third shift reported for work, stayed a few minutes, and then went home. The wildcat lasted four days, during which time Ford laid off the Press Steel workers. Stellato argued that the Rolling Mill workers were denying the rest of the Ford workers "their democratic and economic right to work." The Communists replied that such talk was "strictly Chamber of Commerce stuff."[254]

A trial committee of Stellato supporters was elected by the General Council on September 17, 1950. When the trial began on October 9, 1950, Stellato had already experienced a significant defection. When Walter Quillico, the left-wing president of the assembly unit, was selected to head a committee to defend the five accused officers, Pat Rice abandoned Stellato. Rice proved his willingness to follow the scent of electoral success when he abandoned his CP companions to join Stellato's slate before the 1950 election. Now, in a sure sign that the winds had changed, Rice jumped ship and joined the defense committee. William Johnson, from the Foundry, was the attorney for the defense.[255]

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[253] This is a relatively high number considering the anxiety among workers following Ford's threat to close half of the Rouge through its decentralization plan.

[254] *Detroit Free Press*, October 3, 1950; *Militant*, October 16, 1950; "We Accuse," in "Labor -- UAW Ford" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division. "Labor -- UAW Local 600 Elections, 1951" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

[255] *Detroit Free Press*, January 7, 1951. Stellato provided a detailed account of this period. His account was offered during the 1953 UAW Convention. See, *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, pp.207-209.

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The strength of the CP position was confirmed during the course of the trial. An election of delegates to the General Council had staggering results. Stellato went into the election with a slim majority of support on the Council, but when the votes were finally counted, his support had dropped from about 60% to about 48%, with a net loss of at least 28 seats.[256] Stellato would later recall, "We took a terrific shellacking."[257] The *Wage Earner* ran an exasperated headline, "Rank and File Stupidity."[258] Not only were four of the five accused elected to the Council, but all but one of the trial committee members were defeated. Stellato and the trial committee prolonged the trial process by refusing to report their findings to the General Council. Stellato was clearly hoping that with the upcoming round of Local elections in March 1951, he would be able to swing support back to his own camp.[259]

As early as June 1950, the right wingers at the Rouge began to speculate that Rice would be the left-wing presidential candidate in 1951. But in December 1950, Tommy Thompson, the former president, announced that he would attempt to make the leap from his "new" job, working as a committeeman on the midnight shift in the Tool and Die unit, back to his "old" job, as president of Local 600. Thompson quickly tried to enlist the support of Pat Rice, whom he hoped would run as vice-president on his ticket.[260] The CP had been promoting Rice for president, but once Thompson

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[256] *Detroit Free Press*, January 7, 1951.
[257] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, pp.207-209.
[258] *Wage Earner*, November 1950.
[259] Andrew (1979), p.242; "Local 600 -- clippings, 1950-52" file, box 25, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives; *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, pp.207-209.
[260] *Wage Earner*, December 1950.

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entered, word spread that Rice was expected to team up with Thompson on a coalition ticket. Thompson wanted to the top slot, but Rice had his eye on the same post.[261]

Communist contemplation of such a coalition was once again attacked by Trotskyists and independent progressives at the Rouge. The *Militant* branded the idea of a Thompson-CP coalition "unprincipled opportunism." The pact risked splitting the progressives again.[262]

The CP cut a last-minute deal intended to create harmony. On the one hand, the CP activists capitulated to Thompson, agreeing to run Rice for vice-president, rather than president. However, it simultaneously sought to appease the independent progressives by agreeing to support Joe Hogan, the relatively unknown, independent, left-wing president of the Axle unit, to run for president of the Local.[263] The CP strategy was to emerge from the primaries with Thompson and Stellato facing each other for president, but with Rice still in the game as vice-president. The CP did not expect Hogan to survive the primary. The Thompson and Hogan slates each ran their own candidates for financial secretary and recording secretary.[264]

Stellato's ticket was an ironic assortment. Rice, who had run *with* Stellato in 1950 was now replaced by Jim Rooney. However, William Grant and Bill Hood, who had run *against* Stellato in 1950, now joined Stellato's slate.

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[261] *Detroit Free Press*, January 7, 1951.
[262] *Militant*, February 5, 1951.
[263] *Detroit Free Press*, January 22, 1951.
[264] 1951 Election Leaflets in "Labor -- UAW Local 600 Elections, 1951" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division; *Worker*, February 18, 1951.

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Hogan, who had been a part of the defense committee in the trial, ran a campaign which continued to hammer away at all the themes which had led to electoral success in the October 1950 General Council election. Indeed, the five accused officers issued election leaflets in support of Hogan's slate. Hogan attacked the "war program for full employment that Stellato and Reuther are advocating" and proposed "a guaranteed annual wage and a six-hour day with no reduction in pay" along with increased unemployment compensation. Hogan also argued that the recently negotiated pension plan would "make slaves of the workers" since it left them "tied to the same company for their complete period of employment." He proposed to fight for Government administration of the pension, rather than company administration.[265]

Stellato's campaign continued his assault on the CP. He used *Ford Facts* as a vehicle for defending his anti-Communist crusade, describing himself as "engaged in a death struggle with international Communism. We did not seek this struggle; the Communists sought it."[266] However, Stellato recognized that he also required a positive labor movement program. He did not run on his contract negotiation record from the 1950 round. He did not even try to name any past negotiating successes. Instead, he once again took the somewhat dangerous step of promoting the 30-hour week. In an effort to appeal to the rank and file without alienating the Reutherites, Stellato walked a tight rope. His words were chosen in an almost explicit attempt to

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[265] "Labor -- UAW Local 600 Elections, 1951" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

[266] *Ford Facts*, February 24, 1951. The attempt to portray his campaign as purely defensive suggests that Stellato was self-conscious about the unpopularity of the struggle itself.

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reconcile his position with Reuther's, especially in light of Reuther's 1949 attack on the shorter hours program.

> The goals of our Union are not pie-in-the-sky... Our first aim is the guaranteed annual wage. Our next aim is the 6-hour work day, or the 30-hour week. Both these objectives are as practical and feasible as the present social security system and unemployment compensation programs, and the 8-hour day. Only a few short years back these objectives of Labor were considered communistic and anti-American. However, every American... now accepts these institutions as American... it is not the intention of our Union to wage war against the American people to accomplish these objectives. We recognize the exactions of a war-time economy and the need of sacrifice by all.[267]

Stellato and Hogan ran on shorter hour platforms, although Stellato projected his plan into the future, after the expiration of the five-year contract. Hogan, in contrast to Stellato, accused Reuther of using war as a full employment program and proposed shorter hours as an *alternative labor strategy* in opposition to military Keynesianism.

In preparation for the 13th UAW Convention, set to open in Cleveland on the first of April, 1951, the Reuther administration had made clear its intent to amend the UAW constitution in order to increase membership dues from $1.50 a month to a $2.50 per month minimum. This created some difficulties for Stellato at Local 600. As a faithful member of Reuther's caucus, Stellato was expected to do everything he could to facilitate the passage of the dues increase. But after the October 1950 General Council election demonstrated the strength of the opposition within the Local,

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[267] "Labor -- UAW Local 600 Elections, 1951" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

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Stellato faced the uncomfortable prospect of showing up at the convention with a majority of Local 600 delegates in opposition to the Reuther plan. Stellato's solution was to begin a campaign for a rank-and-file referendum on the question of the dues increase, thus making it more difficult for Convention delegates to cast votes which ran against the grain of rank-and-file sentiment.

Hogan and the other left-wing officers at Local 600 were against the dues increase. Hogan posed sharp questions about the dues increase. Was the money to be used exclusively for strike preparation? Hogan issued a leaflet that characterized the dues increase as little more than a fund for building Reuther's bureaucratic machine. Hogan pressed Stellato, "Admit to the membership that strike funds are used for other things than strikes." Strike preparation hardly seemed urgent after Reuther had just negotiated a five year contract.[268]

While Stellato supported the increase and Hogan did not, they both seemed to agree that the rank and file would support the requested dues increase. Therefore, on January 30, 1951, Stellato proposed to the Local 600 executive board that the question be submitted to a referendum vote of the membership. Recognizing Stellato's maneuver, Hogan, Pat Rice, Ed Lock, Bill Johnson and other left-wing officers voted against the referendum. However, the Executive Board vote passed and the referendum vote was scheduled to coincide with the election of Local officers and Convention delegates.[269]

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[268] Hogan Anti-Dues Increase Leaflet, "Labor -- UAW Local 600 Elections, 1951" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[269] *Ford Facts*, February 3, 1951; Hogan Anti-Dues Increase Leaflet, "Labor -- UAW Local 600 Elections, 1951" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

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The primary election results proved extraordinary. The CP conceded that "Thompson was favored...to be a cinch to meet Stellato in the finals."[270] But it didn't happen that way. Hogan won 9,010 votes while Thompson received on 7,784. Stellato topped the other two, winning an impressive 16,205 votes. *Labor Action*, sympathetic to Stellato and the Reuther administration, declared that Stellato "established himself as an up-and-coming figure in the UAW by his triumph" but also noted that Thompson's poor showing was a "surprise." Moreover, the article noted, "Hogan's 8,000-odd votes [sic] were more than Reuther forces conceded he would obtain."[271] The *Militant* called Hogan's showing "a big surprise" while the *Worker*, somewhat awkwardly, scoffed at the way other newspapers celebrated the "amazing results" signaled by the high vote for Hogan.[272] The CP played down Hogan's victory.[273] Its election coverage emphasized, instead, the fact that each of the five accused Communist officers won the highest number of votes in the primary election, and that only Gallo faced a run-off election. The other four were re-elected outright.[274] Independent progressive, anti-Stellato candidates also won the presidency in several units, including Tool and Die, the Casting Machine Shop, Maintenance, Rolling Mill, and Axle. A few more progressives were still in the running after the primaries, including presidential candidates in Frame and Cold Heading, Dearborn

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[270] *Worker*, March 4, 1951.
[271] *Labor Action*, March 5, 1951.
[272] *Militant*, March 12, 1951; *Worker*, March 4, 1951.
[273] Arguably, the CP was still trying to go easy on Stellato. In his election coverage, Allan argued that "Stellato, watching the issues and the type of campaign of Hogan in the last days of the primary election was forced to drop his well known red-baiting towards the end of the campaign." There is little evidence to support this observation and the run-off campaign would see an *increase*, not a decrease in red-baiting. It appears that the CP had narrowed its "conditions" for coalition partnership to the single issue of red-baiting, without serious regard for trade union issues.
[274] *Worker*, March 4, 1951.

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Assembly, and Bill Johnson in the Foundry. Pat Rice, who ran with the backing of Hogan and Thompson, beat Stellato's candidate, Jim Rooney. The Thompson and Hogan candidates for Recording Secretary split the progressive vote, leaving the always popular Bill Hood with enough votes to win office again.[275] The left-wing candidate for recording secretary, Virgil Lacey, beat Thompson's candidate and now faced former Local 600 president and one-time-CP-ally Bill Grant in the run-off.[276]

The Stellato administration was not without electoral success in this primary round. However, he was repudiated on several important fronts. First, the easy re-election of four of the five accused officers demonstrated that his red-baiting campaign had backfired. But his referendum also backfired, much to the surprise of Stellato *and* the progressives, both of whom significantly underestimated the anti-Reuther sentiment within the rank and file. The Ford workers turned down the dues increase by a vote of 23,000 to 9,000.[277] The anti-dues vote was significant because it put Stellato in the extremely uncomfortable position of attending the UAW Convention as the leader of a delegation *opposed* to Reuther's Convention agenda.

But Stellato faced additional hurdles as the Convention approached. The run-off election was scheduled for March 13-15, 1951. Hogan continued to lead a militant campaign, calling for an abrogation of the contract provision which granted the company the right to "establish, maintain, and enforce" the speed of production. Hogan proposed that the speed of production be cut 20%. "Ford workers can't wait

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[275] When Hood ran for office *against* Stellato in 1950, he won more votes than any other candidate for Local-wide office.
[276] Hogan Run-off Election Leaflet, "Labor -- UAW Local 600 Elections, 1951" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[277] *Militant*, March 12, 1951.

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for the 5 year Company Security Contract to expire. Negotiations... must take place now. The workers want action and improvements now!"[278] Hogan also argued for a fighting program to stop Ford's decentralization plan.

Stellato shot back with his most vicious red-baiting campaign to date, dashing CP hopes that he would warm up to the Communists. He used a major front page article in *Ford Facts* to launch an anti-Communist tirade in which he claimed that he was being persecuted by the Communists who, he said, were sending their "best organizers into Dearborn to defeat me in this election." Stellato asked the membership to choose between trade unionists and "persons in our local who are being supported by a political organization which owes its allegiance to a foreign country."[279] He even went so far to reproduce a copy of Victor Riesel's "Inside Labor" column from the *Sunday Mirror* in which Riesel complained,

> One of the gimmicks the Commie comrades called for in this massive poll... was a demand for 20 percent more leisure in the plants. They simply ran on a platform saying let Ford slow down the work by 20 percent. This would make more jobs -- and then there wouldn't be the need for war production, no war. Peace, it's wonderful.... the old Bolsheviks from New York are in to plot the smearing of the anti-Communists.[280]

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[278] *Worker*, March 11, 1951; Hogan Run-off Election Leaflet, "Labor -- UAW Local 600 Elections, 1951" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

[279] *Ford Facts*, March 10, 1951.

[280] *Ford Facts*, March 4, 1951.

According to the "Old-Timer" and his "Autotown Alley" column in the *Worker*, the only smearing was *by* not *of* the anti-Communists. He reported that the Stellato administration was now working to "get the House Un-American Committee to come into the Ford situation." *Worker*, March 18, 1951.

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It is particularly ironic that the "threat" to Stellato was quite real, but it was *not* coming from the CP. Indeed, Stellato (and Riesel) implicitly recognized the battleground. The threat was correctly understood to be the *program*, which was not the CP's program, so much as the line of Hogan and the other independent progressives.[281] But Stellato did not directly attack the program. His strategy was either to ignore these trade union issues (especially his 1950 administrative record) or to *appropriate the progressive position*, as in the case of his endorsement of the shorter work week. Stellato directed his attack against the "threat" posed by the more vulnerable "Commies."

Stellato won the run-off election. But when the votes were tallied, Stellato was stunned to learn that he had come within about 450 votes of losing the presidency to Hogan.[282] The results were all the more upsetting to Stellato because Hogan had

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[281] Hogan's program, including his opposition to the Korean War, was certainly similar to the line of the Socialist Workers Party. While the SWP shared the CP's allegiance to the Bolshevik revolution and opposed the cold war, they were not in search of top-level deals. The SWP played the more traditional role of ideological brain trust to those Rouge elites, like Hogan, who were still competing for the support of the rank-and-file.

Shachtman's *Labor Action* could not quite make sense of Local 600's left-wing, calling it "a mish-mash...not dominated by Stalinists." *Labor Action*, April 23, 1951.

[282] The *Worker* reported the election results to be 17,111 for Stellato, 16,682 for Hogan, with a difference of 429 votes. The *Wage Earner* reported that Stellato beat Hogan 16,664 to 16,188, for a difference of 476 votes. *Worker*, March 25, 1951; *Wage Earner* article in "Local 600 -- clippings, 1950-52" file, box 25, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

Andrew (1979:243) uses the 429 vote difference to describe the run-off outcome. Andrew's project is to argue against the notion that Communism was a powerful feature in Local 600. He writes, "Rather than the high tide of CP power, the March 1951 elections were instead the nadir of Stellato's prestige." While this is accurate, it may be going too far to claim that the elections were "considered more of an anti-Stellato reaction than a leftist demonstration of strength." It was a leftist demonstration, not only in support of syndicalist trade union policies, but also in opposition to a full employment program based on a war economy. Andrew seems to conflate "leftist" trade union policy and Communist Party support.

Walter Jason (B.J. Widick), the key writer assigned to coverage of the UAW in the pages of Shachtman's *Labor Action*, reported that Hogan had made "an amazing showing... in spite of a fantastic 'Moscow plot' story cooked up against him." *Labor Action*, April 2, 1951.

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announced his candidacy no more than a couple of weeks before the primary election and ran for the top Local office without having ever held any Local-wide office. He was an unknown outside of the Axle building. The aggressive militancy of the rank and file had, once again, caught Stellato by surprise. And although he had managed to hold on to his office, Stellato had also been handed an undeniable mandate from the rank and file that he use that office to lead a fight against Reuther's dues increase at the upcoming Convention.[283] Finally, having lost his majority in the General Council back in October 1950, Stellato now faced a divided executive board.[284]

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[283] Andrew (1979:244) reports that "between the time of the referendum and the start of the convention, Stellato had actually pledged to Reuther that he would support a dues increase." The only event between the referendum and the convention which could have changed Stellato's thinking was the run-off election.

[284] Stellato used *Ford Facts* to declare, "For the first time since he was elected to the presidency of Local 600 in May 1950, Stellato now has a majority of the members of the Local Executive Board in his corner." The CP was similarly confident in its calculation, noting, "The 26-man Executive Board of the 65,000 member local now lines up as follows: Stellato, 10, the progressives, 11, and five members who are rated as independents." *Labor Action* reported that the majority of the executive board members were "against Reuther." None of the calculations attached names to the numbers, fearing that the more independent officers would object to being considered "deliverable" by either side. In any event, Stellato did not face an easy ride.

Two significant losses for the left did occur in the units. Wally Quillico, the left-wing leader from the Assembly unit, was defeated by Mike Donnelly, a Stellato supporter. Also, Bill Johnson was "edged out" of the Foundry presidency by the Reutherite, "Old Man" Harold Johnson. Phil Schatz, the CP organizer, reported that Stellato had taken credit for winning an extra 5-cent bonus for 7-day operations in the Foundry in late 1950. The *Militant* similarly noted that the "demonstrative actions" of the progressives had led to this success. But in this instance, Stellato had not attacked the rank-and-file militancy. Instead, while Reuther took credit for negotiating the deal, without mentioning the rank-and-file actions, Stellato gave credit to the membership, coming very close to endorsing and defending the actions, after the fact. "The Ford Motor Company would not have negotiated if these stoppages had not taken place last week." See *Worker*, April 8, 1951; *Militant*, September 25, 1950.

At the very least, the left-wing unit presidents included Alex Simeon in Axle, Jack Poole in Casting, Art Speed in Maintenance, Paul Boatin in Motor, Carl Smith in Open Hearth, Ed Lock in Plastic, Joe Morgan in Frame and Cold Heading, and John Orr in Tool & Die. But many political allegiances, including those of Bill Hood, Pat Rice, Bill Grant, and other unit leaders, were quite flexible, making it difficult for Stellato to make a confident assessment of his situation in advance of particular struggles.

Also, John Gallo, the only accused Communist who did not win outright in the primaries, beat his opponent in the run-off election.

For the newspaper calculations and for Gallo, see *Ford Facts*, March 24, 1951; *Worker*, March 25, 1951; *Labor Action*, April 23, 1951. For the list of left-wing unit presidents, see "Local 600 -- clippings, 1950-52" file, box 25, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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Stellato's first post-election comments were somewhat conciliatory to Local 600's potent left wing. "Now that the elections are over," he wrote, "it is our duty to try to effect the program which we ran for election on. But it is also the duty of those who were defeated to try to bring to realization those parts of their program which are good for our membership."[285] In a sign of respect for the support demonstrated for Hogan's program, Stellato conceded that "parts of their program" would be "good for our membership." But Stellato was not yet clear which parts he considered powerful enough, given the militant climate of Local 600, to warrant appropriation.

[285] *Ford Facts*, March 24, 1951.

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Chapter 7: The Making of a Militant: Carl Stellato, 1950-1952

Stellato's first piece of business, coming only one week after his close call, was to try to find a way to get through the UAW Convention in Cleveland. The issue of *Ford Facts*, published the day before the Convention, included a massive, front-page, banner headline, "Local 600 Pushes Fight Against Dues Increase."[286] But this fighting line was in direct opposition to Reuther, who made the dues increase his top Convention priority.[287] The headline back home was certainly intended to appeal to the anti-Reuther rank and file, but when Stellato arrived in Cleveland, he attended a pre-Convention meeting of the Reuther caucus, reportedly as "a *Reuther supporter*."[288] However, he announced the referendum results from Local 600, made clear his intention to carry out the wishes of the membership, and argued for a rank-and-file referendum on the issue. His suggestion was met with boos and jeers from the Reutherites. Stellato kept pleading that he was a right-winger and belonged in the Reuther caucus.[289] Secretary-treasurer Emil Mazey made a ferocious attack on Local 600 during the Convention discussion of the dues increase. Mazey declared,

> I am a little sick and tired of seeing cheap politicians come to this Convention who have a one-point program against dues,

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[286] *Ford Facts*, March 31, 1951.
[287] *Labor Action*, April 2, 1951. Walter Jason (B.J. Widick) was highly critical of Reuther's dues increase.
[288] *Labor Action*, April 9, 1951.
[289] *Labor Action*, April 16, 1951. Widick reported that the attack on Stellato came as "quite a shock" to some who had thought that Widick's own April 2, 1951 article had been too critical of Reuther's moves to increase bureaucratic power and stifle union democracy. Widick reported that the "language of the Reuther leaders was different than in other years. Stellato was an 'enemy of the union,' and anyone agreeing with him was 'sabotaging the union.'"

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> not in favor of organizing or political action or other things. All they are in favor of is getting re-elected. And I say that I am ashamed of some of the leadership of the Ford Local because, by God, your organization was made possible by people sitting in this room today.[290]

Stellato may have wanted to use Mazey's attack on "some" of the leadership in order to distance himself from the "cheap politicians," but he calculated that his precarious position at home was more dangerous than Mazey or Reuther's wrath.

Having incurred that wrath, however, Stellato was determined to cash in some chips with the militants back home. He used the first post-Convention issue of *Ford Facts* to demonstrate his fidelity to the membership by contrasting his own opposition to the dues increase to the Convention delegates from other locals who had promised their membership opposition only to switch at the Convention. It was in relation to these delegates that he ran a banner headline, "Betrayal." But the article, which discussed Reuther's pressure tactics in convincing such delegates to support the increase, clearly hinted that it was Reuther who had also betrayed the membership.[291]

Stellato was almost certainly a reluctant dissident. He had done Reuther's bidding at Local 600 throughout his difficult first year in office. He had tried to maneuver around the left-wing officers on the dues increase, but the membership forced his hand. He had gone to the Reuther caucus in search of some sympathy for his uncomfortable circumstances. But the caucus did not show Stellato sympathy, the caucus showed Stellato the door. He was, after all, doing the work of the opposition now, whether he *wanted* to or not.

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[290] *Proceedings of the Thirteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, April 1-7, 1951, Cleveland, Ohio*, p.96.
[291] *Ford Facts*, April 23, 1951.

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The rank and file at Local 600 had not elected an opposition figure, they had created one. And while Stellato may have been a reluctant militant, he was not a stupid one. Stellato had been on Reuther's staff during the 1949 convention and was well aware of Reuther's Achilles heal: the shorter work week. It was, as Reuther had acknowledged in 1949, an enormously popular program within the UAW membership. Stellato had recognized the widespread support for the shorter work week when he campaigned for office in 1950 and 1951, but he soft-peddled the issue because he was well aware of Reuther's opposition to the program. Now that his bridge with the Reuther administration had been burned, he could unify the rank and file around the 30-40 program without regard to Reuther. Reuther's strongest argument against the program in 1949 had been its association with the Communist Party, but Stellato considered himself a right-wing, red-baiting anti-Communist. Who better to remove the CP stigma from the demand?[292] Almost immediately, Stellato transformed the dues fight into a substantive fight about trade union policy.[293]

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[292] The CP recognized that Stellato was quickly emerging as a powerful opposition figure. The *Worker* reported, "Stellato, seriously concerned about his narrow victory in the recent elections, is making overtures in all directions seeking new realignments." However, the CP was simultaneously dismayed that Stellato's *Ford Facts* editor, Dave Averill, was still "red-baiting in the old way." The CP always referred to Averill as a Trotskyite. *Worker*, May 13, 1951.

Stellato was committed to appropriating the militant left-wing trade union program that had almost defeated him. The CP, which, in contrast to Hogan, had not put any pressure on Stellato, could not understand why he was so threatened by Hogan's program, but was still not afraid of attacking the CP.

Nevertheless, the CP itself would come to speak of this period as a time when a "coalition was consummated" with Stellato. The "coalition" took its most concrete form in Stellato's appointment of Bill Johnson as his administrative assistant. Johnson had lost his run for the presidency of the Foundry. But the Johnson-Stellato alliance made sense in light of the fact that the new Foundry president, "Old Man" Johnson, was himself more loyal to Reuther than Stellato. When Stellato was pushed into opposition to Reuther, most of Stellato's right-wing supporters joined him in his new militancy. "Old Man" Johnson was one of the few who did not support Stellato. See "The Defeat of Reuther in the Elections of #600," an extremely important manuscript, written by an unidentified CP organizer at the Rouge. "The Defeat of Reuther in the Elections of #600" in

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Stellato's new strategy was to appeal, full throttle, to the militant sentiment of the rank and file. Union *officers* could very rarely afford to articulate, in its most militant form, the desires of the rank and file. While such a militant position was understood to be a powerful tool for getting elected to office, all officers simultaneously prepared to *contain* the rank and file when it was necessary to "sell" a contract to the membership. Ironically, the five-year contract that Stellato helped "sell" in 1950 now provided him with four more years during which his only task was seek the support of the rank and file. He would not have do the work of containment until the next contract. It was the contract which had brought down so many incumbents at Local 600. The contract forced all *officers* to play the role of labor statesman, balancing the pressure from the company (and the International) against the pressure from the rank and file. But Stellato would face few responsibilities as a labor statesman until 1955.[294] Until that time, he could, if challenged, afford to be more militant than any other competing elite within Local 600. Nothing would force him

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"Reuther #4" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

[293] *Labor Action* was skeptical of the potential for expanding the fight beyond the dues issue. Such opposition was unlikely because the UAW was "so strongly united on the main questions of trade union policy." The Shachtmanites had almost completely lost touch with the demands of the rank-and-file. See *Labor Action*, April 23, 1951.

[294] While Stellato could not *afford* to play "labor statesman" in Local 600, he never renounced the idea of getting *away* from the difficult task of keeping one step ahead of the Rouge workers. Therefore, he consistently ran for offices which would take him out of Local 600. This included a run for regional director at the UAW Convention in 1953, and a campaign for one of the UAW vice-presidential slots in 1955. While Stellato tried to moderate his rhetoric when interacting with members of the Reuther caucus, in the hope of being welcomed onto the International Executive Board as an ally, the various militant positions he was forced to take at Local 600 made this unlikely. There were too many loyal caucus members in line for such IEB slots. See *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.502; *Proceedings of the Fifteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 27-April 1, 1955, Cleveland, Ohio*, p.377. For the analysis of Stellato's relation to the Reuther caucus and IEB positions, see Stieber (1962), p.149.

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once again to leave himself vulnerable to attack from the independent progressives.[295] He could appropriate any militant program that had popular support.

The Korean War provided an extremely useful battleground for challenging Reuther's administration of the UAW. For Reuther, the War provided a renewed hope that labor relations might return to the great days of the first two World Wars when a booming war economy would require government and industry to seek the aid of labor statesmen like Reuther in an effort to manage the pretensions of the rank and file in a period of wartime labor shortages. In fact, however, Reuther's strategy was in trouble from the start. While he applauded Truman's military offensive, he was rebuffed in his efforts to get a firm footing within Truman's war administration agencies.[296] The labor shortages refused to emerge, as wartime conversion caused massive layoffs, beginning early in 1951.[297]

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[295] He did, of course, face some resistance from Reuther supporters, especially those outside Local 600. Ken Morris, Reutherite president of Local 212, got into a feud with Stellato almost immediately after the Convention. Morris wrote Stellato a letter in which he criticized Stellato for "initially raising the 'Commy' issue within your local union and initiating fully publicized charges and trials... Then you take a complete reversal on your anti-Communist attitude when those who strongly opposed your position are placed by you on the local staff to full-time positions." This last point was a reference to Bill Johnson. See Ken Morris Letter, file 19, box 249, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

But some Reutherites within the Rouge felt betrayed by Stellato's new opposition relationship with Reuther. James F. Ryan, as self-described "old-timer" who knew Walter Reuther "from the time he was an apprentice tool & die maker" at the Rouge, wrote to criticize Stellato, saying, "The time has come when the rank and file of Local 600 woke up to the fact that you are no longer the man we thought you were when they elected you at the last election." See James F. Ryan Letter, file 19, box 249, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[296] Kevin Boyle (1995) *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp.72-73. While the three labor union representatives on Truman's Wage Stabilization Board had resigned in February, protesting the board's anti-labor policies, Reuther accepted a post on April 5 to serve in an "advisory" capacity on Truman's National Advisory Board on Mobilization Policy. Preis (1964), p.436

[297] For a discussion of the unemployment during the 1951 conversion to wartime production, see "Official Proceedings, National Emergency Conference on Problems of Unemployment" in file 3, box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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Reuther not only demonstrated his enthusiasm for the war, but he actively sought governmental intervention into labor relations.[298] But when that intervention finally came, it was in the form of a Wage Stabilization Board proposal to cancel the 4-cent yearly improvement raise guaranteed in the 1950 contract.[299] The increased payments were due to begin June 1, 1951. On May 29, the executive board of Local 600 voted *unanimously* for a strike, set to begin Monday, June 4, 1951. Reuther wired the board, warning Local 600 that the IEB would not tolerate a strike. Under pressure, the board agreed not to *call* the strike, but warned Reuther and the WSB that it could not guarantee what the workers would do Monday morning. "Fortunately for Reuther," one commentator observed, "Ford... announced they would make retroactive payments on the 4 cents."[300]

As the tenth anniversary of the 1941 Ford strike approached, Stellato decided to use the occasion to present his alternative to Reuther's corporatist strategy of labor-government-industry co-management. The June 23, 1951 celebration was to be an enormous rally, with John L. Lewis as the featured guest speaker. Lewis was a symbolic choice, not simply because he had initiated the CIO organizing drive which led to the 1941 victory at Ford, but also because Lewis was not Reuther.[301] Reuther

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[298] Boyle (1995), p.72.

[299] As early as February 16, 1951, the WSB adopted a wage-freeze formula

[300] The quote is from *Labor Action*, June 11, 1951. Also, see *Daily Worker*, June 1, 1951; Preis (1964), p.436.

[301] Indeed, Lewis had temporarily become the darling of militant unionists within the UAW who perceived his 1950 fighting spirit and contract victories to be a model of old-style labor struggle preferable to Reuther's statesmanly vision of "social unionism." Indeed, early in 1950, Joe Hogan and William Hood had been part of a Local 600 caravan which brought supplies to a Miners Relief Committee in West Virginia. *Militant*, March 13, 1950. For comparisons which held Lewis to be a better model than Reuther, see several articles in *Militant*, March 27, 1950. One comparison characterized Lewis as "a fighting union leader" in contrast to Reuther's stance which was characterized as the "begging" of a "poor relation." *Militant*, September 25, 1950. Lewis himself

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launched a UAW boycott of the event, not only refusing to accept an invitation to speak, but also forbidding attendance by UAW staff members and advising other allies that the event was opposed by the UAW. The Reuther administration publicly charged that the event was a Communist plot against him.[302]

The Anniversary Celebration was an enormous affair.[303] The Local purchased advertisements in the Detroit daily press and on local radio stations. Lewis, who had not stepped foot in Detroit for more than 10 years, arrived by train and was greeted by

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added fuel to the fire, offering up scathing attacks on Reuther's leadership of the UAW. The Lewis-Reuther feud and its role in the 10th Anniversary Celebration at Local 600 is discussed by Zieger (1990).

[302] *Labor Action*, June 11, 1951; Zieger (1990), p.54.

Reuther's pre-Celebration charges of renewed Communist influence at the Rouge was the first volley in Reuther's attempt to demonstrate that the CP now controlled Stellato. But Reuther probably had more success in his red-baiting than the CP had in its many attempts to control Stellato. While the CP made no effort to discourage the view that Stellato was an ally, they found little evidence of this in their own experience at Local 600.

The Communists were confident that they would be able to dominate the Anniversary Celebration because Stellato had appointed Percy Llewellyn, his former boss, to head the organizing committee for the big event. Through Llewellyn, the CP tried to make Senator Edwin Johnson the featured speaker at the event. The CP embraced Johnson as a hero for having introduced a resolution to stop the Korean War. While at first the CP thought they had succeeded in getting Johnson on the program, they were crushed and embarrassed when, at the last minute, "someone changed the schedule and the main speaker being billed is John L. Lewis." Senator Johnson was not invited to speak at the event. Stellato owed a personal debt to Llewellyn, not a political debt to the CP. The Communists had difficulty recognizing the difference. Furthermore, Llewellyn had been appointed as paid member of Stellato's staff. As such, he did not "represent" the CP. Rather, he was forced to serve a new master: Carl Stellato. *Daily Worker*, June 20, 1951; *Worker*, June 24, 1951.

Moreover, the CP had their hopes further dashed at the Anniversary Celebration when Lewis himself, responding to Reuther's charges of Communist domination of the event, engaged in a bit or red-baiting during his remarks at the celebration. The CP noted that the speech by Lewis was "marred by a gratuitous statement on the UMW's anti-Communist policies and exclusion from membership of Communists." In particular, Lewis is reported to have reminded Reuther, "I was opposing communism... before Walter Reuther ever went to Russia." But the CP failed to note that Lewis, speaking of himself in the third person, added, "John L. Lewis was opposing Communism before Walter Reuther ever read Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* and failed to understand it." Reuther lived and worked in the Soviet Union from November 1933 until June 1935. For the disappointment of the CP, see *Worker*, July 1, 1951. For the Lewis snipes at Reuther, see Zieger (1990), p.54; *Labor Action*, July 2, 1951. For Reuther's time in the Soviet Union, see Lichtenstein (1995), pp.36-44.

The CP was so frustrated with Stellato that, for a time, the *Worker* gave up trying to show everyone that Stellato was an ally. They turned, instead, to running articles which praised the "peace" program Joe Hogan had developed prior to Stellato's election. For CP nostalgic and after-the-fact support for Hogan, see *Worker*, July 8, 1951.

[303] *Detroit News*, June 24, 1951.

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an enthusiastic crowd and then escorted by Local 600's flying squadron as the caravan traveled from Detroit to the rally in Dearborn.[304] One observer contrasted the massive rally to the mid-June 1951 invitation-only dedication of the new UAW headquarters, Solidarity House. While some auto workers had tried to attend the Solidarity House celebration, but were denied admittance, "the ceremonies at which Lewis spoke were truly a working-class rally: auto workers with their wives [sic] and kids by the thousands, like the CIO picnics and rallies of old times."[305]

It was at this rally that Stellato launched his campaign to establish his new credentials as a trade union militant capable of articulating a coherent vision before the membership of Local 600. The mass rally included a speech by Stellato in which he set forth a "Fighting Program for the Auto Workers" that soon became known in labor circles as the "Ford Program." Crafted as an initial step in the creation of labor movement alternatives to Reuther's corporatism, Stellato highlighted, now more forcefully than in his presidential campaigns, the 30-40 program. The idea of shorter hours and higher pay, which Lewis heartily endorsed in his remarks, was proposed as a basic trade union strategy, both for tightening labor markets and thereby increasing bargaining strength, and for giving workers added freedom from the burdens of worklife. Stellato threw off the caution which had nearly cost him the 1951 election. Gone was the acquiescence to Reuther's Korean War "Equality of Sacrifice" rhetoric. He called out, before a crowd of at least 50,000 people, for the 30-hour week for 40 hours' pay and the guaranteed annual wage. But this time he did not adopt Reuther's

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[304] Zieger (1990), p.53; *Detroit News*, June 22, 1951; *Labor Action*, July 2, 1951.
[305] *Labor Action*, July 2, 1951.

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delaying tactics which postponed such demands until some perfect moment, always just over the ever-receding horizon. Stellato demanded that the program be pursued, not in 1955, but "Now!" The crowd echoed the call for action as Stellato demanded new contract talks and a national UAW emergency conference to craft a strategy for combating the increasing unemployment facing auto workers.[306]

With this speech and rally, Stellato emerged as a leading opposition figure within the UAW.[307] He quickly caught the attention of the Socialist Workers Party and was already well known to the Communist Party.[308] However, many fractional groups were obviously more excited by the prospect of a powerful leader who was

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[306] *Labor Action*, July 2, 1951; *Militant*, July 2, 1951; *Worker*, July 1, 1951.

[307] Stellato's new militancy caught the attention of the mainstream business press. For example, immediately following the 1951 Local 600 election, *Business Week* ran a story, entitled "No Left Turn at Ford," that was dismissive of claims that the election results signified a powerful left-wing showing. However, the article, which falsely claimed success for the right-wing, provided an unintentionally accurate and nuanced analysis by reporting that "the heavy opposition vote was more anti-Stellato-ist than it was pro-Communist." *Business Week*, March 31, 1951.

While *Business Week* was correct in refuting the CP's own triumphant claims, it quickly retracted its report of a right-wing victory. In a June 9, 1951 article, *Business Week* ran a larger, follow-up story entitled "Ford Hit By New Bid for UAW Power." This story noted that given the strength of the opposition at Local 600, "obviously, Stellato holds a shaky position." In order to firm up his base of support, Stellato was taking more militant positions, joining the left in attacking speedups at Ford. The article considered this a troubling sign, noting that the factionalism came just as the UAW was "beginning to win a reputation for being a responsible organization...UAW's employers, though far from loving Reuther, watch with some dread the efforts of an opposition to organize. Such an opposition invariably tries to outdo Reuther in being tough toward management."

By the September 8, 1951 issue of *Business Week*, an article entitled, "UAW: War of Words," identified Stellato as "shrill president of Ford Local 600...calling for action almost daily."

[308] The actual influence of the SWP on the shop floor is difficult to measure. Stepan-Norris & Zeitlin (1996) emphasize the role of the Communists, without much reference to other elements on the left. Nevertheless, when Dave Moore suggested in an interview that the left at the Rouge was itself diverse, Stepan-Norris & Zeitlin asked, "Were there Socialists?" Moore responded, "Oh yeah. You had Trotskyites." "Which side did they fall on?" "The Socialists? They would swing back and forth. They would be with the left for awhile on a certain issue and they would go to the right for awhile. And you never could tell where the hell they were going to be. They wasn't a big force there. Small force they had, but was in-between on the different issues. It all depends on what the issues were." Stepan-Norris & Zeitlin (1996), pp.178-179.

Sadly, there is in this description, no distinction made between the Shachtmanites and the SWP. There is little evidence that the SWP went "to the right for awhile." It was the Shachtmanite group that distinguished itself in this way.

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willing to oppose Reuther than they were by the substance of the 30-40 program. Stellato had watched carefully as the demand for a shorter work week was adopted by the CP in 1948 and early in 1949. But in mid-1951, the CP and the SWP no longer showed enthusiasm for the program, especially when compared with Stellato's faith in the program's popularity. As the CP prepared its Michigan State Committee trade union program in the first quarter of 1951, the shorter work week was not one of the suggested areas of struggle.[309] When Nat Ganley published a column outlining the CP's program for the 1951 UAW Convention, it did not include any mention of the shorter work week.[310] After the rally, the SWP was so impressed by the "excellent program" proposed by Local 600, that the *Militant* published a special editorial that announced, "We wholeheartedly support the proposal of Ford Local 600." But the proposal that the SWP found so compelling was not Stellato's own emphasis on the 30-40 campaign, but his simultaneous call for "a $60 weekly unemployment benefits law."[311]

As the summer of 1951 turned to autumn, Stellato became increasingly popular, not only at home in Local 600, but also as a spokesman for a larger movement of 30 for 40 supporters. Other leaders, seeing Stellato's success with the program, began to try to ride the same wave. In August, support came from within Buick UAW Local 599 in Flint. "Ford Local 600 has called for a shorter work week,

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[309] The program did call for a vague "defense of economic conditions" but emphasized more specific proposals which included the "need to win UAW for peace camp away from support of imperialist war policies" and "united non-factional drive for election of a Negro VP." "Michigan Conventions," file 17, box 1, Ganley-Wellman Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[310] *Worker*, April 1, 1951.
[311] *Militant*, July 16, 1951. The same characterization of the Ford Program appeared in the *Militant*, July 23, 1951.

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a 30-hour week so that more men [sic] will be employed. BUT it must be 30 hours work with 40 hours pay. The workers today cannot afford to draw a smaller pay check than a 40-hour pay week.... We join with the Ford Local Executive Board in this demand for all labor." The president of Ford Local 200, in Windsor, Canada (just over the boarder from Detroit) presented an identical program to his membership meeting.[312]

The most common plea from Stellato was simply a call for an emergency UAW conference to consider labor movement strategy. When the International did not respond to this demand, locals began to propose conferences without the sponsorship of the International. In mid-July, Stellato began threatening that, if the International did not respond to the demand for an unemployment conference, Local 600 would serve as host for such an event.[313] The conference call was quickly picked up by a meeting of Chrysler stewards, representing 60,000 Chrysler workers, who agreed to demand an unemployment conference and threatened to take matters into their own hands if the International did not take some action. An even more bold move was announced when Chevrolet assembly plant workers took the unusual step of announcing that 11 Chevrolet locals had already agreed to sponsor such an independent conference, to be held in St. Louis on September 1, 1951. Local 600, as the initiator of the demand, was invited to send representatives to the event.[314]

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[312] The quote is from the *Flint Weekly Review*. It was reproduced in the *Worker*, August 26, 1951. For the Ford Windsor plant, see *Daily Worker*, August 31, 1951.
[313] *Daily Worker*, July 13, 1951; *Worker*, July 15, 1951.
[314] For the Chrysler stewards, see *Worker*, July 22, 1951. For the Chevrolet assembly workers, see *Daily Worker*, August 28, 1951. For the leadership of Ford Local 600, see *Labor Action*, September 24, 1951.

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Reuther recognized that the threat of independent conferences was real. Local unions had always had the capacity to self-organize, but it was unsettling to see that they now had the *will* to move ahead without the International. In response, Reuther moved to take the wind out of the Chevrolet locals' sails by calling an unemployment conference of all GM locals, to be held in Detroit on September 28, 1951.[315] This was quickly followed by the announcement of a Ford conference, scheduled for October 11-12, 1951, and the promise of a Chrysler conference.[316]

As preparation for the conferences proceeded, Local 600 produced and distributed a very distinctive booklet, commemorating the Anniversary Celebration, and reproducing the new "Fighting Program for the Auto Workers."[317] The booklet identified the program as one supported "unanimously" (if only ceremonially) by the Local 600 workers at the Anniversary Celebration, and endorsed by a "state-wide meeting of auto workers" in Flint, Saginaw, Pontiac, Bay City, and Detroit. In addition to promoting the 30 for 40 program, the booklet included an extraordinarily harsh attack on Reuther's recent bargaining strategy. Ignoring his own complicity in the 1950 round, Stellato now disavowed the entire affair. The most striking element of the "Fighting Program" was its charge that Reuther's corporatism entangled him in the unseemly logic of war-dependent job creation.

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[315] *Worker*, September 16, 1951.

[316] Preis (1964), p.440. *Worker*, September 20, 1951.

The term "GM conference" or "Chrysler conference" is meant to signify a conference of UAW delegates representing workers from these auto companies. The companies were not involved in such union conferences.

[317] *Daily Worker*, August 28, 1951. A copy of the booklet can be found in the "UAW, Local 600, 1950-1960" file, Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

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> Some top leadership in labor were influenced by the government's pronouncements of abundant defense employment for the automobile industry over a period of the next five years. These glittering promises, dangled before the eyes of this top labor leadership, lulled them into a false sense of economic security and induced them to sign five-year contracts... It is apparent to all of us that these five-year contracts mean economic security only for Big Business, while on the other hand, *labor was no longer to rely on its economic strength as its chief bargaining power, but was to await the shower of blessings that were to come from Government, Big Business, and labor and government politicians.*[318]

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[318] Emphasis added. "UAW, Local 600, 1950-1960" file, Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

Because of its "peace" overtones, the "Fighting Program" (if not the 30 for 40 component within it) was given considerable coverage by the George Morris, as part of a special series of articles for the *Daily Worker*. According to Morris, the program was "widely circulating" within the UAW. See *Daily Worker*, October 5, 1951.

With this document in mind, it is somewhat astonishing to consider Boyle's (1995:77) discussion of Stellato's campaign. Boyle suggests that "Stellato could have offered a radical, even syndicalist alternative to Reuther's social democratic agenda... But Stellato did not create a radical movement. Rather, he channeled the rank and file's anger in an essentially conservative direction." Boyle suggests that Stellato's demand for "a thirty-hour work week for forty hours' pay... simply demanded that the UAW leadership seek a bigger share of wartime spoils." It is difficult to square this characterization with the "Fighting Program." Of course, Stellato did not "create" a radical movement. He reluctantly led such a movement, as a response to "the rank and file's anger." But it is extremely difficult to imagine what Boyle means when he suggests that the program "channeled" this anger into "an essentially conservative direction." The "Fighting Program" was indeed a "syndicalist alternative" to Reuther's dependence upon the military industrial complex.

Boyle can ignore this only by glossing over the *change* in Stellato's program which followed the 1951 election fiasco. As Boyle points out, Stellato's 1950, pro-Reuther program included support for all efforts to increase defense spending in Detroit. It also included a commitment to a wartime "equality of sacrifice" program that was intended to delay any immediate calls for action on the 30 for 40 program. But, as Boyle (1995:77) notes, "Stellato switched his allegiance shortly thereafter." Boyle does not seem to have recognized that switching allegiances included transforming his program from one which "simply demanded that the UAW leadership seek a bigger share of wartime spoils" (Boyle 1995;77) to the "Fighting Program" which *explicitly* rejected this program. After Stellato switched sides, Reuther proceeded to champion wartime spending without the endorsement of Stellato. Boyle is mistaken when he tries to pin responsibility for Reuther's cold war strategy on right-wing pressure from Stellato and the membership of Local 600. "By adopting a portion of Stellato's program as his own, similarly, the UAW president deepened the union's subordination to the military industrial complex that [some] had complained of in early 1951" (Boyle 1995:80). Whatever reason Boyle has for thinking that "a portion" of Stellato's program was to push Reuther toward the military industrial complex, this "portion" certainly excludes 1951 "Fighting Program" that was so synonymous with Stellato's turn toward the anti-Reuther opposition. The 30 for 40 program was a tool for exercising syndicalist power through reliance on labor's own economic leverage, rather than awaiting the "shower of blessings" from the corporatist military industrial complex.

Boyle (1995:284n43) notes, "Much of Stellato's attack on the International was nothing more than gamesmanship." Certainly, Stellato was an opportunist and was not an ideological radical.

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The "Fighting Program" became the basis for a new caucus within the UAW. The Committee for a Democratic UAW met for the first time during the weekend of Reuther's GM unemployment conference in Detroit. The caucus meeting, held at the Fort Wayne Hotel, drew approximately 200 participants. Stellato served as chair of the new group, with additional leadership emerging from Coburn Walker, president of Flint Chevrolet Local 659. The inclusion of Local 659, the large, always-militant local formed from the historic GM units of the sit-down strike of 1936-37, was a major coup for Stellato's new caucus. While Local 600 was a thorn in Reuther's side, he never considered Ford to be his "base" of operation. As UAW vice-president, Reuther had led the General Motors department, although even within GM, his support was greater in Detroit than in Flint.[319] Not withstanding his time as a Rouge worker, Reuther -- the labor politician -- had always been a GM man. Now, the giant Ford local combined with Flint's finest and rallied around the "Fighting Program" as the basis for a new insurgent movement.[320] The group distributed a leaflet at the GM conference, urging support for the 30 for 40 program.[321]

There is no reason to believe he shared Reuther's socialist background. Instead, Stellato was merely an astute and opportunistic political elite who shifted left in an effort to maintain the support of the rank and file at the Rouge. The membership was interested in syndicalist labor militancy; Stellato's gamesmanship was a calculated response to pressure from a militant membership. Thus, it is all the more surprising to find Boyle (1995:77) arguing that "Stellato's actions also reinforced a growing perception at UAW headquarters that the rank and file had itself swung to the right." If anything, Stellato's actions demonstrated that the membership was to the left of the UAW headquarters.

[319] Reuther built his career as leader of Local 174, an amalgamated local in Detroit. As Reuther's career pushed him toward corporatism, the Flint workers refused to go along with Reuther, his heroic reputation notwithstanding. For Reuther at Local 174, see Lichtenstein (1995). For Flint's reputation as an "obstinate anti-Reuther" territory, see *Militant*, December 31, 1951.

[320] *Daily Worker*, October 2, 1951; *Daily Worker*, October 5, 1951; *Daily Worker*, October 10, 1951; *Militant*, November 5, 1951.

With the distribution of the "Fighting Program," Stellato's status within the UAW had risen quickly. The CP and the SWP, both hoping to claim Stellato for themselves, nearly split the young

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The week of the GM conference proved a busy one for Reuther. He gave three major speeches in Detroit. Two speeches, dress-rehearsals for the GM conference, were given before Reuther "caucus" rallies, and a final address was given Friday night before the 350 delegates of the GM conference. The talks were nearly identical and shared two common themes: an explanation of the current unemployment problem and sharp condemnation of the Ford "Fighting Program." Reuther explained that a temporary shortage of metals, the "bread and butter problem of today... is the issue."[322] But Reuther knew that the conference was itself designed, not to mobilize the membership for a campaign against metal cartels, but to confront the challenge presented by Ford Local 600. In this, Reuther made no concessions to the popular 30-40 program. Using many of the arguments he had formulated in 1949, Reuther began by identifying the shorter work week proposal as "unrealistic," if popular. His second

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caucus in two. The CP was disappointed to find "some derelicts" (especially Paul Silvers; the CP called him a Trotskyite and considered him an extremely mild critic of Reuther) within the new caucus. Under the heading, "Vermin" the "Old-Timer" reported that the meeting "sure stank of Trotzkyites. Wonder when Carl Stellato... is going to order a delousing job." *Daily Worker*, October 10, 1951; *Worker*, October 14, 1951.

The SWP proudly announced that Stellato, responding to what the *Militant* called "a witch-hunt drive against the Trotskyists," eventually sided against the CP. According to the *Militant* the anti-CP signal was given when Stellato "sharply condemned 'those people who refuse to go along because someone in the group wears a red tie or because so-and-so is a Trotskyite." *Militant*, November 5, 1951.

[321] *Worker*, October 7, 1951. The leaflet also proposed a 10% wage increase, abrogation of the five-year contract, and a continued fight against speedup.

[322] The "bread and butter" theme was a response to Lewis, who, during his speech at the Anniversary Celebration, had charged Reuther with neglecting basic trade union demands.

The "metal shortage" would continue to be Reuther's primary concern for some time. Reuther's argument was essentially that employers were incompetent, especially when contrasted with his own planning expertise. George Morris ridiculed Reuther's discussion of the issue in an article entitled, "Reuther -- Mighty Hunter of Metals." Morris attacked Reuther's corporatist "line" that he characterized as suggesting that "labor will solve its problems if it first helps the boss solve his...the only thing left for us to do...is to organize the membership into junk-collection squads." *Daily Worker*, October 8, 1951.

For an excellent example of Reuther's "line," see the transcript of a speech he delivered in early 1952, "Official Proceedings, National Emergency Conference on Problems of Unemployment" in file 3, box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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line of attack was to impugn the motives of those who would advocate the program, arguing that the demand is aimed at "dissipating the power of our union." His attack focused on John L. Lewis, the Communists, and the leadership of Ford Local 600. After this assault, he then returned to his 1949 tactic of formulating a false representation of the demand, as though the 30 for 40 demand were merely a call for trading increased wages for increased time. Pitting leisure against consumption, Reuther argued that the real struggle was for more goods, not more leisure. Finally, and most desperately, Reuther acknowledged that the program was not simply a bid for leisure time, but also an effort to increase the economic leverage of the union, but claimed that the program was unnecessary, since war production would soon create labor shortages.[323]

During the week or so between the GM conference and the meeting of the Ford delegates, Stellato spoke to Rouge workers during lunchtime rallies of each of the three shifts (11:00 a.m., 7:30 p.m., and 3:30 a.m.). He told the workers that the Rouge delegation to the Ford conference would introduce a motion to open negotiations immediately for a 30-hour week with 40 hours' pay.[324] The conference began on Thursday, October 12, 1951, with speeches by Reuther and Mazey. With approximately 100 delegates present (all Ford Local officers, most loyal to Reuther),

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[323] Preis (1964), p.441. *Militant*, October 15, 1951; *Worker*, October 7, 1951.

The GM conference led 14 GM stewards and committeemen to create a leaflet, "Layoffs -- Are You Next?" which demanded that negotiations begin for a 30-hour week at full pay." *Worker*, October 14, 1951.

[324] *Worker*, October 14, 1951. In a second article on the same page, the *Worker* "reported" that a group of unnamed shop and local union leaders had prepared a set of demands for the Ford conference. This article almost certainly represents the CP's own program. The difference between the two articles is profound. Stellato's only agenda item is the 30 for 40 program. The CP program did not even mention the 30 for 40 demand.

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Stellato rose to introduce a resolution for a 30-hour week at 40 hours' pay. The chair of the Ford Council, a member of the Reuther caucus, ruled that the resolution was out of order since contract demands were not on the agenda. Stellato appealed the ruling of the chair, but the delegates sustained the decision to ignore the shorter work week demand.[325]

The conference proceeded as planned, but on Friday, October 12, Reuther called Stellato and vice-president Pat Rice to appear immediately for questioning before the entire International Executive Board to explain statements "detrimental to the interests of the International Union."[326] Stellato and Rice presented themselves at Solidarity House later that day, with the accompaniment of Local 600 executive board members and many rank-and-file workers. Some building officers, unable to join the Solidarity House visit, sent telegrams to the IEB. One telegram, from the Gear and Axle Building, proclaimed,

> We strongly protest your action in demanding that brothers Stellato and Rice appear before the international executive board today at four p.m. for asking for the 30-hour work week at 40 hours pay for Ford workers. We also strongly protest your action in ruling Brother Stellato out of order when he attempted to put this vital issue before the Ford Council for consideration and action.[327]

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[325] *Detroit News*, October 12, 1953.

[326] B.J. Widick reacted sharply to this language: "Very frankly, we are quite suspicious of this latest move because we have seen far too many examples where Reuther leaders identify themselves as the union." *Labor Action*, October 22, 1951.

[327] Western Union Telegram (October 12, 1951), file 19, box 249, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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When, at the appointed hour, the IEB did not provide formal charges against Stellato, the leadership of Local 600 went on the offensive. Stellato refused to answer questions until specific charges were provided in writing. Furthermore, Stellato, Rice, Hood, and Grant all took the occasion to speak out in defense of their 30 for 40 program. According to one observer, Stellato "ridiculed the five-year contracts" and "renewed his demand for a 30-hour week with 40-hour pay."[328] The Rouge militants put Reuther on the defensive, demanding to know what program he advocated in response to the growing pool of unemployed auto workers. Reuther responded by ridiculing the 30 for 40 demand, saying that war production would soon create labor shortages.[329]

On Sunday, October 14, 1951, a meeting was called of the 200-member General Council of Ford Local 600. At this meeting Stellato introduced the "Fighting Program," including the 30 for 40 demand, and called upon the International officers to cease attacking Local 600 and adopt the "Fighting Program" as their own. The General Council voted overwhelmingly in favor of the program. In a powerful sign of the support Stellato's program had won at the Rouge, the vote was nearly unanimous, with only seven Council members, all of them members of the Reuther caucus, voting against the program.[330] This was followed by a massive membership meeting held one month later, on November 11, 1951, which also voted for the program, including a call

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[328] The quoted observer is Widick in *Labor Action*, October 22, 1951. The *Militant* suggested, "From accused, Stellato became the accuser." *Militant*, October 29, 1951.
[329] *Detroit News*, October 13, 1953; *Daily Worker*, October 17, 1951; *Labor Action*, October 22, 1951; *Militant*, October 29, 1951.
[330] The *Daily Worker* reported only six opposition votes. *Daily Worker*, October 17, 1951; *Militant*, October 29, 1951.

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for abrogation of the five-year contract in order to make the 30 for 40 demand. Several thousand members reportedly roared with approval as Stellato mocked C.E. Wilson and Walter Reuther, both of whom had been predicting labor shortages for more than a year. Responding to new Ford company plans for "revolutionary" new production technologies for 1952, Stellato proposed the 30 for 40 demand as a progressive answer to the labor movement difficulties caused by the threat of technological unemployment.[331]

While Reuther was willing to appropriate the more modest, social democratic demand of Local 600 for $60 a week in unemployment compensation, he did not budge in his opposition to the 30 for 40 demand.[332] On November 7, during the 1951 CIO Convention, Reuther received a telegram from Stellato. The telegram, addressed to Reuther as "Chairman, Resolutions Committee, CIO Convention" was a copy of the message Stellato had sent to Ed Lohre of the CIO Woodworkers Union. Lohre, a member of the Resolutions Committee, had drafted a 30 hour week resolution for the Convention. In his message to Lohre, Stellato recalled,

> Recently Local 600 UAW CIO raised a demand for a 30 hour week with 40 hours pay... We feel that only through a shorter work week without any reductions in take home pay can we guarantee employment to our members, 20,000 of whom are now laid off and seeking employment. We are aware that your International Union is confronted with the same problems and is prepared to introduce a resolution to the CIO Convention calling upon the Convention to fight for the establishment of the 30 hour work week.

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[331] *Daily Worker*, November 13, 1951; *Militant*, November 19, 1951. For mention of Ford's "revolutionary" plans, see *Worker*, November 4, 1951.

[332] For Reuther's appropriation of Stellato's demand for $60 per week unemployment compensation, see *Worker*, October 21, 1951; *Militant*, December 24, 1951.

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> We hope that your fight to put the CIO squarely behind the demand for a 30 hour week will receive the support of the overwhelming majority of the delegates present. It represents a basic need for all workers in all segments of organized labor and is a fight that must be waged with the combined strength of all labor...
>
> Within our Local union we shall continue the demand for a 30 hour week with 40 hours pay and extend our full support to any union seeking the establishment of this same program.[333]

In the copy sent to Reuther, Stellato concluded, "We urge you, as Chairman of the Resolutions Committee, to support the resolution proposed by the CIO Woodworkers Union." The Resolution never got beyond Reuther's Resolutions Committee. None of the resolutions brought forth from the Committee mentioned the shorter work week demand, and there was no discussion of the issue at the CIO Convention. Reuther used the occasion to repeat his lesson on the complexity of metal shortages.[334]

Reuther reportedly began making speeches which included sarcastic remarks about the 30 for 40 program. In particular, Reuther, trying to pin the demand on opportunistic and ambitious officers at Local 600, declared that he had never received a request from the rank and file for a 30-hour week. In response, the opportunists at Local 600 made the most of Reuther's cracks. They collected between 30,000 and 40,000 cards, signed by members of Local 600. Each card asked Reuther to join the rank and file in demanding immediate negotiations for a 30-hour week with 40 hours pay. The public statement also addressed itself directly to Reuther: "Walter, your

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[333] Western Union Telegram (November 7, 1951), file 23, box 249, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives

[334] *Proceedings of the Thirteenth Convention, Congress of Industrial Organizations, November 5-9, 1951, New York, NY.*, pp.554-556 (Resolutions, Indexed by Subject), pp.288-292 (Reuther on Metals).

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position does not help the auto workers. It helps the Fords, Chryslers, and GM... We repeat. Don't help industry. Join with us in our fight for our membership."[335] On November 19, 1951, a delegation of 14 Local 600 members crafted a brilliant piece of political theater when they carried the thousands of cards to Solidarity House in order to present the demand to Reuther. Dave Moore, an Axle building officer and one of the five accused Communists, and William Johnson, the Foundry leader now on Stellato's staff, led the delegation and asked to meet with Reuther.[336] One of Reuther's assistants told the delegation that they could not see Reuther or talk to him on the phone. A heated exchange followed, as more members of the Solidarity House "palace guard" blocked the doors to the building. Finally, several members of the delegation angrily dumped the cards on the floor. The event, a rare high-stakes intra-union protest action, appeared in the headlines of the Detroit press and the photo of the scattered cards made the front page of the *Detroit News*. *Fortune* reported the incident, including the Local 600 demand that Reuther "tear up existing auto contracts and ask for a 'thirty-hour-week at forty hours' pay,'" and dubbed the event "the

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It was not until this time, after the CIO Convention, that the William Allan, *Worker* correspondent at the Rouge, began to list the 30 for 40 demand as its top demand. See *Worker*, November 18, 1951.

[335] *Wage Earner*, November 1951.

[336] Stellato himself did not participate in the delegation. The significance of Stellato's absence is discussed below.

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opening round of a new war in the still turbulent union." The 30 for 40 demand had moved to center stage.[337]

[337] *Detroit News*, November 19, 1951; *Worker*, November 25, 1951; *Fortune*, January 1952, p.40-42.

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Chapter 8: The International Strikes Back, 1952

Within two weeks, the International took further action to head off the growing restlessness within the union and the emerging interest in Local 600's 30 for 40 program. Stellato's call for a national unemployment conference was finally answered on December 12, 1951 when the IEB announced that approximately 600-800 delegates would be invited to Washington for a January 1952 unemployment conference.[338]

When the conference opened, on Sunday, January 13, 1952, the purpose of the meeting was not difficult to discern. Rather than a "strategy" session to craft a labor movement response to unemployment, the conference was a publicity event designed to pressure the government to take action. On one wall, an enormous banner announced, "Congress Has Acted to Protect Corporations During Defense Emergency... It Must Act To Protect Workers' Families Against Hardship." But the banner at the front of the room, hanging over the podium, was even more indicative of Reuther's agenda: "Unemployment Weakens Democracy --- Strengthens Communism."[339]

While much of the conference time was devoted to visiting Congressional leaders on Capitol Hill, the conference proceedings did include a speech by Reuther, in which he discussed the problem of metal shortages and the unwillingness of the auto

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[338] *Militant*, December 24, 1951.
[339] "Official Proceedings, National Emergency Conference on Problems of Unemployment" in file 3, box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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industry to fight aggressively for defense work. Reuther complained, "the big companies in the auto industry proper haven't got a large enough volume of defense work to take up the slack of the unemployment... but we have got to get more defense work... they still have too little, if we are going to absorb the unemployment."[340]

Reuther devoted a considerable amount of energy to attacking the 30 for 40 movement. Rather than wait for Stellato to make another shorter hours motion, as he had at the Ford conference, the administration introduced an unemployment resolution that included an eight point program for fighting unemployment, and a one point program for fighting the 30 for 40 movement.[341] The administration resolution,

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[340] "Official Proceedings, National Emergency Conference on Problems of Unemployment" in file 3, box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives (p.21).

The conference followed by a few weeks a speech by Senator Lyndon Johnson who, Reuther recalled, "came out and made a great deal of noise about the issue of guns versus butter." Reuther considered this "most unfortunate" since it implied that mobilization was more important than protecting domestic civilian production. Reuther proposed that the choice was unnecessary since "we must have both" (p.7).

It is certainly true that Reuther was committed to public spending for civilian production. His Keynesianism has never been in doubt. However, Reuther's demands for "both" guns and butter, including his calls for increased defense spending as a solution to unemployment, would seem to make it clear that Reuther also relied on a form of "military Keynesianism."

Therefore, it is somewhat difficult to understand the sweeping statement made by Nelson Lichtenstein (1995:278) that "Reuther rejected military Keynesianism, but labor did not have the power to influence the defense budget." It may have been true that labor lacked sufficient power to affect Washington spending decisions, but the January 1952 conference shows Reuther frustrated, not by his inability to *prevent* defense spending, but his inability to *maximize* its utility in promoting job growth and labor market tightness.

This frustration within Reuther's administration was exemplified by Emil Mazey's 1953 trip to Washington when he "stormed into the Capitol to protest the Kaiser [defense department contract] cancellations. Mazey warned that 'the $500-million cutback in tank and truck production means the end of jobs and hardships for many thousands of workers.'" See *Fortune*, October 1953, p.122.

[341] The eight point program demanded (1) enact a federal unemployment compensation bill; (2) continue essential civilian production until defense jobs are available; (3) dovetail defense and civilian work in existing plants; (4) place defense and civilian work in existing plants; (5) break the machine-tool bottleneck; (6) establish a technical task force on critical materials; (7) initiate nationwide scrap campaign (i.e., collect metals, etc.); (8) free the American economy from the stranglehold of monopoly and scarcity.

The program was an excellent example of the corporatist logic within the labor movement. Not only did it advance the idea that difficulties could be resolved through a "technical task force," but it promoted a set of demands which, with the *possible* exception of federal unemployment

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entitled "UAW-CIO Practical Program to Keep America Strong -- To Keep America at Work," began its attack on the shorter work week with Reuther's now-familiar red-baiting strategy. "Certain forces outside our union are again attempting to seize upon the feeling of insecurity and uncertainty that unemployment has created, in an effort to make political capital of the present problems by raising the impractical and unrealistic demand for a 30-hour week with 40 hours' pay at this time... in order to weaken our defense mobilization program."[342]

Next, Reuther returned to an older theme that had won him the UAW presidency in 1946, i.e., the CP reversals during World War II. It was the CP shift to the right-wing of the political spectrum that had allowed Reuther to take a more militant line. "These are the same political forces who... following... the invasion of Russia by Hitler... were then willing to put every hard-earned trade-union gain on the altar of sacrifice in their complete desire to serve the Soviet Union. The Communist Party... launched a campaign to put piecework in every shop." Rhetorically, at least, Reuther had once again reconstructed the old political landscape in order to reinforce the image of militant leadership. After recalling that the CP had advocated a postwar no-strike pledge, Reuther's resolution jumped seamlessly to the contemporary situation in order to make its central claim: "A careful study of the *Communist Daily Worker* and other Communist publications will show conclusively that the demand for a 30-hour week with 40 hours' pay was engineered at this time by the Communists for

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compensation, attempted to assist the auto industry and, in so doing, sought to strengthen the auto workers.

[342] "Official Proceedings, National Emergency Conference on Problems of Unemployment" in file 3, box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives (p.28).

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the purpose of creating discontent and confusion and to weaken the efforts of the union to carry out its practical program to deal with unemployment and at the same time to strengthen the mobilization effort."[343]

Firing in many directions at once, the resolution also advanced Reuther's idea that the 30 for 40 demand was, on its own terms, a legitimate demand, but one which awaited more perfect timing. The program would have to await a time "when our technological productive capacity has advanced to the point which enables us to create sufficient wealth to guarantee a higher living standard than we currently have on the basis of a shorter work week." At present, the resolution argued, such a program would be "dangerously unrealistic" and "irresponsible," especially at a time "when *employment levels are high*, due to defense production and the increasing requirements of the Armed Services."[344]

Along the lines of this last argument, the printed record of the proceedings, published by the International, included a full-page chart, along with explanatory text, which asked, "When is the Strategic Moment?" for the 30-hour week. The chart showed labor force employment rates dating back to the 1929 and projected through 1953 in order to contrast the high unemployment of the 1930s with the relatively low unemployment of 1952 and the even lower unemployment predicted for 1953. The accompanying text said, "This chart shows that a 30-hour week is an absurd and a false solution to the unemployment problem now... The drain of men into the armed

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[343] "Official Proceedings, National Emergency Conference on Problems of Unemployment" in file 3, box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives (p.29).
[344] "Official Proceedings, National Emergency Conference on Problems of Unemployment" in file 3, box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives (p.29). Emphasis added.

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forced plus the increased defense production requirements make a 30-hour week impractical and unrealistic at this time."[345] A similar caption beneath a photograph of Reuther declared, "Talk of a Thirty-Hour Week is Untimely and Irrelevant" due to "(1) obvious Communist inspiration... ; (2) failure... to recognize the actual causes of defense unemployment (the lack of coordination between civilian curtailment and defense production); and (3) recognition that a 30-hour week now would only multiply the roadblocks which stand in the way of re-employment for laid off workers."[346]

Finally, Reuther spoke to the issue of Communist inspiration.

> There is a fundamental difference between believing in a 30-hour week, which we believe in -- some day we are going to make that fight -- and raising that as a practical immediate trade-union demand at a time like this... this thing was engineered at this time by the Communist Party. We can document that. We can document by the *Daily Worker* and other Communist publications that this originated at this time -- not the idea, not this long-range goal with labor to get a shorter work week, but this demand was raised by the Communist Party, and that can be documented.[347]

But Reuther did not document, because he could not document, that the *current* 30 for 40 demand originated with the CP. After 1950, it was Stellato who had recognized the opportunities for capturing rank-and-file support by pushing the 30-40 demand. Nevertheless, even without evidence of CP inspiration, Reuther did show the

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[345] "Official Proceedings, National Emergency Conference on Problems of Unemployment" in file 3, box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives (pp.12-13).
[346] "Official Proceedings, National Emergency Conference on Problems of Unemployment" in file 3, box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives (p.18).
[347] "Official Proceedings, National Emergency Conference on Problems of Unemployment" in file 3, box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives (p.33).

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conferees two articles. One was a *Ford Facts* article which quoted a Communist magazine that called for "Unity among the big five for world peace."[348] The article did not even mention shorter hours. The other article was taken, not from a Communist newspaper, but from the *Detroit News*. It was the article about the November 1952 30-40 card protest at Solidarity House. Nobody in the audience could have doubted that this article demonstrated the existence of a 30 for 40 movement at Local 600. However, the article did not even mention the Communists. The link between the CP and the shorter hours movement was clear in Walter Reuther's head, however. Reuther did acknowledge that Carl Stellato was not himself a Communist. "I think that temporarily for reasons of opportunism, he has permitted himself to be seduced by them... And I say, Brother Stellato -- your slip is showing."[349]

Bill Hood, recording secretary of Local 600, did introduce an alternative resolution crafted by the Committee for a Democratic UAW-CIO, including Paul Silver and others.[350] The resolution did include the demand for 30-hour week with 40 hours' pay, but it was mixed in with several other proposals. The proposal did not include the earlier stinging critique of those labor leaders who depended upon the *shower of blessings* from the defense establishment.[351]

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[348] The CP magazine was called *March of Labor*.
[349] "Official Proceedings, National Emergency Conference on Problems of Unemployment" in file 3, box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives (pp.33-34).
[350] Silver took some credit for helping craft the resolution, although his own position at the conference was less to defend the resolution than to suggest that the shorter hours demand be tacked on to the administration resolution as a ninth point. See "Official Proceedings, National Emergency Conference on Problems of Unemployment" in file 3, box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives (p.38).
[351] "Official Proceedings, National Emergency Conference on Problems of Unemployment" in file 3, box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives (pp.31-32).

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Most significantly, when Stellato finally took the floor to speak, he did not challenge Reuther. He did not point out that Reuther had actually failed to provide evidence that the CP initiated the campaign. He did not mention that as far back as 1950, as a Reutherite, he had initiated the current 30 for 40 campaign. He did not challenge Reuther's claim that "a lack of coordination" was responsible for unemployment or the suggestion that the formation of a "technical task force" to address metal shortages was equivalent to a fighting program to confront unemployment. Nor did he question how defense unemployment could simultaneously be so serious that it could lead people, in their "insecurity and uncertainty" to embrace a Communist-inspired plot, while so minimal that the 30 for 40 demand was irrelevant. Rather, Stellato defensively asserted that "[We] did not come down here to engage in any debate or political squabble with President Reuther or anyone else.... We believe, in Local 600, that President Reuther has done a good job in trying to avoid the unemployment. There is no question." He then reminded the delegates of his 1950 program.

> In 1950... Local 600 adopted a program along the same lines that you see up there on that board here today.[352] We went further. We asked that the automobile industry be completely diverted to defense and that one automobile manufacturer be allowed to build cars for the purpose of transportation.[353]

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[352] The "board" to which Stellato referred listed the Reuther administration's eight point program.
[353] "Official Proceedings, National Emergency Conference on Problems of Unemployment" in file 3, box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives (p.32).

Stellato covered over the fact that he had shifted his stance since 1950. If one were to attempt to characterize Stellato's opposition movement based exclusively on his comments at this conference, rather than his campaign at Local 600, before and after the Washington conference, it would be possible, if nevertheless incorrect, to conclude, with Boyle (1995) that Stellato's position was one which simply pushed Reuther closer to the defense establishment.

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Stellato completely retreated from the militant critique of Reuther's "military Keynesianism," and took the extra step of disavowing the entire period of his opportunistic radicalism by returning to his 1950, pro-Reuther days and his old-time war dance, designed to bring on that very shower of blessings from the defense establishment he had so recently condemned. Why did Stellato abandon the "Fighting Program" of Local 600? Stellato was almost certainly a reluctant militant, but pressure from the rank and file had forced him either to lead or get out of the way. Stellato opted to lead rather than risk his job. He had gone so far as to begin the high-publicity task of organizing an opposition caucus within the UAW, so he had plainly calculated the costs and benefits of challenging Reuther, surmising that the benefits would be substantial back at Local 600. So why would he put his job at risk by abandoning the "Fighting Program" that had so united the rank and file in support of his tenure?[354]

However, while Stellato was hiding from the fight, Reuther was not. Reuther was responding to the "Fighting Program" in its bold advocacy of 30 for 40 as a radical, militant alternative to Reuther's military Keynesianism. Reuther's response to the movement, however was to launch a massive assault on the shorter work week demand. As noted above, Boyle denies that Stellato "offered a radical, even syndicalist alternative to Reuther's social democratic agenda." Boyle goes on to imagine, "Had he done so, it is at least conceivable that Reuther would have shifted to the left, perhaps sanctioning and even directing worker action at the point of production." Reuther himself made such a fantasy inconceivable through his very real assault on the very real syndicalist alternative of the 30 for 40 program. See Boyle (1995), p.77

[354] The *Wage Earner*, aligned with the self-proclaimed "right wingers" at Local 600, cautioned against support for the 30-40 program. "Thinking members of the local," they suggested, "will see the 30-hour-week demand as pie-in-the-sky, and recognize the reasoning of Reuther who declared this is not the time for a 30-hour week with 40-hour pay." However, even with this pro-Reuther clause, the newspaper conceded the popularity of Stellato's administration. "That Stellato is militant is an obvious fact.... Honest veteran unionists admit that Stellato, even with his wild roundhouse swings against top UAW officers, has won much popular support by his demands for democracy within the UAW, the right to criticize international officers, the right to print criticisms in union publications and his demands for more local autonomy." *Wage Earner*, November 1951.

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Stellato may have feared losing his job at the hands of the militant Local 600 membership, but not so much as he feared getting caught in the red-baiting web of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). In November 1951, shortly before Local 600's 30-40 post-card protest at Solidarity House, news arrived in Dearborn that the HUAC was preparing to hold public hearings to investigate the influence of Communism in Detroit. The hearings, to be held locally, were aimed especially at Local 600 and, reportedly, an agent for the committee had already visited "Solidarity House" for a meeting about the Ford Local.[355] Significantly, Stellato had supported the initiation of the post-card protest, but once the news of the HUAC hearings broke, he personally withdrew from the highly visible action. He allowed the post-card signing to proceed, thus avoiding the local embarrassment of shutting down a rank-and-file campaign which was already in progress, but skipped the widely publicized main event, which went on without him.[356] Thus, as early as November 1951, the threatened HUAC inquisition had curbed Stellato's appetite for confrontation.[357] By early January, it had become clear that the hearings were intended to make a big splash in Detroit: the HUAC staff made the highly unusual

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[355] *Detroit Free Press*, November 11, 1951; *Daily Worker*, November 22, 1951. See also Andrew (1979:251).

[356] *Detroit News*, November 19, 1951.

[357] Stellato, as always, hedged his bet. During the Washington unemployment conference, while away from the Rouge workers and surrounded by Reuther allies, Stellato renounced Local 600's militant syndicalist program. But Stellato still felt compelled to put on a militant face in order to maintain the support of the Local 600 membership. Thus, in a story published in *Ford Facts*, after the Washington conference, Stellato offered a description of his heroic fight for shorter hours while characterizing Reuther as promoting a corporatist "'let's help the bosses' program." *Ford Facts*, March 8, 1952.

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announcement that the entire committee would travel to Detroit to participate in the hearings.[358]

The hearings themselves were, by most accounts, quite effective in transporting the red scare to the motor city.[359] Militants from Local 600 protested the hearings, but no resistance was forthcoming from the UAW International. Reuther was briefly caught in the cross-fire of the red scare when the local press quoted W. H. Hall, secretary of the Board of Commerce, accusing Reuther of leading the country toward "the socialistic state."[360] Nevertheless, observers of all political stripes noted that Reuther seemed quite pleased that the HUAC set its sights on Local 600. Reuther even took the dramatic step of instructing several members of his International staff to testify as cooperative witnesses before the Committee.[361]

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[358] *Labor Action*, February 4, 1952.

[359] Excellent coverage of the hearings appeared in a series of articles written by Walter Jason (B.J. Widick) in *Labor Action* beginning in March 1952. One particularly vivid article was entitled, "Detroit Becomes Salem: Probe Looses Hysteria": "For any social historian anxious to get the 'feel' of dark epochs like the Salem witch hunt or the Stalin purges in Russia, there is fertile soil in this tense febrile city since the opening of the hearings by the congressional Committee on Un-American Activities last week." *Labor Action*, March 10, 1952.

Details of the reaction in Detroit can also be found in Andrew (1979:251-52).

[360] Quoted in *Labor Action*, March 10, 1952.

[361] Cochran (1977), p.328.

Business Week ran a story about the Detroit hearings entitled, "A New 'Ally' for Reuther." The story noted that, although Reuther had hitherto denounced the HUAC members as "witch-hunters," "this week Reuther and the committee were working together on the UAW like a well-rehearsed vaudeville team." *Business Week*, March 22, 1952.

The Militant suggested that, in instructing his staff to cooperate with the Committee, he had made a suicidal pact with the devil. "While the immediate target of the witch hunt is the progressive leadership and membership of Ford Local 600, the aim of the inquisitors is to undermine and destroy the independent labor movement. Reuther knows this. Yet, in his factional frenzy to eliminate the opposition to his bureaucratic rule he aids and abets this crime against the organized labor movement." *Militant*, March 17, 1952.

The Wage Earner took credit for leading Reuther (and HUAC) to the Communist menace. One article, entitled "Local 600 Due for Scrutiny As Old Reds Take Limelight," recalled the history of CP influence at the Rouge. The ACTU newspaper argued that the historic successes of CP, in contrast to the failures of the right-wing at Local 600, were due to the "apathy of the rank and file worker." Nevertheless, the *Wage Earner* took some comfort in the possibility that the hearings would finally crush the left-wingers at the Rouge. One self-satisfied headline boasted, "Red Hearings

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The most important testimony came from Lee Romano, formerly a CP activist at the Rouge and now a member of the International's staff. Romano testified that the Communists and their supporters controlled Local 600. Romano also tried to follow Reuther's example from the Washington unemployment conference by using the witch-hunt not merely to expose the existence of Communists at the Rouge, but to crush the 30 for 40 movement by linking it with the CP and the Soviet Union. Romano had studied at the feet of a master. Referring to the old World War II alignment of the United States and the Soviet Union, Romano noted,

> in that day, [the Communists] were waving two flags. In one hand they were waving the American flag and in the other hand the Soviet flag. Today, they are only waving the Soviet flag. They have dropped the American flag for the 30-hour week, because everybody knows in America that although we may have a problem in Detroit, in most of the key centers of industry there is a shortage of manpower.[362]

Climax 2 Years of *Wage Earner* Stories Exposing Communist Infiltration Into Ford Local 600." *Wage Earner*, February 1952; March 1952.

Labor Action, after documenting the lurid effects of the hearings, paused before the sight of Reuther's cooperation. In advance of the second part of the hearings, in mid-March, after Reuther had already approved of the cooperative effort, Widick self-consciously noted, "As yet the UAW leadership has not directly criticized the conduct or results of the hearings. Will Reuther roll with the punch? Will he try to take the play away from the committee as being more 'anti-Communist' than it? Will he vigorously defend the present UAW stand on democratic rights for Stalinists? Speculation, opinion in advance or faith in Reuther are besides the point. The events of the week will speak for themselves." *Labor Action*, March 17, 1952.

A locally published CP newsletter, the *Michigan Party Forum*, noted the uncomfortable position of socialists within the Reuther caucus. "Rank and file followers of Reuther, inclined towards democratic or 'socialist' ideas, expected him to speak out against the Un-American Committee.... But everyone knows what Reuther did. Instead of 'cleaning out the fascists' by fighting the Un-American Committee, he assisted them. People on Reuther's payroll such as Lee Romano and Shelton Tappes, defeated office holders in Local 600, took the stand as friendly witnesses (stool-pigeons) for the Committee." *Michigan Party Forum*, April, 1952.

[362] United States House of Representatives, Committee on Un-American Activities (1952) *Communism in the Detroit Area*. Washington: US Government Printing Office, p.3052.

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But when Congressman Walter of Pennsylvania asked how successful the CP had been in bringing about a shorter work week, Romano answered in two distinct ways. First, following Reuther's now-familiar refrain, Romano suggested that the CP activists "have not been successful in that because the people objected to that themselves, with the high cost of living and everything concerned, the more hours you put in, the much better and much easier it is to buy the commodities and necessities of life." But the Congressman asked a follow-up question: "Because of that resistance, did the Communist Party abandon its program of the shorter week?" In answering this question, Romano forgot his scripted response. "No," Romano recalled,

> They asked for a 30-hour week with 40 hours' pay. That is something everybody desires. Every worker in America desires it. I desire it and I imagine you gentlemen desire it -- to work less hours, if possible, and still maintain an equilibrium insofar as your living is concerned, your standards are concerned. Everybody wants that and we know that.... The only thing is, they point up these things and fan this hysteria.... They know that by creating this hysteria, which meets the needs and desires of the people, that they are able to drum up enough agitation for this particular program. They don't say they want a 30-hour week with 30 hours' pay. No, they are for 30 hours a week with 40 hours' pay.[363]

The Committee's Counsel, Frank Tavenner, quickly interrupted that line of inquiry and moved the discussion to safer ground. While a 30 for 40 "hysteria" has never been documented, Romano's remarks do provide some indication of the depth of the

[363] United States House of Representatives, Committee on Un-American Activities (1952) *Communism in the Detroit Area.* Washington: US Government Printing Office, p.3053.

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program's popular appeal, as well as the difficulties Reuther was having keeping a good demand down.

But Reuther was about to act decisively to overcome these difficulties. The hearings into Local 600's affairs ended on Wednesday, March 12, 1952. Within four hours of the Committee's concluding questions, Reuther, "like a jackal pouncing on a wounded prey... swooped down on Ford Local 600."[364] In a daring power play, Reuther ordered the officers of Local 600 to appear, once again, before the International Executive Board, this time challenged to "show cause why an administrator should not be appointed to take charge of the local union."[365]

On Thursday, March 13, the General Council of Local 600 met in a special session and voted overwhelmingly to support the local officers in their fight against an administrator. The officers of Local 600 released a statement condemning Reuther and the IEB for joining forces with the House Un-American Activities Committee. "We reiterate our previous statement that your actions have been conceived in a desire to destroy the most democratic union in the UAW-CIO since you have failed in every effort to take control of Local 600 through your cohorts and paid international representatives."[366]

Reuther, acting as prosecutor, began a one-day hearing on Friday, March 14, inviting 39 local union presidents to sit in on his home-made un-American activities "trial."[367] The key charge made by Reuther was that "the manipulation of a small, but

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[364] The dramatic rhetoric appeared in a front page story in *The Militant*, March 17, 1952.
[365] *Militant*, March 17, 1952. *Business Week*, March 22, 1952.
[366] *Militant*, March 24, 1952.
[367] *Labor Action*, March 24, 1952.

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well-disciplined communist group...was able to subvert the policies, programs, and publications of local 600 to their own ends and against the best interests of the union membership." In the early morning hours of March 15, after listening to prosecutorial accusations for thirteen hours, the IEB made its decision, announced a press release arguing that Local 600's leadership had become completely subservient to the foreign policy needs of the Soviet Union.[368]

Reuther seized control of Local 600. On Sunday, March 16, an "Administrative Board" met to announce that five unit officers had been removed from office, accused of being "either members of or subservient to the Communist Party line." The five officers were the same five that Stellato had accused in 1950. In addition to supervising the "purge" of these five elected officers, the Reuther administration also took control of the Local 600 newspaper, *Ford Facts*. This was a significant step because *Ford Facts* was not only the newspaper of the Rouge workers, but had, after the creation of the fighting "Ford Program," become a widely distributed dissident newspaper and the most important *independent* source of UAW ideas about alternative programs to those of the Reuther machine. Indeed, Reuther cited the role of the newspaper as one of the reasons for taking control of the local. Without explicitly mentioning the influence of the 30-40 movement, Reuther did mention

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The Militant speculated that Reuther extended the invitation to the union presidents in order "both to 'brief' the Reuther machine on how to move against opponents who can't be defeated in a legitimate manner and at the same time provide a warning of what's in store for anyone with the courage to break from the machine as Stellato did just a year ago." *Militant*, March 24, 1952.

Several reports, filed by Fred Collins for the editors of *Time* and *Life*, contain interesting details about the events of mid-March, especially the hearing at Solidarity House. See "Reuther 1952 -- FE/CP," file "K," box 7, Daniel Bell Collection, Tamiment Institute Library.

[368] Stieber (1962), p.146.

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irresponsible action by the local which was harming the entire union.[369] When the Reuther administration began publishing its own version of *Ford Facts*, it immediately took aim at the 30 for 40 program, recalling for the membership how a "minority group" put forward a program of their own at the Washington Unemployment Conference, instead of supporting the "realistic" official program of the UAW.[370]

Reuther was warmly praised by the House Un-American Activities Committee for acting on the committee's findings and for assisting in the ongoing war against subversives in the United States.[371]

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[369] Nelson Lichtenstein notes that Reuther was well aware of the power of an opposition newspaper since he had once used his own local's *West Side Conveyor* as a weapon in his factional battles against the incumbent administration of Homer Martin. So too, Lichtenstein suggests, "Stellato and company made *Ford Facts* a union-wide organ of Reuther's opposition." Lichtenstein (1995), p.314. For Reuther's efforts to control the union press throughout the UAW, see Stieber (1962), pp.140-143. For details of the hearing and the justification for the administratorship, see Stieber (1962), p.146.

An article written in 1952 for the CP theoretical journal, *Political Affairs*, also noted that "the Ford Local did distribute its local paper to other plants." *Political Affairs*, July 1952.

[370] *Ford Facts*, March 29, 1952.

[371] *Business Week*, March 22, 1952.

Many ex-Trotskyists and those aligned with the Shachtmanites inside the Reuther caucus defended Reuther's actions. Horace Sheffield, one of the few Shachtmanite-aligned black activists in the Reuther camp at Local 600 recalled, "I had no problems with it [Reuther's administratorship of Local 600], because I had come out of the local, and I know some of the things that happened in the local." Stepan-Norris & Zeitlin (1996), p.221. William Johnson estimated, "Ninety-nine percent of all blacks were in the anti-Reuther caucus." Paul Boatin similarly recalled, "The only right-winger out of the blacks was [Horace] Sheffield. Every other black was either middle-of-the-roader or a progressive." Stepan-Norris & Zeitlin (1996), p.171, 172. For an excellent description of Sheffield's fascinating role as a youth leader within the NAACP during the recognition battle at Local 600, see Meier & Rudwick (1979).

Many other Shachtmanite allies of the Reuther administration were certainly uncomfortable with Reuther's alliance with HUAC and with his undemocratic grab for power. *Labor Action*'s B.J. Widick posed the question rhetorically: "Why has the Reuther faction been unable, with 90 per cent of the UAW in its control, to build a cadre of union leaders and unite them on a sound progressive program that would smash the influence of Stalinism in the way that counts most, by defeating them in elections, by winning the rank and file away from their influence?... There seems little question but that Reuther has disavowed his one-time method of defeating Stalinism by a superior program and leadership." *Labor Action*, March 24, 1952.

Widick was always "shocked, shocked" to find autocracy within the Reuther machine, but he never seriously considered the possibility that so long as Reuther opposed the most popular rank-and-file demands, including the 30-40 program, repression rather than popular legitimacy would provide his only way of maintaining power.

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The four top officers -- Stellato, Pat Rice, Bill Hood, and Bill Grant -- were not actually removed from office. They were stripped of all responsibilities, and all normal functions of the local were suspended (i.e., meetings of the local's Executive Board, the General Council, etc.), but at least formally, the top officers remained in office. One observer, a *Time/Life* reporter named Fred Collins, called this move "some first class politics.... This, of course, gives the appearance of a 'soft hand' on local matters and is obviously designed to prevent any great unrest in the local."[372]

Many wondered how the leadership, and the membership, of Local 600 would respond to the administratorship. In a private report to his editors, Fred Collins, for example, observed that the hearings may have created a "break" between the four top officers. Collins suggested that Stellato and Pat Rice may have made a deal with Reuther. Stellato, it was alleged, had "changed his defiant manner from the 'we will not let them take over the local' to 'when this is over I will take the issue to the convention.'" Rice reportedly "spoke, in a cheerful manner, with Reuther in the hall." In contrast, Bill Hood "said little, left hurriedly" and Bill Grant was "still defiant."[373] It is not clear that Collins correctly identified the nature of the split, but all observers knew that Stellato would, at the very least, be tempted to sit quietly as Reuther tried to accomplish what Stellato had failed to do: beat down the militant workers of Ford Local 600.

There was reason to believe that Reuther might succeed. First, few believed that Reuther would have taken such a bold step unless he was certain of victory when,

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[372] "Reuther 1952 -- FE/CP," file "K," box 7, Daniel Bell Collection, Tamiment Institute Library.
[373] "Reuther 1952 -- FE/CP," file "K," box 7, Daniel Bell Collection, Tamiment Institute Library.

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after 60 days of rule, he would have to hold an election. "The stakes for Walter P. Reuther are high," wrote B.J. Widick. "A defeat for his faction in the Ford Local 600 elections, after these drastic measures to win control of the local, would be a major blow to his reputation and influence in the UAW as well as nationally. Reuther is now in a position where he must have a victory at any cost!"[374] *Business Week* added that "Reuther has only two months in which to destroy the majority support [the local's officers] have had, or face the most serious setback he will have had since he took over the union's helm."[375] Second, even militant left-wing observers of the HUAC hearings acknowledged that Reuther's "cooperation" during the hearings "gave the witch-hunt a certain appearance of 'legitimacy' in the minds of many workers."[376] Finally, since Stellato had been so acquiescent during the Washington Unemployment Conference, and Reuther had given him such a frightening tongue lashing, there was every reason to expect that Stellato would now gladly return to the Reuther fold. Reuther's decision to leave Stellato in office clearly reflected this confidence.[377]

But Reuther had miscalculated. Communists and anti-Communist witch-hunters had accepted that the HUAC hearings were about Communist Party activity. The CP had been active at Local 600 and everybody knew it. But Reuther's dictatorial imposition shifted attention from Communism to Reutherism. The membership of Local 600 was well aware that the fighting "Ford Program" had been a

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[374] *Labor Action*, March 24, 1952.
[375] Interestingly, *Business Week* reported that "industry in Detroit is betting Reuther can't do it." Nevertheless, the *Business Week* writer argued that "Reuther took the initiative in the fight. He could have kept ducking it.... Now in the ring, he's playing for keeps." *Business Week*, March 22, 1952.
[376] *Militant*, March 24, 1952.
[377] Levenstein (1981), p.317.

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thorn in Reuther's side and they knew that the CP had only belatedly supported the militant posture of the non-CP radicals at Local 600. Moreover, the "Ford Program" was a labor union program and a radical alternative to Reuther's corporatist program. By seizing control of the local, Reuther instantly turned the battle into a war between the syndicalist program of the independent militants at Local 600 and the corporatist bureaucratic dictatorship of Reuther. Local 600 had "democracy" and militancy, form and substance, on its side.

Moreover, the local CP activists adopted a far more militant position than the national CP leadership had been promoting. Immediately following the imposition of the administratorship, the State Committee of the Communist Party of Michigan began producing editions of the *Michigan Party Forum* which were far more militant than the standard CP line. The *Party Forum* hailed the development of an organized caucus devoted to "a return to militant trade unionism" including the "30 hour week with 40 hours pay."[378] Moreover, the five officers accused of being Communists publicly campaigned, not with a defensive and formalist civil liberties program, but with a substantive fighting program to restore the independent fighting spirit of Local 600. In a clear message to Stellato and others, one pamphlet issued by "the five" reported,

> Many rumors are floating around. The anti-labor press happily predicts that President Stellato is about to break with the Progressives of Local 600... Unless the Coalition is maintained, there is a great danger of division and disunity and a Reuther victory. Whoever splits this unity for pork chop deals, will stand exposed and branded forever with the hatred and disgust

[378] *Michigan Party Forum*, March 1952; *Michigan Party Forum*, April 1952.

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> of the Ford workers. Ford workers want a continuation of the solidarity and struggle which has won such popular support amongst the auto workers throughout the country.[379]

If there were splits in the unity, these were not evident at an extraordinary "special" Local 600 meeting, held only a week after the administratorship was imposed. Since the Reuther administration controlled the Local 600 building, a meeting was called at Dearborn's Club Supino, where "more than a thousand workers" reportedly jammed the hall to rally for a fight against the Reuther dictatorship. While it is not clear who actually organized such an enormous affair, all four top officers were said to have made "fiery speeches" with Stellato taking the lead. Stellato charged Reuther with using the "Communist" issue to hide his real target: the militant program of Local 600. In particular, Stellato pointed to the significance of Reuther's opposition to the demand for a 30 hour week with 40 hours pay. Moreover, Stellato began the process of mobilizing against Reuther's seizure. Committees were established for publicity and finance, and $4,000 was collected at the meeting itself. The fight for Local 600 had begun. Within a month, the local leadership was producing its own independent newspaper -- *Local 600 Union Facts* -- as an alternative to Reuther's edition of *Ford Facts*.[380]

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[379] "Ford Material, 1947-52," file 9, box 3, Ganley-Wellman Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[380] *Militant*, March 31, 1952; *Militant*, April 21, 1952.

The right-wing *Wage Earner* confirmed that Stellato had joined in the fight against the administratorship, noting that he was promoting "a campaign to confuse the rank and file and hinder the administrators' attempts to pull the...local back on a trade union basis." Stellato's campaign of confusion "included... such legitimate UAW long range, but-not-now objectives as the 30-hour week." *Wage Earner*, April 1952.

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Reuther appointed his most trusted aide, Jack Conway, as the administrator of the local. Conway, who received national attention for this role, faced the enormous challenge of building support for Reuther and pro-Reuther candidates, even as he continued to remove popular, democratically elected officers from power. After the initial group of five, many more officers were removed, only now Conway did not even use the pretext of Communism to take action. Rather, the reasons given included "reorganization on a more efficient basis" and providing "the workers... better representation."[381] Leaving resentment in his wake, Conway nevertheless tried to build a Reutherite base of support. An effort was made to build up the right-wing caucus associated with the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, but without a positive program, the caucus had fallen on hard times. The *Wage Earner* acknowledged that the "difficulties ahead are obvious. Veteran right-wingers point out that the only remaining capable members available are men over 60 -- too old to face the rough 'gaff' ahead." In addition to general decline, the caucus also had to concede that when, in the past, its leaders had been defeated in elections, Reuther saved them from "the shop" by giving them staff jobs at Solidarity House. The *Wage Earner* confessed, with sadness, that "the rank and file looks at International staffers as pork choppers interested strictly in politics" rather than programs.[382]

Conway and Reuther kept close tabs on all of the Rouge buildings, trying to keep a careful watch on the political mood. But the reconnaissance simply confirmed the bad news. In a handwritten note by Reuther, there is a list of unit names and

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[381] *Business Week*, March 22, 1952; *Militant*, April 7, 1952.
[382] *Wage Earner*, March 1952. Lichtenstein (1995), p.318.

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membership numbers as of April 15, 1952. Next to seven of the larger units, Reuther marked "CP problem," meaning that he was in trouble. Next to one building, a frustrated Reuther wrote, "workers don't understand issues." Another building (Boatin's Motor Building), Reuther had scrawled, "in BAD shape... will support Stellato." Finally the page included two urgent notes: "Don't hold election too quick--" and "CALL JACK C."[383] Shortly thereafter, the IEB announced that there would be no election at Local 600 on the premise that since the top officers were not removed, no election was required.

Even as Reuther's campaign for control proceeded to crumble, opposition at Local 600 grew increasingly united. When the Administrative Committee denied the request of the "not removed" officers to convene a General Council meeting, Stellato issued a call for a massive "private" meeting of all Unit Officers, Committeemen, and General Council Delegates to be held at the Salina School Gymnasium on May 3, 1952.[384] Resistance grew and the idea of a more or less "permanent" administrator infuriated even the most staunch right-wingers.[385] According to one report, about a thousand Rouge workers joined in "a big riot" in front of Solidarity, demanding elections.[386] With resistance on the rise, and right-wing activists forced to support

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[383] "Local 600 Apr-May 1952 IEB Administratorship," file 5, Box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[384] "Call for Meeting" Leaflet, file 1, Box 249, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[385] The *Wage Earner* tried to calm the anger of "loyal right-wingers" who were "antagonistic to the administrators place over them by the International to erase Communist influence." The responsibly pro-Reuther newspaper advised its diminished ranks that they could "still switch the balance of power" to the right if they could somehow move beyond their "hereditary dislike of 'ordered thinking' from above." *Wage Earner*, July, 1952.

[386] Walter Dorosh, at one time a left-winger, recalled, "[W]e started raising hell, and we took about a thousand guys, I guess, out to Solidarity House. I guess that scared [Reuther]. We had a big riot out in front of the building there." Stepan-Norris & Zeitlin (1996), p.218.

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calls for democratic elections, there was no way the Administrative Committee could sustain its decision to deny the call for elections. Stellato, who had agreed not to violate any of the orders of the International, announced that this "cooperative" posture would not continue if the 60 day mark passed with no election date set. After May 15th, Stellato suggested, "the gloves will be off."[387]

Finally, after stalling as long as possible, Reuther "gave in" five days before the deadline, as the rank-and-file fight for elections by May 15 "finally penetrated the sound proof walls of Solidarity House."[388] Unit elections were scheduled for June and July and local-wide elections were scheduled for September 9-11, 1952.

While there is no reason to doubt that workers were angered by Reuther's decision to deny calls for elections, there is little evidence, other than that provided by Dorosh's memory, of "a big riot" about elections. The only such "riot" confirmed by other sources was the 30-40 action at Solidarity House in November of 1951. Even this action was not quite a riot.

[387] "The Defeat of Reuther in the Elections of #600" in "Reuther #4" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

[388] Election Leaflet, "Local 600 Apr-May 1952 IEB Administratorship," file 5, Box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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Chapter 9: The CP Takes a Dive, 1952-1953

Once again, the political alignments at Local 600 were in flux. Where did Stellato belong? If Stellato thought that the time was right for him to rejoin the Reuther caucus, and if Reuther agreed, then the right-wing would have to resist the temptation to offer a challenge to Stellato from the right. Instead, the *Wage Earner* argued that if at all possible, the right-wing should "bide their time, and adopt CP maneuvers: drive a wedge between Stellato and the Communists."[389]

If, on the other hand, Stellato still considered it necessary to maintain his militant, anti-Reuther program in order to keep the support of the rank and file, then the right-wing would have to do everything in its power to challenge Stellato. Indeed, some right-wingers were quite anxious to renounce the top officers altogether and to create a viable, trustworthy, independent right-wing slate. Motivated by the desire for such a principled approach, several right-wing leaders at Local 600 wired a caucus resolution to Solidarity House on May 4, 1952. The telegram threatened, "we will not pardon or condone any deal or private agreement by any one man or group in the International UAW with the present top four Local 600 officers."[390]

Similarly, the left wing (including those still close to the CP and other independent militants aligned with the SWP) faced the prospect that their erstwhile ally, Stellato, would double-cross the left as he had once double-crossed Reuther. Stellato's performance at the Washington Unemployment Conference certainly

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[389] *Wage Earner*, May 1952.
[390] *Wage Earner*, May 1952.

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signaled that, without pressure from the membership, Stellato would once again drift back toward the International's corporatist program.

Finally, Stellato himself undoubtedly was in search of safe passage through the election. He was not about to begin making decisions on the basis of ideological principles and was therefore as eager anyone else to test the winds in order to gauge the political climate at the Rouge.

Immediately after Reuther announced the scheduling of elections, Stellato issued a leaflet in which his picture appeared alone, without his fellow officers, Pat Rice, William Hood, and W.G. Grant. The leaflet announced Stellato's intention to seek re-election as "an independent candidate." Over his own picture, he had printed, "Local 600 Belongs to the Membership, Not Reuther -- Not Ford -- Not the Communist Party." Stellato acknowledged, "Yes, there have been many rumors circulated in the daily press and in the Rouge Plant about Stellato making a deal with Reuther, and Stellato making a deal with the Communist Party... These two rumors are deliberate lies." Running on a triple negative -- not Reuther, not Ford, not the Communist Party -- Stellato searched for something positive. All he could muster was the memory of his position against the dues increase. The document did list a program, including "30-hour week for 40 hours pay." However, the shorter hours program was listed as a sub-category within a larger pledge of unity within Local 600 and within the UAW more generally. In one final hedge, undoubtedly designed to appease the left, the final demand was for "peace."[391]

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[391] Campaign Leaflet, file 18, Box 249, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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The Rouge right-wingers began to see "red" in Stellato's eyes in no time at all. At first, there were rumors that Stellato had actually visited Solidarity House to meet with UAW "top brass." But, when Stellato distributed a new leaflet, adorned with the photographs of all four top officers, the right-wingers concluded that Stellato "had not met with success" in his outreach to Solidarity House. In a reversal of Reuther's own emphasis on driving a wedge between Stellato and the Communists, the *Wage Earner* asserted, "So long as Stellato remains teamed with the other three well-tagged officers as a member of the slate, the right wing has hopes. Should Stellato run alone, a belligerent, autonomous-loving, top echelon-suspicious rank and file might vote him back."[392]

Stellato's leaflet did show signs that Stellato was trying to gain support from the most militant workers at the Rouge, even as he and his "well-tagged" officers asserted, "We are independents... We are independent of Reuther, We are independent of the Communist Party." But the leaflet did make clear that Stellato was not going to dump the left wing of his slate. "As Independents, we are united as officers because...[we] agree that cooperative action is in the best interest of the membership."[393] The leaflet went even further. Its program included a call to "fight speed up" (missing from Stellato's solo-leaflet) and 30 for 40 was prominently displayed as demand number one. The leaflet also included one final bold signal. The Administrative Board announced that the five officers accused of being Communists

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[392] *Wage Earner*, July 1952.
[393] Campaign Leaflet, file 18, Box 249, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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would not be permitted to campaign for office in their units.[394] The leaflet, in an unmistakable reference to the five CP-aligned officers who had been cleared by the General Council of Local 600, asserted, "we believe that any member in good standing of Local 600, who is not specifically prohibited from doing so by trial of his own peers, should be permitted to run for office."[395]

Stellato's opportunism was exceeded only by his political sensitivity. The membership of Local 600 had been united behind Stellato and his militant "Ford Program" and Reuther's dictatorial actions had only strengthened the independent resolve of the membership. Stellato opted to maintain his independence from the administration, publicly aligning himself with the left to insure that he would not be abandoned by the membership.

In the unit elections, Stellato-slate candidates ran with full force on the 1951 "Ford Program," highlighting the demand for a 30 hour work week at 40 hours pay.[396] In many units, the Stellato slate ran on an unbeatable program of syndicalist labor movement demands accompanied by more formalistic demands for union democracy. For example, in the Axle building, Alex Semion was one of the militant leaders removed by the Administrator *without* charges of Communist conspiracy and then replaced by a pro-Reuther officer. Semion ran with the 30-40 program displayed prominently, with the support of respected militants like Joe Hogan, and with the righteous indignation of one who had been undemocratically removed from office.

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[394] *Militant*, August 11, 1952.
[395] Campaign Leaflet, file 18, Box 249, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[396] See the many Campaign Leaflets, file 18, Box 249, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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Pro-Reuther candidates ran a campaign "under the overall direction of International appointed administrators."[397] ACTU leader John Fitzpatrick produced *The Score*, "the official UAW administration publication for the right wing." The *Wage Earner* itself acknowledged that, with quotations from everyone from Sophocles to Stalin, the newspaper didn't particularly "cater" to the Rouge workers. "We doubt... [it will] sway many Local 600 workers into a frenzy of right wing devotion."[398] The Reuther slate produced leaflets with green print and the slogan "Support UAW Program; Full Employment -- Guaranteed Annual Wage." These leaflets were primarily filled with accusations that "the Commies, Stellato and the 2,000 Club (pro-Communists)" had made "the Communist Party Program... the Program of Local 600, and the records don't lie."[399] There was no demand for formal independence from the International, and most of the substance was based upon an attack on the "Commies" rather than an affirmative promotion of Reuther's labor policies. On most of the right-wing leaflets, the written text was all about the Communists, etc., while only a small green printed "button" at the bottom of each page listed the above-mentioned program.

While the right wing was attacking Stellato for his "Commie" labor program of shorter hours and higher wages, the national Communist Party was, tragically, doing its best to undermine the local CP activists at the Rouge who had rallied behind Stellato's militant "Ford Program." Beginning in April of 1952, an author identified as

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[397] *Wage Earner*, July 1952.
[398] *Wage Earner*, July 1952.
[399] Campaign Leaflets, file 18, Box 249, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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John Swift[400] crafted a series of four articles addressed to "Problems of Work in Right-led Unions," in general, and then "Reuther's Seizure of the Ford Local," in particular. These articles mark a final rift between the local militants of Local 600 and the CP, which was making a break for the Reuther camp. Along the way, the CP launched a campaign to remove the 30 for 40 program from the discourse of CP activists.

These articles were written with the twisted logic of a shifting political strategy wrapped in the rhetoric of political theory. In classic CP style, Lenin's "brilliant polemical booklet" *'Left-Wing' Communism: An Infantile Disorder* was dragged in to justify abandoning a militant program in favor of unity with social-democrats.[401] Swift's first direct attack was against local CP enthusiasm for Stellato's Committee for a Democratic UAW. Back in October 1951, George Morris had warned of the influence of pro-Reuther "Trotskyites" within the group, but had vigorously promoted the *program* of the Committee. Now, Swift argued that the group was too anti-Reuther, too factional, and lacked a viable program. Referring to "a recent heading over a story in an outstanding [CP] progressive labor magazine" which was "unfortunate because it was inaccurate," Swift denounced the headline, "Anti-Reuther Forces Unite To Fight Lay-Offs, Speed-Up." "The rank-and-file movement," Swift suggested, "cuts across the pro- and anti-Reuther lines." The sound political theory was that the CP "must not permit the leadership to shift the issue to "for, or against,

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[400] The name John Swift is almost certainly a pseudonym. While several important Communists, from Joseph Starobin to Joseph Stalin, shared the initials "JS," the articles were most likely the work of Jack Stachel. Daniel Bell has argued that after 1945, even as William Z. Foster was named national chairman, "the real power in the party [resided] in the hands of Jack Stachel and various secret Comintern 'Reps.'" See Daniel Bell (1952) *Marxian Socialism in the United States.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

[401] *Political Affairs*, April 1952, p.31

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Reuther." Instead, Swift argued, "the movement of the rank and file for progressive policies must start out as a *positive* movement *for* something, for a *single* demand stemming from the immediate needs of the rank and file or for a *program* of demands.[402] The point, however, is not that this theory is correct, but that it represents a departure from the 1951 policy which feared that Stellato's group was too close to Reuther, regardless of its program.

But what "program" cut across the pro- and anti-Reuther lines? Surely it was not the 30 for 40 program. The demand for a shorter work week at full pay might have been wildly popular with the membership (Swift did not speak to the popularity of the demand), but Reuther's opposition to 30-40 made the issue *de facto* "factional" rather than substantive. Reuther had made it clear several times that he was set against this program and he had done everything possible to crush the demand. In an incredible turnabout, the CP now argued that whatever positive program *would* ultimately serve as the basis for unity with Reuther, shorter hours would not be that program. The 30-40 program was too disruptive of unity with Reuther and would have to be abandoned.

In an article written after Reuther's seizure of Local 600, but before the elections, Swift publicly criticized the local militants' emphasis on the 30 for 40 demand. In an incredible rebuke to "gross illusions" among "certain Michigan Party leaders," Swift discussed "a number of weaknesses which had developed" at Local 600. While acknowledging that "the Ford Local did distribute its local paper to other plants," Swift asked, "Did it not... frequently leave the impression of seeking close

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[402] *Political Affairs*, May 1952, p.31.

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contact only with locals whose leaders shared its general outlook?" Still, this criticism was too abstract. "Let us take, for example, the issue of unemployment." Swift acknowledged that it was "to the credit of the Ford Local leadership that it was among the very first to recognize the serious consequences of this problem" and that it "raised sharply the demand for immediate attention...to alleviate the hardships caused by the unemployment which everybody admitted existed in large numbers."[403] But this line of credit was quickly and dramatically withdrawn.

> And yet...Reuther was able to put the Local 600 leadership on the defensive.... Reuther launched his main attack upon Local 600's proposal to make the 30-hour week slogan a demand for immediate action. At a conference in which the overwhelming majority of the delegates were from locals in which there was no acute unemployment problem, Reuther was demagogically able to make it appear that the 30-hour-week demand at this time would jeopardize the earnings of those working full time and over-time.... The delegates of Local 600 to this conference defended their local program, but did not call for the unity of all locals around that on which they could all agree... Thus, those in the Ford Local leadership... forgot... that workers judge leadership on the basis not of who *demands* more, but of who helps them to *get* more.[404]

There are several astonishing elements within this statement. Swift dropped the demand for a full 40 hours' pay when mentioning the demand for a 30-hour week. More significantly, Local 600 stands accused by the CP of foolishly making excessively bold demands for a shorter work week. Why excessive? Why did Local 600 deserve the whipping it got from Reuther? Because it failed to see that "the

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[403] *Political Affairs*, July 1952, p.13.
[404] *Political Affairs*, July 1952, pp.13-15.

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overwhelming majority of the delegates were from locals in which there was no acute unemployment problem." This was one of Reuther's own twisted lines of defense at the Washington Unemployment Conference in question. Suddenly the "hardships caused by the unemployment which everybody admitted existed in large numbers" were completely forgotten. Ironically, Reuther was so successful in crushing the shorter work week proposal at the conference, not at a time when the Local 600 leadership "defended their local program," but during the pre-HUAC days when Stellato and company completely refused to defend the militant program.

Again, Swift's political theory or logical coherence was not important to the correct functioning of the article. His message to Local 600's CP activists was altogether clear: drop the shorter work week demand. But what if Stellato and the rank and file were going to press forward with the 30 for 40 program? The CP response was clear. If Stellato gets in the way of unity with Reuther, then break ranks with Stellato. The political theory was always already available: undoubtedly it must have been something like "unprincipled opportunism" which made Local 600 CP-activists enthusiastically join in Stellato's campaigns. Having made deal after deal with sell-out administrations at Local 600, the CP was now prepared to declare its principled independence by pushing Stellato's administration *to the right*. Swift characterized recent events at Local 600 by suggesting, "Reuther spread the lie that the leadership of the Local was subservient to the Communist Party." In fact, Swift argued, the CP had become too subservient to the Local. "[A]ctually the Communists felt so keenly the need for supporting the progressive coalition, that they actually

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remained silent on points of disagreement, remaining silent, in particular, on the danger of factionalism." Swift attacked "the failure of the Left to take an independent position and to partake openly in constructive criticism."[405]

What was the CP doing? What reason could the Party have for walking away from an issue that was undoubtedly popular among the rank-and-file members of Local 600? The CP had spent most of the early cold war years sniffing around Local 600 trying to pick up the scent of *any* program that would win it support among the rank and file. The 30 for 40 program had been so successful at Local 600 that it had created sufficient heat to force an ex-Reutherite like Stellato to appropriate the demand in order to stay in office. Now the CP was walking away from a winning issue. What could make the CP abandon the rank and file in so callous and foolish a manner?

Swift had written that personal attacks on Reuther should give way to a more programmatic emphasis, letting individuals be judged based upon substantive positions. But if the shorter work week was not to be the *positive* program by which all leaders would be judged, then what would be the CP criterion? "Our basic evaluation," Swift asserted, "must rest on a solid foundation."

> This today is determined by the central issue, the issue of war and peace. A labor leader is a progressive to the degree that he stands for peace, not abstractly, but concretely -- that is, for peace and co-existence with the Soviet Union. He is a reactionary to the extent that he stands for war -- that is, supports the war drive of US imperialism and its anti-Soviet foreign policy.[406]

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[405] *Political Affairs*, July 1952, pp.18-19.
[406] *Political Affairs*, May 1952, p.32.

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Thus, Communist Party priorities were made clear and explicit. All labor union issues would be subordinated to the service of the Soviet Union. This was not news. But why, then, the new friendliness toward Reuther? After all, Reuther's original sin in the eyes of the CP had been precisely his support for the war drive of US imperialism and its anti-Soviet foreign policy. The answer to this mystery was not solved "in writing" until the March 1953 UAW Convention when the rationale for the CP's preparatory efforts of 1952 became clear. Headlines from the *Worker* tell the story: "Auto Workers Urge Government to Accept Malenkov Peace Bid," "Reuther Plan for Peace Economy," and "Reuther Talks Peace."[407] Reuther had agreed to introduce a so-called "peace" resolution at the Convention. The post-Convention *Worker* article celebrated the fact that "the resolution noted Malenkov's recent declaration that there are no issues which cannot be settled peacefully." The same article called it "unfortunate" that the Reuther leadership "larded the peace resolution with the same Cold War red-baiting line that Washington uses" even as it "recognizes the great peace sentiment among the workers... The important thing, however, is that at long last labor is officially talking up for peace."[408] In a later article, the CP quoted with delight another Reuther proclamation: "We must find a way to get together not because of hatred and fear of something but for hopes and aspirations, for a peaceful world of the brotherhood of man."[409]

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[407] *Worker*, March 29, 1953; *Worker*, April 19, 1953; *Worker*, May 3, 1953. Malenkov was the General-Secretary of the Soviet Union in the immediate aftermath of Stalin's death.
[408] *Worker*, March 29, 1953.
[409] *Worker*, May 3, 1953.

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Just as the CP had been militant labor unionists for cold war reasons, Reuther had been a cold warrior primarily for labor union reasons. Reuther's brand of corporatism demanded that all steps be taken to prop up corporations. Support for cold war defense spending was an obvious choice for Reuther. But as the war in Korea was ending, the CP was more than willing to join Reuther in corporatist demands for peacetime efforts to undergird the revenues of American industry. Thus, the CP moved to divert attention from Local 600's syndicalist demand for high wages and tight labor markets through the progressive withdrawal of labor supply, and lend support instead to Reuther's corporatist vision of peace and full employment through corporate magnanimity.

"Not increasing war production, but increasing production for peace is what the workers want and need," Swift reported. "They will want work, and work without war. While the demand of the local for a six hour day is one plank of such a program, it does not answer how the Rouge and the rest of the auto-aircraft industry can avoid shutdown when a crash comes." But the CP embrace of a strategy of tightening labor markets through more jobs instead of less work was not simply a way of demonstrating to Reuther the possibility of abandoning war-Keynesianism and embracing its peacetime mode. Rather, the CP's exclusive interest foreign policy. Thus, Swift suggested that "trade with China and with other Communist-led countries may make all the difference in the world in determining whether the workers in the Rouge have jobs or not."[410]

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[410] *Political Affairs*, November 1952.

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The Communist Party itself was never to be openly welcomed into the Reuther caucus. Indeed, even as the CP heaped praise on Reuther's new "peace" policy, the *Worker* continuously noted, with regret, that Reuther never completely abandoned his red-baiting cold war language.[411] Nevertheless, the old Shachtmanites were now joined in the Reuther camp by the same Stalinist party that had led them to abandon the rank and file and join Reuther and his anti-Communist bureaucracy.

In the latter part of 1952, and early 1953, even as Reuther was continuing his persecution of Communists at Local 600, the Communist Party abandoned its critical posture. For the first time, the *Worker* featured news stories about Reuther and his labor policies, but included none of the biting commentary that had consistently made the *Worker* a discursive space which broke through Reuther's own internal union publicity machine. Now the CP allowed the *Worker* to become merely another outlet for that machine.[412]

In an extraordinarily long, detailed article by Saul Wellman and Nat Ganley, published several weeks before the March 1953 UAW Convention, the CP argues for unity and calls on CP activists to set aside "all other considerations, all divisions which weaken the union, all personal ambitions and group bitterness produced by the years of inner factionalism." What is also set aside is the 30 for 40 demand. In this four-

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[411] *Worker*, May 3, 1953.

[412] See, for example, the article about Reuther and Ford Motor Company in the *Worker*, April 19, 1953.

The retreat of the Michigan CP was driven by the policy shifts outlined in the CP journal, *Political Affairs*. However, the more rebellious elements within Michigan State Party were *effectively* silenced not only by the internal discipline demonstrated by all "faithful Stalinist hacks," but by a severe environment of repression created by the US government. After the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Smith Act, the FBI moved in to break up the Michigan Party. On September 17 & 18, 1952, the "Michigan Six" were arrested: Saul Wellman; William Allan; Nat Ganley; Thomas Dennis, Jr.; Helen Winter; and Phil Schatz. See *Worker*, September 28, 1952.

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page article, including a long section devoted exclusively to collective bargaining demands, there is almost no mention of the shorter work week demand. On the final page, after long passages about the need for peacetime jobs, etc., the article mildly suggests "moving towards the eventual realization of the longer-range economic goals of the UAW, such as the 30 hour week with 40 hours pay."[413] In an article about Local 600's own convention resolution submissions, the *Worker* does report that the 30 for 40 demand is included, but after reprinting Local 600's list, the article is expanded to include "commentary" on "some of the top resolutions." There is not one word about the 30 for 40 demand.[414]

A review of the Party's historical positions, written in 1955, confirms the turnaround.

> From 1947 to 1951... we placed, correctly, great emphasis, though of a schematic and mechanical nature, in the development of the tactic of the united front of struggle from below and for special attention to the development of single issue struggles.... In 1951, at Ford Local 600, old hard and fast factional lines were broken by the emergence of the Carl Stellato middle-road position (neither in the 'war' or 'peace' camp) and which coalesced with the left. While welcoming this new unity development, some Left and Communist forces... saw it primarily as a blow at the Reuther machine. We said, "Ford workers have found the Achilles heel of Walter Reuther.[415]

Significantly, the CP identifies Carl Stellato with his position on foreign policy, rather than with his labor movement program. The review goes on to recall the events of

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[413] *Worker*, January 18, 1953.
[414] *Worker* (National Edition), January 25, 1953.
[415] "Michigan Communist Party, 1950s," file 31, box 31, Nat Ganley Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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1952 (without even mentioning Reuther's seizure of the local or any labor movement issues).

> We called for a shift in tactics... The Reuther policy has gradually changed... his foreign policy stand has progressed from the 1953 convention policy favoring US-Soviet peace talks at the summit."[416]

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[416] "Michigan Communist Party, 1950s," file 31, box 31, Nat Ganley Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

Nelson Lichtenstein suggests that CP-activists like Walter Dorosh "reached a mutual accommodation" in 1955 when Reuther needed the help of old-time Communists to defuse a revolt of skilled trades workers. This revolt is particularly ironic because it demonstrates the degree to which Reuther's "new" social unionism was based, in part, on the strategy of supplementing the insufficient labor market leverage of production workers by linking them with the old craft leverage of the remaining skilled workers in the big auto companies. As skilled workers recognized that Reuther was relying on them to subsidize the wages of production workers, without embracing any strategy for building autonomous market leverage for production workers (e.g., shorter work week), these skilled workers increasingly refused to "go down" with the production worker ship.

Some CP activists, notably John Orr, president of the Rouge tool and die workers, had championed that crusade. See *Worker*, beginning May 6, 1951.

While Lichtenstein correctly notes that Reuther wanted to get the Communists to abandon various rank-and-file struggles, he does not mention the reason for the Communist accommodation to Reuther. While undoubtedly a minor oversight, the point is important, lest it seem as though the CP had reached an accommodation with Reuther because he had transformed his labor movement program in some substantive way that satisfied these "militants." See Lichtenstein (1995), p.323.

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After this shift the Communist Party became increasingly "social-democratic" in its labor movement orientation, as "John Swift" had advised. If the rank-and-file fight for the shorter work week in the UAW was going to progress, it was going to have to do so without the support of two of the major left-wing ideological formations in the postwar United States, the Shachtmanites and the Communists.

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Chapter 10: The Limits of Anti-Communism Revisited, 1952-1953

Even as the CP withdrw from the movement, the 30 for 40 demand continued to make progress at Local 600, in the UAW, and beyond.

Indeed, the Local 600 election turned out to be a terrible loss for Reuther and a triumph for the coalition of Local union elites who had worked to win rank-and-file support in return for advocacy of the 30 for 40 program. With or without Communist support, the shorter work week demand maintained all of its popular appeal at the Rouge. Moreover, the program faced almost no ideological competition, other than a negative program of anti-Communism, from the right wing. As the unit election returns piled in, a *Wage Earner* headline acknowledged not only the sad news, but also the lack of a viable right-wing program: "Admitting Poor Early Strategy Ford Right-Wingers Race Time to Hammer Out Slate, Program." "While unit elections already held may not be added up to a Progressive or Communist sweep since victories included those of independents, anti-Reuther and anti-Commie slates, nevertheless straight right-wing caucus losses are admitted."[417] The *Militant* was considerably more up-beat in its coverage.

> Campaigning on the basis of clear-cut opposition to red-baiting and dictatorial intervention in the affairs of Local 600 and for a program that included demands for a six-hour day and breaking of the five-year contract, the Unity forces grouped around the four top officers of the Local won a heartening election victory and the Reuther machine suffered the most crushing defeat since it came to power in the CIO United Automobile Workers

[417] *Wage Earner*, August 1952.

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> Union.... Of the 19 units, 15 put into office opponents of the Reuther machine.[418]

These victories included not only the return of anti-Reuther incumbents, but also the success of pro-Stellato Local 600 candidates against Reuther incumbents. One officer, Alex Semion, who had been removed by the Administrative Board, was overwhelmingly returned to office on a prominent 30 for 40 platform.[419] In the Iron Foundry, Bill Johnson, the progressive black leader who had been working as Stellato's Administrative Assistant, beat the right-wing candidate, "Old Man Johnson." As one CP observer noted, "Old Man Johnson received 500 and some votes or 16% of the total, the most devastating rejection of Reuther by this great concentration of

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[418] *Militant*, September 22, 1952. The four pro-Reuther units included the Miscellaneous unit, the Ford Central Depot, the Glass Plant, and the Transportation Unit. By Reuther's own calculations and the calculations published by the *Worker*, these four units included only 3,786 workers. These four units included fewer than half the number of workers, for example, in the progressive Maintenance unit. *Worker*, August 24, 1952.

[419] See "Local 600 1947-52 Political Pamphlets, Literature," folder 18, Box 249, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

Semion beat his opponent, Bill Hughes, 593 to 384. See *Worker*, August 3, 1952.

In the Tool and Die unit, CP-activist John Orr beat his opponent, William Poet, 1,892 to 842. *Worker*, August 24, 1952.

In some cases, including the massive, 7,500-member Maintenance & Construction Unit, competition for office kept the Stellato-aligned candidates on their toes. The incumbent president Art Speed, generally considered an independent labor militant, dropped the 30 for 40 program from a "Unity" campaign leaflet and may have tried to make peace with Conway and the Administrative Board. But a group of relatively unknown right-wing activists pressured him with their own leaflet which noted that what was "missing in his program printed on his leaflet is the 30 hours work for 40 hours pay plus cost-of-living allowance for pensioners. Well the $120.00 question now is: IS OUR PRESIDENT ALSO TRYING TO DOUBLE CROSS CARL STELLATO AND HIS PROGRAM?" Ironically, this right-wing slate that pressured Speed to stick by Stellato and 30-40 ultimately voted against Stellato (and for right-wing activist, Joe McCusker) when Stellato ran for higher office (see below). But ideological opportunism keeps militancy alive, so long as candidates recognize the possibility of winning rank-and-file support by articulating militant demands. Through the maintenance of a competitive political marketplace, incumbents of all stripes were "relieved" of the temptation to betray the rank-and-file in search of easier relations with Reuther. See "Local 600 1947-52 Political Pamphlets, Literature," folder 18, Box 249, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

Both the right- and left-wing newspapers considered Art Speed a "progressive." Speed won the election, in spite of what the *Militant* called a "major concentration of administrators in an attempt to defeat him. See *Wage Earner*, August 1952; *Militant*, August 11, 1952.

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Negro workers."[420] As Stellato himself announced, "The Reuther dictatorship received a shellacking of major proportions."[421]

The upset was so significant that even these relatively obscure intra-Local unit elections received national press attention. *Fortune* announced that Reuther's "men from headquarters" were "continuing to have difficulties" at Local 600. "The unit elections held in July and August appear to have resulted in a number of victories for

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[420] "The Defeat of Reuther in the Elections of #600" in "Reuther #4" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

Johnson also served as defense attorney for the five accused Communists. In an interview with Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin, Johnson's recollection of this period contains a strikingly incoherent non sequitur which is unintelligible without an understanding of the CP's new pro-Reuther "peace" agenda. "So," Johnson recalled, "when they held the election, we defeated every one of them. The membership returned all the guys to office.... We had a certified public accountant who supervised the election and we swept the election and defeated all of the Reuther team. So, after that time we sat down, and we felt, 'Well, maybe the fight has gone on long enough. Maybe, we ought to seek an accommodation on each side" -- and that's what happened."

Johnson was asked, "When did that happen?" "In 1952-53," he responded, "and from then on, there was very little infighting between the local and the international union."

Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin asked, "Was that a policy of Carl Stellato?" Johnson's answer was more qualified: "It was a policy that we all more or less agreed to. I myself felt that it was becoming destructive, and it was not really doing the local union, or the international union, for that matter, any good." See Stepan-Norris & Zeitlin (1996), p.216.

While Johnson undoubtedly was supportive of the CP, the CP did not always return the favor. Indeed, during this crucial victory, the CP did not support Johnson even though he had been "associated with the progressives for many years" and ran a good campaign, "coming out four square on all the issues." One CP observer called the failure of the Left to support Johnson "the biggest blunder of the campaign." As a consequence of this blunder, "Johnson continues cordial relations with the progressives but is an independent." See "The Defeat of Reuther in the Elections of #600" in "Reuther #4" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

[421] *Worker*, August 31, 1952.

Significantly, the *Worker* ran two articles about the Local 600 elections. The first article was a regular, unattributed news story on the front page. The Stellato quote appeared in this article, as did a passage which identified Stellato's more substantive press release that suggested "workers do not want to wait until the contract opens in 1955. They demand urgent changes NOW, such as 30 hours for 40 hours pay."

However, the second article, attributed to William Allan, featured an analysis of the election more explicitly articulating the perspective of the Communist Party. This article lists Dave Moore as co-chair of the Progressive Caucus and records the Caucus program of "restoring democracy in the local by rejecting Reuther's lily-white administrators, fighting speedup, for a peacetime economy, ending discrimination, for a five-power peace pact, wage increases and for scrapping the Reuther five year do-nothing contract." This second CP article made no mention of the 30 for 40 demand.

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left-wingers and other anti-Reutherites."[422] While the important Local-wide elections had not yet been held, there was no doubt that Reuther had failed to gain control of the secondary leadership. This meant that any presidential candidate would in all likelihood face an Executive Board and General Council controlled by officers who had run on programs which were explicitly opposed to Reuther's administrative policies. Thus, while *Fortune* noted that, at Local 600, there were "insistent rumors that Carl Stellato...has made a compromise of sorts with the UAW administration," this in no way altered the fundamental significance of the unit elections. "In any case," argued *Fortune*, "the control over the volatile membership that Reuther expected to attain when he sent in administrators is still a long way off."[423]

The rumors of a compromise spread quickly after the unit elections, but the nature of the compromise was much in dispute. The *Wage Earner* reported, "In winning units piecemeal the CP and Progressives have much of an advantage. Right-wingers believe that President Stellato can capitalize on the situation today and successfully run on a Progressive slate or engage in an International compromise."[424] The Local 600 ACTU right-wingers considered all talk of compromise as evidence that Reuther was preparing to concede the election to Stellato. Despite these rumors, the right wing supported Edgar Lee, a veteran right-winger, as its candidate to oppose Stellato in the Local-wide elections. Although Lee had served as an International representative and staff member for the Education department, his was an independent candidacy, developed without the permission of the International. According to Local

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[422] *Fortune*, September 1952.
[423] *Fortune*, September 1952.
[424] *Wage Earner*, August 1952.

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600 right-wing caucus members, "his 'independence' did not make him a popular selection with the UAW International."[425] Reuther and Conway let Lee continue to talk about running, but it did not take long for Lee and others to recognize that the International was backing down from its offensive against Stellato. Lee remarked, "I was going to be a candidate for local president, but I don't know now if the right wing or the International wants anyone."[426]

The right wing publicly criticized Reuther for failing to support the independent right-wingers at Local 600. By early August, one member of the publicity committee for Lee's campaign admitted the caucus was considering withdrawing its right-wing slate.[427] In late August, the caucus very publicly announced to Detroit's daily newspapers that they had been abandoned by Reuther and would therefore no longer run against Stellato's slate. In two separate, front-page stories, the *Wage Earner* announced, "Right Wing Charges 'Whitewash' as UAW Administrators Concede Local 600 to Stellato Machine," and, still more dramatically, "End of UAW-Reuther Era Seen in Events at 600."[428] One article suggested that "when Reuther failed to meet with right wing caucus leaders after their nominations, they recognized certain facts...[and refused] to let candidates be sacrificed in what we knew would be a defeat."[429]

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[425] See *Wage Earner*, August 1952; *Worker*, August 24, 1952.

If the *Wage Earner*'s coverage of the alleged "unpopularity" of Lee's candidacy at Solidarity House were not true, the right-wing would have had to have fabricated the unpopularity simply in order to convince the rank-and-file of Lee's independence from Reuther.

Lee was nominated along with a slate of candidates for other Local-wide posts.

[426] *Wage Earner*, August 1952.

[427] *Wage Earner*, August 1952.

[428] *Wage Earner*, September 1952.

[429] "Right Wing Charges 'Whitewash,'" *Wage Earner*, September 1952.

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This allegedly principled withdrawal actually only occurred in the case of Stellato, who ran unopposed in the election and was elected with 19,678 votes.[430] But the other three officers all faced right-wing challengers, even though they, too, were sacrificed in near-certain defeats. Rice beat his challenger 14,500 to 4,648, Grant won with 13,783 votes to his challenger's 4,849, and Hood, the black incumbent recording secretary, won 12,567 votes in contrast to his three white challengers who, combined, polled only 6,497 votes. These victories, all by powerful 3-to-1 ratios, reinforced the significance of the earlier unit elections. Moreover, in the General Council elections, anti-Reuther forces were elected to almost 80% of the delegate seats. As the *Wage Earner* bluntly asserted, "Local 600's right wing caucus failed to function... A last minute attempt to plunker for right-wingers in vital building elections for delegates to the local's powerful general council failed.... [and] the right wing suffered a near total defeat."[431]

Nevertheless, the fact that Stellato was himself allowed to run unopposed signaled to some that a compromise had, in fact, been reached. *Business Week*'s coverage, which ran the week before the election was actually held, was titled, "Backstage Agreement at Ford." The analysis flip-flopped back and forth in an effort to weigh the balance of forces which led to the withdrawal of the right-wing opposition.

> At first glance it looks like defeat in advance for the forces of UAW president Walter Reuther.... One theory has it that Reuther simply didn't want to take a sure beating... Recently,

[430] *Worker*, September 21, 1952; *Militant*, September 22, 1952; Andrew (1979), p.254.
[431] *Wage Earner*, October 1952.

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> however, it has begun to look as though Reuther may be winning after all -- behind the scenes.... Reuther seems to have gained an agreement from his opposition that they will put a damper on their anti-Reuther campaign.[432]

However, the article also stressed that Reuther was, in fact, quite vulnerable to "troublesome dissension" to the extent that he had failed to integrate significant rank-and-file grievances into his labor program. According to this scenario, it was Reuther who was forced to make substantive concessions based upon pressure from the rank-and-file.[433] This analysis of Reuther's capitulation was shared by the right-wing critics at Local 600. One right-wing caucus member suggested, somewhat cryptically, "It looks now as though the International's slip is showing... A right wing caucus just isn't wanted because votes for the International -- no matter what the price of compromise -- are needed when men are ambitious."[434] The remark, which was later picked up by *Fortune* and *Business Week*, is cryptic because it is not clear for what purpose the "ambitious" Walter Reuther needed Local 600 votes.[435]

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[432] *Business Week*, September 6, 1952.
[433] *Business Week*, September 6, 1952.
[434] *Wage Earner*, September 1952.
[435] *Fortune*, October 1952; *Business Week*, September 20, 1952.

Nelson Lichtenstein suggests that "Reuther's real problem was that his faction had lost the capacity to reproduce itself when it was not in control of the union apparatus." But Lichtenstein also reports that Jack Conway "thought the trial and subsequent administratorship an unprincipled capitulation to the HUAC." Conway, a staffer whose roots were in the anti-Communist "left-wing" that joined with the Reuther caucus in the closing days of World War II, certainly had no love for the Rouge Communists. But even as the Reuther caucus held together on the basis of a shared anti-Communism, friction remained between the ex-Socialists and the ACTist right-wingers within the caucus. Did Conway help "throw" the election by withholding support for the right-wingers as the right-wingers insinuated? Perhaps. But the election results from all of the contests in which Stellato's Unity slate *was* challenged demonstrate that Stellato's candidates were never seriously threatened by right-wing slates. Lichtenstein writes that "Conway reported that an explicitly Reutherite slate was doomed against Stellato and his allies." This report was proven correct. See Lichtenstein (1995), pp. 318-19; *Wage Earner*, September 1952.

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Many observers agreed that the election had been a disaster for Reuther. *Business Week*, which at first credited Reuther with winning through a "backstage" deal, later reported the views of critics who said that Reuther had "lost face" because of his abandonment of the right-wing caucus. The *Wage Earner* went so far as to suggest that the event marked the end of the heyday of the UAW and even suggested that the future belonged to such unions as the chemical workers union.[436]

For ACTU, the Local 600 was a defeat for anti-communism. But a loss for Reuther did not mean a victory for the Communists. In fact, in an internal document, one local CP agent acknowledged that it was Stellato, and not the Communist Party, that had taken the strongest line. In a memo that defended the local left-wingers against the charges by "JS in PA" ("John Swift" in *Political Affairs*), the CP activist noted that "in general Stellato came out the strongest, having a greater independence somewhat as compared to last year.... However, Stellato was elected to leadership on a coalition program of struggle and unity."[437]

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[436] This shrill prognosis did not last. After the death of ACTU ally Phil Murray, the *Wage Earner* shifted gears and gleefully celebrated the election of Walter Reuther as CIO President at the December 1952 convention. See *Wage Earner*, December 1952.

[437] "The Defeat of Reuther in the Elections of #600" in "Reuther #4" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

The contemporary historiography is not very consistent in its discussion of the 1952 Local 600 election aftermath. Without even mentioning the 30 for 40 demand in connection with Stellato, Bert Cochran's account of the affair concludes, "While Stellato and his associates managed to get reelected after the receivership was lifted, he was emphatically contained by the now irresistible power of Solidarity House." This account in no way does justice to subsequent events. See Cochran (1977), p.328.

One excellent historian, Harvey Levenstein, makes the mistake of "writing off" Local 600 a little too early. Levenstein suggests, "Many months of continuing rule by the Reuther emissaries and the purges finally paid off with the victory in the next elections of a pro-Reuther slate of committeemen to accompany Stellato, who ran unopposed, into office. The last outpost of Communist strength in the UAW had been beaten down mainly through bureaucratic power." See Levenstein (1981), p.317.

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There is much to commend this analysis, but it must be understood in the context of the new political spectrum of Local 600 politics. Stellato did emerge with a greater independence. But he came out "the strongest" because he was the most successful in winning the support of the rank and file with a militant program. Thus, "independence" did not develop in the relation between Stellato and the Local 600 membership (a relationship which only ideologues, not political opportunists, can afford to forget). Rather, Stellato emerged with a greater independence from the CP and from Reuther, *both of which were now to his right* on basic questions of labor union program. He depended on neither Reuther nor the CP for his support.

Thus, for Stellato, the election signaled once again that at Local 600, the rank-and-file was essentially unwilling to demonstrate loyalty to individuals but was unswerving with regard to the pressing issues of life and work. Various elite personalities, be they Communists or "Labor Statesmen," would be set aside by the rank-and-file in favor of *anyone* who would articulate a program more adequate to the desires and grievances of workers. Stellato knew this; he had learned to run fast in order to keep ahead of the membership at Local 600. He had twisted himself into the

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While Local 600 could not be considered an "outpost of Communist strength" or even an outpost for the CP ideological line, neither could the election correctly be characterized as a victory by a "pro-Reuther slate."

On this point Lichtenstein's analysis is correct. He suggests that the administratorship "turned into an enormous embarrassment" and that "Reuther's humiliation at the Rouge proved but one index of his declining capacity to mobilize a politically coherent movement." Furthermore, Lichtenstein, while not elaborating the substantive nature of Stellato's subsequent campaigns, does report that Stellato remained "a thorn in Reuther's side for the balance of the decade." See Lichtenstein (1995), pp. 318-19. Similarly, William D. Andrew had suggested in 1979 that after the administratorship, "Stellato and his local were to continue to be a thorn in the side of the Reuther International." Andrew (1979), p.254.

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shape of a militant in order to maintain the support of the rank-and-file and keep his job.

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Chapter 11: Showdown at the UAW Convention, March 1953

Stellato began looking for a new job. In the week before the actual Local-wide election, but after it was announced that Stellato would be left to run unopposed, the *Worker*'s gossip column, "Autotown Alley," announced that Stellato would definitely be making a run for Joe McCusker's position as co-director of Region 1-A when the delegates voted at the upcoming 1953 UAW Convention.[438] From the perspective of Stellato's own political career, the move demonstrated shrewd strategic perspicacity.

Suppose, for example, that Stellato had wanted to make a deal with Reuther and the administrators, and that he might have even signaled as much to Solidarity House during the administratorship.[439] If so, then the election results in the units, the General Council, and the contested Local-wide offices, demonstrated that such a deal would not be possible without alienating the rank and file. Faced with an obvious double-cross, the membership might well eject Stellato in the 1953 round of Local elections. Thus, Stellato's task was to find a way to become more "independent" of the rank and file without making this process obvious to observers.

Stellato had already watched how the Regional directorship could facilitate this process.[440] The directorship offered precisely the kind of increased independence from

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[438] *Worker*, September 7, 1952; *Business Week*, September 20, 1952.

[439] This is not difficult to imagine, even stipulating that Stellato felt no more ideological affinity toward Reuther than he felt toward any other ideology. The simple fact is that the cost of alienation from Reuther was the unsettling sensation of having all the resources of the International brought to bear in an ongoing effort to oust any and all challengers to the Reuther program. While Stellato -- and the rank and file -- had effectively warded off this challenge, Stellato knew that Reuther would not and could not abandon the fight so long as the massive Local was not under his control.

[440] Of course, Reuther never minded hiring his opposition to work as International representatives on his staff. But Stellato had already served in that capacity and had come a long way since then. He

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the heat of the rank and file because the prestigious office, which included a seat on the International Executive Board, was not accountable directly to rank-and-file votes. Rather, the regional directors were elected only by intra-regional delegates to the UAW Convention.

Thus, for example, just as Stellato had been forming the "Committee for a Democratic UAW" late in 1951, he was able to observe the strategic moves of Bob Carter. In the wartime days of the ex-Trotskyist "Rank and File Caucus" -- the group that had championed the cause of the workers when all others preached self-sacrifice -- Bob Carter had been one of the most active leaders of this militant faction. In the years after the war, Carter was elected as a dissident Regional director from the militant Flint region, with the backing of Coburn Walker and the workers of Local 659. He had been expected to play a significant role in the development of a strong dissident faction, along with Stellato and others. However, once on the International Executive Board as Flint's Regional director, Carter moved progressively closer to the Reuther administration, making it increasingly clear to the Reuther caucus that he was not going to make waves.[441] Evidence of the relative autonomy provided by the Regional director seat was also provided by the case of McCusker himself. After his unpopular term as Local 600 president in 1945 and his failed re-election bid in 1946, McCusker was able to survive as Regional director for many years, even without a strong base of rank-and-file support.

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was now increasingly considered a national figure within the labor movement and his own ambitions, combined with his successes, undoubtedly convinced him that he might effectively leverage a more prestigious position than that of International representative.

[441] *Militant*, December 31, 1951.

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Having decided on the most appropriate office, Stellato would have had little difficulty figuring the angles for winning support from Local 600. In fact, almost everybody at Local 600 supported Stellato's run, even if for widely divergent reasons. In December 1952, the General Council of Local 600 took the unprecedented step of "directing" its president to run for the Regional directorship with a stunning vote of 182 to seven. The avowed reason given for directing Stellato was that of "giving more scope and impetus toward the realization of the Local 600 program," especially the 30 for 40 demand and increased pension benefits for retirees.[442] However, the *Wage Earner* reported that the lopsided vote (far more lopsided than the 3-to-1 ratios of the September election) was the result of an unusual "joint vote" of "right wing members, Progressives and Communists, and political opportunists" against a tiny minority of dedicated Reuther representatives.

On what basis did such a coalition emerge? The opportunists simply wanted the jobs that come with the Regional directorship.[443] And even though Stellato's run could be viewed as an attempt to betray the militant program of the Ford rank-and-file, the left-wing support was actually easy to understand. The Progressives committed to the "Ford Program" might well have viewed Stellato's run as a chance to take advantage of newly reconfirmed left-wing strength and prestige coming out of the failed administratorship. As such, the hope was that Stellato might be able to use the Regional director office to create support for the 30 for 40 demand by creating

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[442] *Wage Earner*, December 1952. See Press Release in folder 9, Box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[443] Recall that, at the start of his political career, Stellato himself was given such a job when, during and immediately after World War II, Percy Llewellyn was the Regional director.

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dissension within the International Executive Board. As one right-wing observer cautioned, "Stellato is ambitious. He'd try to split the board."[444] The Communists now saw Stellato as too independent and wanted to get him out of the way. With Stellato out, the CP could run Pat Rice for Local 600 president and win control of the Local in the regularly scheduled February 1953 elections.

"The right wing," reported the *Wage Earner*, "sees a glimmer of hope that with Stellato out they could revitalize their caucus and run a right wing slate." Furthermore, there was some frustration with McCusker who, as a member of the Administrative Board, had been tainted on the left wing for his participation in the failed coup and, on the right wing, for his ultimate failure to support a full right-wing slate.[445] For Stellato, the only remaining risk was that the Convention (and the Regional director election) would not be held until late March, even as the next Local 600 election was scheduled for February. Thus, if Stellato stayed out of the Local 600 election and then lost the Regional directorship, he would have lost everything. Conveniently, the Local 600 election was postponed until April 1953 -- without objection from any faction.

Stellato's biggest strategic challenge, then, was to figure out how to position himself politically between the September 1952 election and the April 1953 Convention. In an increasingly impressive demonstration of his "hedging" abilities, Stellato was most forceful in the pages of *Ford Facts* and in relation to the Local 600

[444] *Wage Earner*, December 1952.
[445] *Wage Earner*, December 1952.

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membership.[446] But late in September 1952, on the occasion of a meeting of the National Ford Council, Stellato was more conciliatory. Hoping to signal militancy to the membership, Stellato agitated for the 30 for 40 demand; but in deference to the Reutherites, Stellato conceded a loss quietly and cooperatively when the 30-40 program was defeated. Stellato was able to save face, in part, because the persistent campaign to renegotiate the five-year contract was now bearing fruit. Reuther had recently acknowledged the inadequacy of the long-term contract and, under significant pressure from the membership, renounced his former defensive posture, declared the contract a "living document" and agreed to push for renegotiation of the contract terms. Stellato's own Unity slate could claim credit for delivering this concession, if not the shorter work week.[447]

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[446] The *Wage Earner* ran an entire article devoted to exposing the news that "Ford Facts Reverts to Type Under Stellato." See Wage *Earner*, December 1952. See also Andrew (1979), p.254.

[447] *Worker*, October 5, 1952; Preis (1964), pp. 485-86.

Reuther would never sign another five-year contract. Lichtenstein mentions the decision to abandon the five-year contract as a testament to the idea that Reuther was "adroit at accommodating pressure from below." See Lichtenstein (1985) "UAW Bargaining Strategy and Shop-Floor Conflict: 1946-1970," *Industrial Relations* 24:369.

Stellato's conciliatory tone is most apparent in a private letter from Stellato to Reuther. The December 15, 1952 note is almost certainly intended to be a cooperative signal since it lists a program of renegotiating demands including health-insurance, pensions, annual improvement factor, and escalator wage increases, but makes no mention of the 30 for 40 demand. See folder 9, Box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

Ironically, the only organized, left-wing ideological formation still opposed to Reuther's labor program-- the Socialist Workers Party -- was, at this time, occupied with pushing its political party program during this time, rather than pressuring Stellato on the 30 for 40 demand. Indeed, after facing a choice between the southern racist, Senator John Sparkman on Stevenson's ticket and the extreme right-winger, Richard Nixon, on Eisenhower's ticket, the General Council of Local 600 did adopt a resolution which called for increased political independence within the labor movement. Art Fox, the most visible SWPer at Local 600, wrote a letter in the November 15, 1952 edition of *Ford Facts*, praising the labor party discussion. See *Militant*, November 24, 1954.

It was on the occasion of this labor party activism by Fox that James P. Cannon dismissed Fox's enthusiasm as misplaced. Cannon's point was not that Fox was missing the real action by pushing a labor party. Indeed, Cannon was primarily moved by electoral party activity rather than labor movement activism. He simply did not trust that the Local 600 membership was serious about building a socialist political party. He was undoubtedly correct. See the comments by Frank Lovell in Barnes (1976), p.146. For political party emphasis within the SWP, see *Militant*, November 17, 1952; November 24, 1952; December 15, 1952, etc.

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As cautious as Stellato might have been during this period, something nevertheless went wrong. When the campaign announcement was made in December 1952, *Ford Facts* had celebrated Stellato's candidacy. Now the newspaper, under his own editorial control, made no mention of the upcoming Convention run. Instead, the right wing withdrew its support for his election bid and Stellato used *Ford Facts* to launch into a militant defense of the 30 for 40 program and to denounce, with full force, the five-year contract.[448] If Stellato had in fact developed plans for rejoining the Reuther caucus, these plans were now shattered. On the front page of *Ford Facts* Stellato proclaimed, "We in Local 600 have, for almost two years, recognized the complete failure of the 5-year contract... At the National Ford Conference in 1951 and again in 1952, we in Local 600 have insisted on action from our International Union."

> It is history now that in 1951 at the National Ford Conference, THE DELEGATES FROM LOCAL 600 WERE SEVERELY CRITICIZED AND CASTIGATED BECAUSE THEY DARED TO SUGGEST CHANGES IN THE CONTRACT. Yes, we were called disrupters, Communists and what have you. We were accused of being out of line with the rest of the UAW which we readily admitted.[449]

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[448] *Ford Facts*, February 28, 1953; *Militant*, March 9, 1953.

The *Wage Earner* referred to "Stellato's apparent reconciliation" when he began to neglect the Regional director campaign. Such neglect, the newspaper argued, represented an accommodation which "can remove Mr. Reuther...from an embarrassing clash" and enable Reuther to "escape an explosive situation." Moreover, the headline suggested a failure of opposition will: "Local 600's Threats of Fireworks Fizzle." Actually, the fireworks had barely begun.

In retrospect, the most likely scenario is that Reuther had, in late 1952, agreed to support (or remain neutral during) Stellato's run for Regional director in return for Stellato's cooperation within the Reuther caucus. Then, one of two things upset this mutual security pact. Either the publication of formal HUAC charges of Communist infiltration at Local 600 forced Reuther to abandon this potentially suspicious "deal" with such disreputable characters at Local 600, or McCusker supporters rebelled when they perceived that Reuther was selling out McCusker to accommodate Stellato. For the HUAC report, see *Business Week*, February 14, 1953. For the potential risk of alienating the "strong right wing caucuses scattered among the major right wing dominated locals" of Region 1-A, see *Wage Earner*, March 1953.

[449] *Ford Facts*, February 28, 1953.

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Thus, by late February 1953, Stellato was busy reconstructing his base of support *within* Local 600. At the same time, Reuther was now preparing a massive assault on the 30 for 40 program in preparation for the upcoming UAW Convention.

By March 1953, those forces within the UAW opposed to Reuther's corporatism had been hammering away at the shorter hours issue for more than five years. At Local 600, political opportunists had been consistently rewarded for championing the demand for 30 hours work for 40 hours' pay. These five years had witnessed various semi-public efforts to restore the demand to the UAW agenda after Reuther had abandoned the 30-40 program shortly after consolidating his presidential power in 1947. Throughout this period, Reuther had implicitly recognized the potency of the issue in that he never ignored the demand; he energetically disavowed it. Tactically, Reuther's self-conscious vulnerability regarding the shorter hours issue -- exposing, as it did, the foolishness of his cultivated image as "the most dangerous man" in Detroit -- made him appear so defensive that his vehemence actually invited attention to the issue.

On the morning of March 24, 1953, the delegates to the fourteenth UAW Convention were presented with a resolution in favor of the "Guaranteed Annual Wage" (GAW). Reuther's idea of an annual wage for autoworkers had become a standard element within Reuther's program since at least the time of the 1947 Convention, when it was introduced alongside the demand for the 30-hour week with higher pay. Promoting an undoubtedly compelling argument in 1947, Reuther

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suggested that "if the good Lord...had intended for your kids to eat only when you punch an electric time clock, he would have put an electric switch in their side so you could have turned off the switch when you left the plant.... The first step, in my opinion, of the annual wage fight is the fight for a guaranteed weekly wage; when a guy punches a time clock in any week he is to be guaranteed 40 hours' pay for that week."[450] Facing no known opposition to either the electric switch idea or the guaranteed weekly wage, Reuther introduced a resolution which the convention passed. As the years went by, Reuther kept the annual wage idea alive and rehabilitated it at most meetings. The proposal was first adopted as a resolution at the 1951 Convention. It had become Reuther's standard response to the problem of cyclical and seasonal unemployment. Moreover, since the form of compensation (hourly wages and annual salaries) had been the de facto mark of class status, Reuther introduced a kind of working class "identity politics" into the mix by suggesting that autoworkers deserved the same compensation form as salaried white collar workers.[451]

By the 1953 convention, Reuther had, quite literally, moved the GAW to center stage. As delegates entered the convention hall, a *massive* banner over the rostrum pledged, "Next Step Forward: Guaranteed Annual Wage...Full Employment, Full Distribution, Full Production...Peace, Abundance, Progress, Freedom...UAW-CIO, 1 1/3 Million Strong." So it was no surprise when the Resolutions Committee

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[450] *Proceedings of the Eleventh Convention, UAW-CIO, November 9-14, 1947, Atlantic City, NJ,* p.15.

[451] While it is difficult, in the long-term aftermath of the 1990-91 recession, to imagine salaried white collar workers as being somehow immune from layoffs, the annual salary apparently did, at one time, appear to be an effective form of inoculation against the anxiety of job insecurity.

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introduced the Guaranteed Annual Wage resolution.[452] The only surprise was the discursive space in the resolution afforded to technological concerns. In its earliest incarnations, the GAW was aimed at the short-term, recurring problems long associated with the auto industry: temporary layoffs and "short work weeks" caused by model changes and cyclical production dips associated with weakness in the consumer market. However, since 1952, when Ford engineers coined and publicized the term "automation" in reference to its new Cleveland, Ohio engine plant, UAW leaders of all stripes had introduced the "technology" problem into the union discourse.[453] Reuther's GAW resolution ominously warned,

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[452] Reuther's Keynesian thinking permeated his GAW program. "The guaranteed annual wage...will lead management to cooperate more readily in developing national economic measures designed to maintain full employment and full production... Industry will have cause to welcome rather than to oppose improved legislation to maintain the incomes and living standards of unemployed workers and their families." Indeed, the talk of a guaranteed annual wage was explicitly used, not to win annual salaries for autoworkers, but to encourage corporations to try to pass off annual wage costs onto the state. "Guarantee payments should be integrated with state unemployment compensation benefits so that employers can reduce their liabilities by effectively working toward the improvement of the state laws...we direct management's attention to the possibilities of substantially reducing its guaranteed wage liabilities by working to bring about needed amendments to State Unemployment Compensation legislation."

Reuther's approach was quintessentially corporatist. While seeking to deflect the burden of unemployment from the backs of the workers, the strategy was to join with the corporation in helping it deflect the cost of maintaining its work force. The idea, in sum, was to extract public tax money from the state. The cooperative intent of the resolution was evident in the only specific "tactic," endorsed by the Reuther GAW resolution and aimed at winning the demand: "[W]e call upon the major corporations under contract with the UAW-CIO to join with the Union in establishing a joint study commission to undertake research and exploratory work on the problems involved in the development of a sound and effective guaranteed annual wage program in order to facilitate orderly and peaceful negotiations." *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, pp.144-47.

It was not necessary, however, for workers to share Reuther's corporatist "tactical" assumptions in order for them to share the basic goal of a guaranteed annual wage. While the program was directed at the narrow problem of temporary, seasonal layoffs and did not respond to concerns about secular trends toward automation, it had never met with any active rank-and-file opposition and the resolution was adopted at the Convention.

[453] As the 1955 *Labor Fact Book* noted, "The word 'automation' has come into use during the past two years to describe the automatic production of goods with a minimum of human assistance -- also called push-button methods of production.... The Ford Motor Co. has taken the lead in applying automation to manufacture. At Ford's engine plant in Cleveland, Ohio, installed in March, 1952, electronic 'brains' operating from several big panels control the huge assembly lines.... In one section

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> Despite tremendous technological progress in the last decade, still greater and more revolutionary technological developments are on the way.... Today's dream of the completely automatic factory is moving rapidly to become tomorrow's reality... The more we learn how to produce with lessened human effort, the greater becomes our need to find the means of keeping our vast productive power at work by maintaining and increasing mass purchasing power and mass distribution of the goods we are able to produce. Unless we solve that problem today's technology will become the cause of tomorrow's bread lines.[454]

The GAW program -- an employer supplement to the state-run unemployment compensation program -- was not particularly well-suited to confront the new corporate leverage implied by the threat of long-term technological unemployment. In fairness, Reuther's resolution acknowledged the limited scope of the program. "The guaranteed annual wage is not a cure-all for our economic problems, but it can be the

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it now takes only three machines and nine men to do the same job that was formerly done by 29 machines and 39 men." Labor Research Associates (1955) *Labor Fact Book, Volume 12.* International Publishers Co., Inc., p.34.

It is at this point in the discussion that every writer who has ever put pen to paper in order to explore the history of the UAW mentions the story associated with Walter Reuther's visit to the Cleveland engine plant. There seems to reason to cite a proprietary source for this quote, since the passage is becoming as much the common property of our culture as is the allegedly fictitious story of Washington's sharp exchange with the cherry tree. In abbreviated form (it can be extended to constitute the entire opening joke of a full-scale lecture on labor and technology): A Ford executive says to Reuther, "None of these robots pay union dues." The quick-witted Reuther shoots back, "And none of them buy cars, either."

Oddly, the story is often invoked by present-day Reuther-boosters in order to bask in the warm glow of labor's Golden Era, when labor leaders could out-smart corporate executives and were willing to talk-back to corporate fat-cats. Repetition of the exchange actually seems more appropriate as a form of anti-union, corporate ridicule, especially since the UAW has subsequently had a much more difficult time collecting dues than Ford has had selling cars.

[454] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ,* p.144.

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beginning, and the focal point, of a general attack on the basic problem of maintaining full employment in peacetime."[455]

To some delegates, this final caveat may have seemed to leave open the possibility that the UAW might favor introducing the GAW program alongside the 30-40 demand, these delegates would not harbor such misconceptions for long. Immediately following the adoption of the GAW resolution, Resolutions Committee member Charlie Groves, approached the microphone and presented, "Resolution #26: Thirty-Hour Week." The resolution sought to discredit the 30 for 40 demand in five distinct ways.[456]

First, the resolution attacked the demand by soiling the reputations and challenging the intentions of those who favored the shorter work week program.[457] In short, 30-40 advocates were either fools or knaves. The knaves were the Communists. "[C]ertain political forces outside our Union choose to inject into the councils of the UAW-CIO the impractical and unrealistic demand for a 30-hour week now.... A careful study of the Communist *Daily Worker* and other Communist publications will show conclusively that the demand for a 30-hour week with 40 hours' pay now was engineered and directed by the Communists for the purpose of

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[455] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.144.

[456] In his discussion of "Collective Bargaining" and the UAW, Jack Stieber notes that this "Thirty-Hour Week" resolution constituted the "first major debate on a collective bargaining issue" to be brought before delegates. He also asserts that the resolution "was an obvious attempt by the Reuther administration to rout the forces supporting the shorter work week rather than the guaranteed annual wage as the major demand for the 1955 negotiations, and at the same time to puncture a growing opposition led by Carl Stellato, president of Ford Local 600." Stieber (1962), p.45.

[457] The resolution did not bring up the motives of 30-40 advocates as its "first" line of attack. The attack was a hodgepodge of nearly incoherent ranting. I have done my best to organize the objections presented in the resolution into five broad categories as a way of reproducing the force of the arguments without reproducing the entire resolution text.

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creating discontent and confusion and to weaken the national defense effort."[458] No red-baiting episode would be complete without recalling the World War II hyper-patriotic disgraces, including "a campaign to put piecework into every shop and, before the party line shifted...a no-strike pledge for five years after the war."[459] The fools were the rank-and-file numskulls who fell for the plan. "Some local unions and sincere and conscientious local leaders have taken up the demand...because they have not fully understood the facts of the present situation."[460]

Second, while Reuther's own GAW resolution had incorporated rank-and-file fear of potential "bread lines" caused by technological unemployment, the "Thirty-Hour Week" resolution argued that a shorter hours demand was unnecessary during the alleged war "boom." As Reuther had argued during the January 1952 Unemployment Conference in Washington, labor markets were already tight, rendering the 30-40 program pointless. "With our economy going full blast...[u]nemployment is near historic lows and millions of workers are working overtime. We are operating at close to the limits of our present capacity in terms of human as well as material resources."[461] But just in case some delegates in the convention hall were uncomfortable with this characterization, recalling rank-and-file pressure to confront

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[458] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ,* p.150.

[459] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ,* p.150.

Thus, the resolution includes the practical demand that an education campaign be initiated, not to inform the membership of the importance of the shorter work week, but "to inform the membership of the political sources of the demand for a 30-hour week." *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ,* p.152.

[460] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ,* p.151.

[461] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ,* p.150.

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labor market insecurity, the resolution simultaneously proposed that the shorter work week was equally inopportune during economic slumps.

> The winning of the 40-hour week, while representing a monumental achievement for American labor, did not, however, deal with the fundamental problem of unemployment. In the dark days of the depression, reduced hours provided jobs for some by spreading the available work over a large number of workers. This represented a sharing of hunger to reduce outright starvation. But the 40-hour week was of little consolation or benefit to the millions of unemployed who continued to walk to the streets of America without work and without hope.[462]

Thus, the shorter hours movement is worthless as a tactic for tightening labor markets and strategically superfluous at precisely those boom times when labor markets are tight and the labor movement has the market leverage to make robust demands.

Third, the resolution argued that, in addition to bearing no value as a labor market strategy for labor movement power, the 30-40 program was undesirable, even as a mere bargaining demand of no *strategic* importance. Advocates of the shorter work week at higher pay were lamentably ignorant of the fundamental, economic facts of life. "The size of the economic pie that determines living standards," the resolution instructed, "can be no bigger than total production. With less work there is less produced and less to enjoy...[and] the most compelling need is not for more leisure but for more goods to satisfy the unfilled needs and wants of millions of workers' families.... Forty hours' pay for 30 hours' work will not buy more if only 30 hours'

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[462] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ,* p.151.

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output is available." Thus, the economy is an unchanging, static pie and the only "problem" is in deciding between income and leisure. "The membership will have no difficulty making its choice between an immediate 30-hour week with a reduced living standard and the security and high living standards that will come from a guarantee that they will enjoy a week's pay or a week's income 52 weeks in the year."[463]

Fourth, in a complete turnaround, the resolution conceded the value of the shorter hours goal. In a significant discursive reversal that almost completely negated the third argument, the resolution addressed itself to those more advanced students of economics who had noticed some kind of correlation between a growing economic pie and shorter hours of work. Perhaps it was possible, after all, to imagine greater output with less work, a development evidenced by precisely those technological innovations highlighted in Reuther's own GAW resolution. However, the "Thirty-Hour Week" resolution set out to make clear the nature of that correlation, lest Convention delegates misunderstand the exact causal relationship between technology, wages and hours.

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[463] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ,* pp.151-52.

Reflecting upon the line that "with less work there is less produced," Jack Stieber notes, "In its zeal to discredit supporters of the shorter work week, the Resolutions Committee even espoused a theory of income distribution generally put forth by management groups and disavowed by unions." Stieber (1962), p.46.

The idea that the labor movement confronts a basic choice between time and money is one of the most enduring legacies of Reutherism. It animates much of the contemporary debate among "quality time" advocates who advocate "down-shifting" in terms of money in order to embrace leisure within the framework of the "simple life" of home-spun obligations (especially to God, to the state, and to family; or alternatively, to the alleged austerity demands of Mother Earth, to participatory democracy, and to community).

One difficulty with this line of thought is that, by accepting the necessity of a "choice," these "free-time" advocates are forced to assert that workers take home too much money. Of course, one also wonders what makes free time "free" so long as the obligations of paid, marketplace labor are merely replaced with those obligations whose only distinction is in having thus far failed to be effectively socialized and thereby appropriated as part of the marketplace.

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> The time will come when satisfactory living standards can be provided out of a 30-hour work week just as surely as the time came when hours could be cut from 12 a day to 10 a day, to 8 a day and then from 6 days to 5 days a week....[and] the reduction of the work week remains a basic objective of the UAW-CIO to be fought for with all the strength and militancy of the Union as soon as and whenever the productive capacity of our national economy makes it possible to maintain high and satisfactory living standards with fewer hours of work.[464]

Nevertheless, the resolution "rejects and repudiates the demand for a 30-hour week with 40 hours' pay *at this time*...as an attack on the hopes of workers' families for higher living standards."[465]

Fifth, and finally, the resolution introduced one argument which conceded almost everything to the 30-40 advocates. Thus, the shorter hours demand -- even if it is assumed to be extremely desirable -- is nevertheless excessively ambitious from a bargaining perspective. Even at a time when the economy going full blast and unemployment near historic lows, the 30-40 program "is unsound, impractical, unrealistic, and irresponsible." The resolution attacked "[t]he opportunists who call for the 30-hour week with 40 hours' pay.... This is a demand for a 50 percent increase in wages -- an easy demand to make, provided someone else has the responsibility for winning it in negotiations."[466]

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[464] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, pp.151-52.
[465] Emphasis in original. *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.152.
[466] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.151.

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After the resolution was presented, Reuther led the delegates through one of the most contentious convention-floor discussions since Reuther's 1947 consolidation of one-party rule within the UAW. Reuther's tempter was short and he tightly controlled the back-and-forth of the discussion. Indeed, one 30-40 advocate complained that delegates were limited to short, strictly-timed comments while, "Brother Chairman, it seems that you manage to speak on everything that comes up even when debate is closed." Reuther shot back with a caustic response. "Whenever I think it is necessary to raise my voice to help protect this Union against elements that I think are working for somebody other than the Union I am going to raise my voice."[467] Nevertheless, the opposition held its own and Reuther's appropriation of presidential privileges did little to effectively curb the debate.

The Reutherites who spoke in favor of the "repudiation" of the shorter work week demand pursued many of the same arguments developed in the resolution, only with even less clarity. Few actually took up the red-baiting line, preferring to make an appeal to the fools, rather than an attack on the knaves. As Emil Mazey, secretary-treasurer of the UAW, noted, "I think it is unfortunate that the tone has been set that everyone who opposes [this resolution] is an opportunist, Communist or fits in some other category, because I believe that there are some delegates who may be confused on this matter, who may be mixed up on this subject, and who believe in the 30-hour work week but don't fit in the category of the opportunists or the Communists." In order to make clear that it was Stellato, and not merely the Communists, in the

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[467] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ,* p.155.

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Administration's cross hairs, Mazey added, "I think in the case of Brother Stellato that when we use the word 'opportunist' in the resolution we were dealing specifically with him.... Carl made a political deal.... He picked up the Communist party slogan of the 30-hour week."[468]

Mazey urged delegates to have faith in Reutherite corporatism, to stick with the terms of the five-year contract, and to abandon as adventurist all syndicalist strategies for using and maintaining market leverage.

> We might feel our oats at the moment. We might feel that we have the economic power at this minute, that we have the advantage over the employers and that we can set aside a contract and fight for the opportunity to make progress. What happens when we have an economic depression in America, when there are millions of unemployed workers, and management has the upper hand? If we take the position that we set aside a contract when we are strong, what is to prevent them, the same people, when they are strong and we are in a much weaker position, from taking advantage of us?[469]

While this discussion of leverage sounded, in part, like an articulate rationale *for* making the 30-40 fight at the peak of leverage in order to maintain strength for the future, Mazey actually intended to argue *against* such a fight. "I think if we view all of the arguments," Mazey suggested, "you will find it just doesn't make sense."[470]

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[468] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ,* pp.158-59.
[469] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ,* p.159.
[470] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ,* p.159.

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Some Reutherites did make sense and effectively retraced the arguments from the resolution, but others made points which seem almost inconceivable from a traditional labor movement perspective. Indeed, Reuther might well have wished he had not set delegates to the task of articulating opposition to the shorter work week. In so doing, he encouraged the kind of extraordinarily reactionary thinking that could not have enhanced his own image as a labor militant. Roger Smithey, president of Tulsa, Oklahoma's Local 1093, argued, "I put in work hours of 60 to 70 hours a week, and I personally don't think that is too much. If you are a good union member you won't think so yourselves." Smithey's brand of corporatism was not only extreme, but articulate. "A 30-hour work week at this time is ridiculous. Surely industry will resist our demand for a full living standard, because it calls for more money and more stock and shares out of their business profits.... We in the UAW should set an example and not shorten the work week for avarice... Let us not kill the hen that lays the golden egg."[471]

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[471] According to one report, Smithey was "roundly booed" for his remarks. See *Militant*, March 30, 1953.

Smithey, who did not make it back as a delegate to the 1955 convention, ended his remarks by apologetically and self-consciously adding, "I am not a polished speaker, I am an electrician, and I make a living by my hands." While Smithey was undoubtedly nervous as a public speaker (he went on to "urge the delegates to disapprove the resolution" when he had just argued for, and almost certainly meant to urge, approval of the anti-30-40 resolution), he was nevertheless more straight-shooting than Reuther's own sheep-in-wolf-clothing manner. Arguably, no long-winded Reuther speech ever defined the corporatist logic more clearly than Smithey did in his brief convention remarks.

One poor fellow who tried to support Reuther's resolution actually did more damage than good by suggesting how little the UAW had accomplished on the shorter hours front. "I don't know how to speak on this, but...in our plant today we have a 55-hour week...I am looking for a 40-hour week. Since I came out of the Army I have never seen it yet, but I believe that at this time we would never be able to get a 30-hour week and still keep up with the defense work that has to be gotten out. I say let's turn that down and when the time comes I am for the 30-hour week just like the rest of us....I say let's vote for the [anti-30-40] resolution."

One delegate made an odd remark that now seems a chilling foreshadow of the future, dramatic gap that would eventually develop between Detroit's workers with "guaranteed"

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In light of the tangled arguments used by the Reutherites to defend the resolution, it is, perhaps, worthwhile to ask why Reuther decided to broach the topic. The resolution seemed like the response to a challenge, but the challenge had not actually been posed to the delegates. But the resolution itself, and the discussion which followed, confirms that a challenge had, in fact, been posed.

Resolutions Committee chairman Ken Morris, the first to speak after the resolution was introduced, explained, "[O]ne of the main reasons this issue is being presented to the Convention is that a number of elements within our local unions have been raising the matter of a 30-hour week with 40-hour pay.... We received a few resolutions that dealt with this specific subject and made this specific demand. In those resolutions the request in almost every case was this be done now."[472] During the discussion, Reutherites repeatedly referred to the challenge from below, mentioning details about resolutions that the Committee had refused to present to the delegates. Mazey, for example, described a resolution that the delegates would never see. "Local 600's resolution, Stellato's resolution is that we scrap our contracts and that we fight for a 30-hour week with 40-hour pay now."[473]

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employment and its economically devastated population of unemployed workers. Lloyd Jones, a delegate from the pro-Reuther Murray Body Local 2 in Detroit, argued that "it certainly behooves us...to be willing to work...40 hours a week and more, until we, at least...can know that when the time comes when we can reduce our productive week to a 30-hour week or 30-hour pay, it will be when we have our 45's laying in the shelves where we can shoot the thief that is sneaking around our house." While, today, the 45's certainly lay in the shelves, the 30-hour week has yet to arrive. Also, it is not clear why Jones would have advocated "30-hour pay."

For these quotes, see *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, pp.156-57.

[472] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.152.

[473] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.159.

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In order to grasp the rationale presented by Morris, it is necessary to understand the way in which UAW convention delegates come to consider various resolutions. In the spirit of democracy and rank-and-file participation, resolutions are sent to the Resolutions Committee. However, it is the Committee which acts as the gatekeeper, deciding which resolutions are actually brought before the delegates for consideration. Committee appointments are made by the International Executive Board. During the period prior to 1947, the factionalism and ideological division within the IEB served to insure that the Resolutions Committee produced competing reports (one majority report and one minority report). This did not determine the course of convention debate, but it did guarantee that no administration had the power to restrict the scope of the debate. After 1947, when Reuther gained control of the IEB, he was able to control the questions posed to delegates, even if he was not able to control the "answers" that came back from the floor.[474] But controlling the questions almost always proved sufficient.[475]

Local 600 submitted a total of 28 different resolutions to the Convention. As the Convention began, the resolution that received the most attention was one "which specifies flatly that all future contracts should have one year's life." See *Wall Street Journal*, March 21, 1953.

Local 600 allegedly sent copies of its resolutions to 900 local unions of the UAW. This certainly explains some of Reuther's defensiveness. See *Worker*, January 25, 1953.

[474] As a symbolic gesture of his open, democratic will, Reuther continued to allow Paul Silver, at one time a Reuther opponent, on the Resolutions Committee. However, since Silver served only at the pleasure of Reuther, he opted to keep the Committee membership and almost completely abandon his opposition stance. It is for this reason that the Communists and Trotskyists, for example, were always disappointed to see Silver at opposition caucus meetings. Everyone knew that he was now integrated into the Reuther machine and represented a "minority view" in name only.

For example, during the discussion of the anti-30-40 resolution, Silver, who "dissented" from the Committee's resolution, did rise to speak. His analysis was quite convincing and somewhat critical of Reuther's resolution. He argued that "the Communists pick up an objective which is important to the American people in an attempt to capitalize on the legitimate aspirations of the American worker. But...the Communists did not start the fight for the shorter work week, and we should not permit the Communists and *The Daily Worker* to slow us up one iota for the drive for the shorter work week with more of the goods that we can produce for the American people."

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During the 1951 CIO convention, when Reuther served as chairman of that body's Resolutions Committee, he simply ignored shorter work week resolutions. By 1953, when the ground swell had grown more potent, Reuther concluded that he could not afford to simply ignore the issue. The "Ford Program" might not have penetrated the Convention walls of the CIO in 1951, but within the UAW, the 30-40 demand was not a secret. Even if the Convention delegates were overwhelmingly bound to the Reuther machine, the Administration needed to send a message back to the rank-and-file. The vigor of the "reaction" might even be taken to concede the strength of the "action."

Morris acknowledged the popularity of the 30 for 40 program. He was clearly attempting to impugn the character of Stellato and other "opportunists," but in the process he revealed a great deal more.

> In many of our large plants," he told the delegates, "we have those political opportunists, and that is what I think they are and nothing else, who for political expediency advocate a 30-hour week with 40-hour pay. Many times, sure, our membership will be for these things. There are none of you sitting in this room who, in all probability, if you could see the possibility of having a 30-hour week with 40-hour pay tomorrow, if you could see that possibility, wouldn't feel that it is necessary. The same applies to our rank and file in the shop. These issues, though, are presented to some of our rank and file...and they are given the idea that this is one of the things UAW is fighting for now.[476]

However, Silver did not take the opportunity, as a Resolution Committee member, of exercising his right to offer one of the resolutions provided to the Committee by 30-40 advocates. As he explained to the delegates, "I did not file a minority report because...I believe that a minority report would only serve to confuse the workers." *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.158.

[475] Stieber (1962), p.21.

[476] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.153.

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Why would it be "politically expedient" for "opportunists" to advocate a 30-hour week with 40-hour pay? Morris knew what he had implied. His very next comment demonstrated the hole he had dug for himself. As if responding to his own suggestion that the shorter work week was, indeed, a popular demand, Morris went on to concede that, "sure" everybody likes the program. While most of the arguments in the resolution had argued against the value of the program, Morris had left himself the only reason for rejecting the program, once its value was conceded. "I think we can all recognize that if our unions were to take on the task of securing now a 30-hour week with 40-hour pay we would have one of the damnedest fights on our hands we could imagine."[477] For Reuther's brand of corporatism, it was almost impossible to imagine such fights.

But, unlike the one-sided attack on the shorter work week which poured forth, unchallenged, at the January 1952 Unemployment Conference, there were now 30-40 advocates proposing a militant syndicalist alternative and willing, so long as Reuther permitted, to stand up and help the UAW imagine making this damnedest of fights. Stellato himself took the floor to make the case forcefully.

> It is my impression today the UAW is the most militant fighting force in the United States for the working man, and today we hear speeches on the rostrum saying we would have an awful time if we vote for a 30-hour work week with 40 hours' pay. Well, maybe the officers are afraid to fight, but the membership of the UAW is not afraid to fight. You are giving aid and comfort to industry by saying here today everyone in favor of a

[477] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ,* p.153.

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> 30-hour work week with 40 hours' pay is a Communist. The speeches made from the rostrum sometimes should be made in a NAM conference.[478]

Other delegates also condemned the resolution's red-baiting. One delegate, Martin Greenberg, from Bristol, Connecticut's Amalgamated Local 626, suggested, "I think we are getting worse than McCarthyism in our International Union."[479]

Stellato and Greenberg both reminded delegates of the hypocrisy in Reuther's red-baiting. Greenberg recalled, "I would like to point out that many of us here were present in 1944 and 1945 and were willing to follow Walter Reuther down the line on the same policy of shorter work week -- not now, but years back."[480] Stellato went so far as to cite an August 26, 1944 article from the *New York Times Magazine* entitled, "A 30-Hour Week After the War? Yes, says Walter Reuther of the Auto Workers; No, say Eric Johnston and Henry J. Kaiser."[481] Indeed, Stellato went on to recall just how effective Reuther had been at advocating the demand when he found it politically expedient as a rising star, seeking to advance his position. "In 1947, in your opening remarks to that Convention, after you had been president for one year," Stellato

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[478] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.155.

[479] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.154.

Reuther responded to the charge that the UAW had become undemocratic. Reuther asked, "How do you keep a union free and democratic with rank-and-file control and yet prevent a small group of people who will hide behind all the democratic slogans, who will exploit all the democratic privileges from tearing the guts out of the organization? It is not easy. That is how unions get bureaucratic...so you can chop down anybody who raises a voice. We don't want that kind of a union...but...we are going to protect [the union] against the small minority...." *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.163.

[480] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.153.

[481] Stellato's citation was incorrect. August 26, 1944 was a Saturday. The *New York Times Magazine* of Sunday, August 27, 1944 carried no article about Walter Reuther, Eric Johnston, Henry J. Kaiser, or a 30-hour work week.

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remembered, "you tore [C.E.] Wilson to pieces, and rightfully so, because he was talking about a 45-hour week with no overtime. You insisted we go to bat for a 30-hour work week with 40 hours' pay."[482]

Martin Greenberg attacked the resolution's economic analysis insofar as it suggested that the shorter hours movement represented an attack on the hopes of workers' families for higher living standards. "What reduction of hours," Greenberg asked, "has harmed our progress, when we went from 56 to 48 to 40 hours, leaving the implication that if we go to 30 hours there is harm going to be done?"

There were also challenges to the resolution's assumptions about technology and labor markets. First, Stellato noted that new technological innovations were providing management with new weapons for breaking labor's back and destroying its postwar market leverage. The labor movement needed an immediate response to management's demonstration that it could increase production while diminishing its relative dependence on living labor. "Let me tell you brothers...industry is bragging about the technological improvements and automation." He referred delegates to a February 23, 1953 article from the *Detroit News* entitled, "Where 41 Men Do the Work of 117." Industry, Stellato warned, was "doing everything automatically, and eliminating workers."[483]

Finally, Louis Ciccone, a delegate from South Gate, California's Amalgamated Local 216, spoke against the resolution, asserting simply, "It contains false

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[482] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ,* p.156.
[483] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ,* pp.155-56.

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propositions, things which in effect challenge the dream of the American labor movement for a shorter work day and week without the reduction in take-home pay.... [I]f we adopt this resolution, we are placing a knife in the back of our brothers in the rubber, longshore and building trades industries. They have the six-hour day."[484]

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[484] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.157.

Like the return of the repressed, the question of women and labor supply entered the Convention discourse.

Ciccone spoke out against the charge that "the 30-40 proposal is a Communist bloc to restrict production." But in so doing, Ciccone demonstrated the basic CP misunderstanding of the logic of the movement it had once blindly championed. In his defensiveness, Ciccone blew the argument. He did not argue, with Greenberg, that shorter hours were not, historically, a barrier to production. Rather, he implicitly conceded that shortening the workday might diminish production, but suggested that the effects of this labor supply withdrawal could be neutralized by an increase in the labor force participation rate. Thus the charge of opposing production was unwarranted. "[P]articularly is this true in view of the fact that labor's reservoir of millions of women remains on tap even at the present time."

Ciccone was not invoking the "reservoir" of women workers as a warning that the flood of women into the market, unaccompanied by a partial withdrawal of labor-power by men and women, would undermine the wage pressures caused by tight labor markets. Nor did his comment seek to signify a rejection UAW patterns of labor supply reduction accomplished through the ejection of women workers after World War II. His was not a call for a new solidarity pact whereby men and women would fight, side by side, for an equal, but -- in aggregate -- diminishing, share of wage- and domestic-labor through shorter hours for any and all labor force participants. Ciccone missed the chance to explore solidaristic struggle for increased labor market leverage among men and women through the withdrawal of hours, rather than the exclusion of workers.

Ciccone raised the question of women workers, but provided no new, progressive response to the question he implicitly posed. One Reutherite, Ed Szymanski, a delegate from Local 3 -- one of the only UAW locals with a strong tradition of women in leadership positions -- responded to Ciccone's twisted thinking. Szymanski, however, did no better than Ciccone. He warned that 30 for 40 would cut manpower by 25 per cent. "Now the brother stated here that we have a resource of woman power. I certainly have no objection to women going to work, but I would have just as much right to ask this Convention to go on record asking the subsidization of the employer to support my four children. My wife has to stay at home with my four children. Industry can't use her."

Szymanski's lack of faith in the labor movement's ability to force employers to "subsidize" child care was matched only by his paternalistic attitude toward "his" wife. The absence of a mobilized force of women in the UAW, present to force elite leaders of the right and left to learn how to articulate a strategy capable of accommodating the demands of women, rendered all leaders incapable of developing a coherent response to the question of women, labor supply, and labor movement strategy. No woman took the floor to ask Szymanski why he hesitated to "ask this Convention to go on record" for subsidized child care *and* 30 hours work at 40 hours' pay. See *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, pp.157 & 160-61.

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After a delegate moved to close debate, Reuther called for a vote on the resolution. The anti-30-40 resolution was adopted by a show of hands.[485]

Later in the same day's proceedings, the delegates returned from dinner to consider the case of the five officers who were originally accused, by Stellato, of being Communists. The IEB had prohibited the five members "from holding any position, either elective or appointive, in Local 600 or its Units."[486] The five appealed the case, and the Convention's "Grievance Committee," chaired by Paul Schrade, recommended that the Convention delegates support the IEB's action. This entire prosecutorial drama was undergirded by a new constitutional amendment, adopted earlier in the convention, which provided the international union with the power to review decisions of local union trial committees and to keep Communists out of leadership positions. All of this was done with a clear awareness among delegates that the amendment was an attack on the CP activists of Local 600.[487]

The Convention delegates were treated to a courtroom spectacle lasting five hours. Reuther asked vice-president Livingston to "present the case of the International Executive Board" and allowed Local 600 to be represented by Carl Stellato and Dave Moore, one of the five accused officers. The International got the

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[485] Mike Donnelly, leader of the Dearborn Assembly unit at Local 600, challenged Reuther to test the resolution's support with a roll-call vote. Reuther responded that, according to the UAW Constitution, Donnelly was within his rights to call for such a vote, so long as 775 delegates supported his demand. Reuther then asked for a show of hands in favor of a roll-call vote, ruled that "there are less than 125 hands up," and put the issue to rest. Thus, there is no accurate count of the support for the demand. The *Militant* suggested that the resolution passed with "a sizable minority voting against." See *Militant*, March 30, 1953.

[486] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.182.

[487] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, pp.119-128; Stieber (1962), pp.147-48; *Wall Street Journal*, March 24, 1952.

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angles right. Not only did Livingston present undeniable evidence[488] that the five officers were members of the Communist Party, he also correctly mapped out the political flip-flops of Carl Stellato. This was done by showing that Stellato changed his tune after the 1951 dues increase and that the CP was, from that day forward, an enthusiastic supporter of Stellato's administration.

The International's mission was more clear with regard to the five officers than with regard to its attack on Stellato. When Livingston read aloud headlines from the post-dues increase issues of *Ford Facts*, he acknowledged that such headlines demonstrated what everybody already knew: that Stellato had moved into the opposition to the Reuther camp. "Naturally such [critical] articles started hurting our Union and our organizational drives throughout the country.... Now, it is important that we once again call your attention to...the kind treatment that [Stellato] received [in the Communist press] after he mad his peace with them. I want to make it clear Stellato is not on trial. This is important only because of his actions, his actions that clearly show the price of compromise with the [Communist] party, what the price is."[489]

Moore's defense was simple. He did not speak to the question of Communist Party membership. He did, however, charge that the IEB's decision threatened internal union democracy because it overturned a legitimate decision of the General

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[488] Evidence which was, of course, *not* denied by the five CP-activists, even though Boatin, for example, had formally left the party by 1949.

[489] There is an extraordinary irony in Livingston's attempt to attack Stellato on the basis of the kind treatment he received from the Communist Press. The irony, however, would have to wait until the week *after* the UAW Convention, when the Communist Press began, in earnest, its above-mentioned "kind treatment" of Reuther for his willingness to "make peace" with the Soviets.

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Council of Local 600 and did so "[w]ithout offering a shred of proof" that the General Council's decision was "a political deal engineered by the Communist Party within the General Council of Local 600." Moreover, he accused Reuther of hypocrisy for red-baiting the five officers since Reuther himself had once revealed a keen interest in the idea that "we must Sovietize America."[490]

When Moore had finished speaking, Reuther called upon Carl Stellato. Recall, however, that Stellato was not on trial for anything. It was a peculiar position for Stellato and a risky move for Reuther. Reuther had not accused Stellato of being a Communist, but he was called to the microphone all the same. But not only was there no charge against Stellato, but everyone knew that he had never been a member of the Communist Party. So Stellato could not rise to defend his *own* good name. Would Stellato defend the Communists? Perhaps this is what Reuther had hoped Stellato would do with his time. Stellato did no such thing. But what could he say at such a time? If he had simply stood up and denounced the five officers, he would have appeared to be capitulating to Reuther. In so doing, he would have alienated his base

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[490] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ,* p.201.

Moore's reference to Reuther's alleged "pro-Soviet" past was centered upon a famous postcard, sent from the Soviet Union and signed by "Walt and Vic" Reuther. The note on the card concluded, "Yes...we must Sovietize Ford and Detroit, and I will go even further...we must Sovietize America." Moore quoted from the postcard as reprinted in a 1948 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post.*

Reuther denied that he wrote the letter. He told the delegates, "The Communist Party have been peddling that letter for years along with every fascist group in America.... I will sit before any Congressional Committee any day of the week and I will swear under oath and take all the risk involved that I never wrote such a letter at any time...Now, my brother, Victor...also denies that he wrote the letter that they carry in that paper." *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ,* pp.206-07.

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at Local 600 at a time when Reuther had made it clear that he would not welcome Stellato back into the Reuther machine.

Seeking to displace the entire dead-end road of Communism, anti-Communism, anti-anti-Communism, etc., Stellato shifted the ground on Reuther. He provided an entirely different rationale for the entire prosecutorial circus. He took the microphone and proceeded to present himself to the delegates as the persecuted, but militant, defender of the movement for 30 hours work and 40 hours' pay. As a preface, he recounted the fact that he had, in fact, preferred charges against the alleged Communists. He even noted the fact that in the "elections that took place while the trials were going on...we took a terrific shellacking...Every single member of the Trial Committee except one was defeated." He recalled that the new General Council had voted against the report of the Trial Committee, but also went out of his way to note that, "For the record Brother Carl Stellato voted in favor of the Trial Committee."[491]

All of this was, according to Stellato, beside the point. The Trial Committee report was thrown out in the Spring of 1951. "Now, we did not hear from the International Union until October 12, 1951, when it is true we were asked to appear in front of the Executive Board.... Brother Reuther insisted that the only thing he wanted to talk about was the copy of *Betrayal*."[492] Stellato now stood by that issue. "I said that every single delegate that ran on a program to vote against the dues increase and

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[491] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ,* p.210.

[492] Recall that "Betrayal" was the headline of the *Ford Facts* edition printed after the 1951 dues increase battle.

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came down here and voted in favor, I said they betrayed the membership and I will say that until the day I die."[493]

Stellato hit his stride when he rehearsed the basis for Reuther's seizure of the great Ford Local. He described the events leading up the administrator being set over Local 600, including the HUAC hearings.[494]

> Why were the administrators moved in? If it was because of Communist control in Local 600 why did they have to wait from August, 1950, to March 1952?...I can tell you what the real reason was....*Detroit News*, October 12, 1951, "Stellato Loses at the Ford Council." Detroit *Times*, October 11, 1951.[495] "A 30-hour Work Week Out of Order. UAW Board Blocks Stellato Proposal." The 30-hour week was no Stellato proposal. The labor movement in this country and part of our Constitution, by the way, calls for the shortening of the work hours for the working man. It is not a Stellato proposal, but at that particular time it was a proposal coming out of Stellato's mouth being shoved in there by the Communists.[496] Well, this,

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[493] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.211.

[494] Stellato was quite harsh in recalling the fact that UAW staffers testified against Local 600 members before the HUAC. Referring to Romano, Stellato suggested, "I am just trying to point out to you in order to be a hero and deserve a Congressional Medal, and maybe even stay on the International pay roll in the cases of some guys, maybe you have to go down to the Un-American Activities Committee." The comment about testifying in order to stay on the payroll was, undoubtedly a reference to Tappes who, unlike Romano, was a reluctant and relatively uncooperative witness. *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.212.

[495] The Convention transcript reads "October 11, 1950," but the article described appeared on October 11, 1951.

[496] It is impossible to know how to interpret Stellato's comment that the shorter work week was "being shoved in [Stellato's mouth] by the Communists." Perhaps Stellato was backing away from the 30-40 demand. He was not above renouncing his own past whenever necessary. But in the context of the entire Stellato speech, it is difficult to believe that he meant to suggest that the Communists had attributed the 30-hour demand to him without his own endorsement of the proposal. It is conceivable, instead, that Stellato was mocking the Reutherite accusation. In this case, Stellato's comment could have meant to suggest that behind an elementary labor movement demand was "allegedly" or "supposedly" the devious hand of the Communists. As is clear from many of Stellato's remarks, he did not always construct sentences well when speaking extemporaneously. Without having access to an audio and/or video recording of the remark, it is difficult to discern the inflection that accompanied Stellato's comment.

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> by the way, is a fight that Local 600 put on in the National Ford Conference.... Those are the reasons why the administrators didn't move in until 1952. And we kept saying that we were for a 30-hour work week. There was nothing wrong with being for a 30-hour work week. I tried to point out this morning to the Convention of the automation, the technological improvements. Yes, as I said before, today there is a war on, there is all kinds of work. But unless this Union prepares or starts working toward a goal of a shorter work week with the same pay, we are going to be faced with that economic collapse.[497]

Stellato could not resist one somewhat obscure jab. Without ever mentioning the specific circumstances of Local 600's highly publicized 30-40 postcard delivery, Stellato recalled, "We went to the International Union. You are going to see a lot more copies of *Ford Facts* here today, I imagine, but these are some that you are not going to see. Here is one: 'UAW-CIO Turns Down Union Delegation.' You will be surprised how hard it is to get into Solidarity House if you are from Local 600. But we have seen [Ford Industrial Relations director] John Bugas walk in without signing his name."[498]

When Stellato finished speaking, Reuther took the microphone "to correct the record on a number of things." Reuther could not let stand Stellato's dig about the 30-40 post-card campaign. Instead, he decided to tell his own version of the story.

> He said he couldn't get into the headquarters of the International Union, but that John Bugas can get in.... [They]

If Stellato *did* mean to join Reuther in suggesting that, not he, but the Communists had promoted the shorter work week, it is strange nobody -- not Reuther, not the *Wage Earner*, the *Militant*, the *Worker*, or *Labor Action* -- made note of such a remarkable retreat.

[497] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ,* pp.212-14.

[498] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ,* p.213.

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> put a picket line around the International office....They had sound trucks and pickets around the International Headquarters.... And they sent around a delegation into the International Union with boxes of cards that they said were signed by the Ford workers demanding higher pensions[499]...They took these cards, scattered them all over the lobby of the International Union.... That is why we went out there and that is why we put an administratorship over the Local and we had the authority under the Constitution we said, "O.K., we are going to step up to these five fellows who we think are Communists, and we are going to take you out of office.... Every delegate in this Convention is going to get a copy mailed to your home address...of the front page of the *Detroit News* showing the International lobby with boxes and postcards on the floor with Stellato's boys kicking the boxes around.... These are the things that went on. These are the things that made us move in.[500]

Reuther had taken the bait. Stellato had drawn Reuther into the debate about Local 600's substantive, alternative labor strategies. Stellato had charged that the administratorship was not about Communism, but about Local 600's militant challenge to Reuther's corporatist repudiation of the 30 for 40 demand. And in his fury, Reuther conceded that it was precisely on this basis that he had decided to seize control of the Local. The charges of Communist infiltration of Local 600 were merely a belated rationale crafted to justify the move against the Rouge workers and their elected leaders.

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[499] It is odd, given the fact that Reuther had, only a few hours earlier in the Convention proceedings, launched a tirade against Local 600's 30 for 40 campaign, that he could not remember that the post-cards demanded 30 hours work at 40 hours' pay, not higher pensions. Still, the "Ford Program" did always demand higher pensions.

[500] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ,* pp.222-23.

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Reuther had been taken for a ride and he knew it. In a somewhat pathetic gesture, Reuther scrambled through his past to find evidence that he had once been a militant leader.[501]

> Now these fellows would have you believe that the leadership of your Union has gotten soft and flabby; has got a dictatorship policy comparable to the Kremlin. I also was a Ford worker. I worked six years in the Ford Motor Company. I got beat up on Gate 4. I had my office blown up when I was the president of Local 174. I had my home broken into and shot into. These fellows don't have a monopoly on the will to fight.[502]

Reuther must have recognized that his defensiveness was not helping his cause. He turned the microphone over to Paul Schrade who brought the issue back to the specific question of the five accused officers. Schrade rehearsed all of the charges, and after a few more delegates made brief remarks, the debate was closed. The delegates voted overwhelmingly (Reuther ruled that it "carried by 96 percent or 97 per cent") to support the Committee's recommendation, deny the appeal, and bar the five from holding office at Local 600.[503]

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[501] Perhaps it was Stellato who had sparked his memory. During his speech, Stellato made much of this past. "I couldn't help but be interested," chuckled Stellato, "in the copy of *Ammunition* that all of you have on your tables. It shows a picture on Page 13 of Brother Reuther with the marks of 'Battle of the Overpass' at Ford. Alongside of that is a copy of a picture of a leaflet that Brother Reuther was passing out before the goons beat him up. 'Ford Workers -- Unionism not Fordism... -- join now in the march and win higher wages and better working conditions -- stop speed-up by union supervision -- six-hour day...." *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.214.

For details about the famous May 26, 1937 "Battle" at the overpass near Gate 4 of the Rouge complex, see Lichtenstein (1995), pp.83-87.

[502] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.224.

[503] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, pp.224-229.

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Later on in the Convention proceedings, Detroit's west side Region 1A met for a roll-call vote to elect its co-directors. It was a three-way race between Edward Cote, Joseph McCusker and Carl Stellato. By the time of the vote, all the earlier talk of right-wing Reutherite support for Stellato must have seemed like the echoes of a long forgotten era. Stellato was once again positioned as an opposition figure at odds with the Reuther machine. Thus, the Reuther "ticket" was Cote and McCusker. Cote was from Reuther's own Westside Local 174 and McCusker was the favorite son of Local 600's struggling right-wing caucus.

Because delegates were allowed to place two votes, and the Reutherite delegates always voted for Cote *and* McCusker (rather than casting a single vote for McCusker), it was not sufficient for Stellato to win support from "his" delegates while they also supported either Cote or McCusker. In order to avoid pushing Cote and McCusker over the top with the votes of his own delegates, Stellato needed his supporters to cast only one vote -- with his name on it. With 85 delegates and 515 votes, Local 600 was by far the largest group of delegates from Region 1-A.

Within Local 600 Stellato received the unanimous, exclusive support of the delegates from all the largest buildings, including Axle, Casting Machine, Dearborn Assembly, Dearborn Iron Foundry, Dearborn Stamping, Frame and Cold Heading, Motor Building, Open Hearth, and Tool and Die. Unanimous McCusker/Cote votes came from Dearborn Engine, Transportation, and Miscellaneous. However, as Stellato might have feared going into the vote, some of the Local 600 units voted either Stellato/Cote or Stellato/McCusker, without a clear pattern toward one or the

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other. Such cases did not help Stellato accumulate the votes necessary to counter either one of the two incumbents. Stellato received 461 votes from Local 600, while McCusker received 93 votes from his home local and Cote received about 70 votes.[504]

Stellato received sporadic votes from some of those locals which were large enough for spaces of dissent to emerge, including Locals 15 (Fleetwood), 22 (Cadillac), 78 (Kelsey-Hayes Wheel), 142 (Kaiser-Frazer; although here Stellato received support from only two of the 15 delegates), Amalgamated Locals 157, 163, and 174. While this signaled support for Stellato and his program, these delegates were not willing to withhold a vote for one or the other candidates. Thus, of these votes, *none* were exclusively Stellato votes, as this would have required delegates to exercise only one of their two votes. It is unclear whether even the Reuther machine could have administered such discipline within its ranks, a point the Reutherites never had to consider.

Meanwhile, as predicted by the *Wage Earner*, the smaller locals and Local 174 (with 57 delegates and 242 votes) voted strongly, with two votes per delegate, in support for McCusker *and* Cote. While Reuther maintained control of his home region, Stellato did garner a total of 555 votes, while McCusker and Cote were returned to office with 833 and 903 votes, respectively. While not a personal victory for Stellato's earlier International Executive Board ambitions -- which had emerged as an escape *from* the pressures imposed by the militant rank-and-file -- it was most

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[504] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ,* pp.506-507.

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definitely a show of support for his opposition stance, in general, and his leadership on the 30-40 front, in particular.[505]

[505] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, pp.502-508. The *Wage Earner* predicted that McCusker would be able to carry the smaller locals where he had solidified his support. *Wage Earner*, December 1952.

Stellato's showing in the election is even more impressive in light of the fact that he had stopped publicizing his campaign for office shortly after the disintegration at Local 600 of the so-called "left-right coalition" in support of Stellato's run for Regional director. *Wage Earner*, March 1953. It goes without saying -- although the *Wall Street Journal* did say it -- that inside the Reutherite machine "opposition to Mr. Stellato's bid for a board seat [was] strong and well-organized." *Wall Street Journal*, March 21, 1953.

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Chapter 12: On the Bus/Off the Bus, Trotskyists vs. the ACTist Faction, 1953

After the 1953 convention, attention at Local 600 turned immediately to its internal electoral process. It would be Reuther's best chance to win control of the local in a free and fair election, one in which Reuther's caucus could compete on a level playing field, without the disadvantage of being tainted as dictators and power-hungry bureaucrats. To accomplish the job, Reuther put together a full slate of candidates. For the top slot, Reuther chose his own on-staff ACTist, Gene Prato.[506] For vice-president and financial secretary, Nelson Samp and Jack Pellegrini -- both of whom had served as Administrators of the Ford Local under Jack Conway -- were selected to make the run. But Reuther also had a few surprises in store for Stellato. Rather than present an all-white slate, Reuther picked one of the most popular black leaders of the Rouge, William Hood, to switch sides, join the Prato slate, and run -- for re-election as an incumbent -- to keep his recording secretary seat. This was no small accomplishment. Hood -- the high-profile founding president of the left-wing National Negro Labor Council (NNLC) -- was welcomed aboard the Reuther ship in early 1953, even as Reuther was busy attacking the NNLC as a "Communist-dominated, dual unionist organization which has as its sole objective the disruption and

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[506] *Business Week* declared that Prato was "backed by all the power and influence the international union could throw into the fight." *Business Week*, May 16, 1953.

Prato took a leave from the Reuther staff in order to return to Local 600. As part of the Reuther team, Prato had served as the elected chairman of the National Ford Department. *Worker*, May 17, 1953.

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wrecking of the American labor movement."[507] Moreover, in a strange move that seemed designed to split the "left-wing" vote, Pat Rice broke with the Stellato ticket to run as an "independent" against Stellato himself.[508] The CP-aligned John Orr ran in place of Rice for the vice president slot on the Stellato slate.[509] Faced with the defection of Hood, Stellato needed a leader powerful and popular enough to beat an incumbent. He selected his old staffer, William Johnson, the prominent black Rouge leader who had recently trounced the Reutherite incumbent in the October 1952 election to become president of the Iron Foundry. With a full slate of Reutherite

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[507] Reuther's hostility toward the NNLC is briefly discussed in Korstad and Lichtenstein (1988) and in William H. Harris (1982) *The Harder We Run: Black Workers Since the Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press. The Reuther quote is from *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.264.

Hood had already begun to make his play for the right wing by the time of the 1953 Convention. When it came time to cast his delegate-vote in the Regional Director election, Hood hedged his bet with the extremely unusual vote -- for Stellato *and* McCusker -- that any football referee would have declared "off sides" with a man in motion. *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.506.

[508] *Business Week* couldn't quite figure Rice, incorrectly pinning him as an anti-Communist frustrated with Stellato's alleged soft spot for the CP. The *Worker* did not champion Rice as a CP candidate, but did mention that he ran "as an independent." The *Militant* did not know how to interpret the Rice defection, but was certain that it "in no way reflected a retreat [by the Stellato slate] from a program pushed by Local 600 at the last UAW convention." His intentions remain a mystery, but it would not have been foolish of Reuther to have hoped for a Rice candidacy in an effort to divide the left. *Business Week*, may 2, 1953; *Worker*, May 17, 1953; *Militant*, May 18, 1953.

[509] The selection of John Orr undoubtedly represented something of a compromise for Stellato. Orr was a militant, no question. And he was a loyal ally of the Communist Party. His power, however, derived not from his status as a Communist, but as already noted above, from his position as the undisputed dissident leader of the *skilled tradesmen* within Local 600, if not the entire UAW. There is no evidence that Orr opposed the 30-40 program, but he did not build his base of support by championing the cause. Indeed, the Stellato campaign literature that was produced by Stellato himself highlighted the 30-40 demand while the campaign literature published by the more CP-dominated "progressive caucus" did not mention the shorter work week as a part of its program. In all of their literature, the only time the "progressives" ever mentioned the thirty-hour work week was a brief mention of the fact that Gene Prato opposed it. *Worker*, May 24, 1953. Campaign Leaflets in "Labor -- UAW Ford" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

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candidates challenging the Stellato slate, Reuther had once against launched a high-profile, high stakes offensive to try to capture Local 600.[510]

The *Wage Earner*, as usual, was mournfully blunt in its coverage of the election outcome. "The right-wing slate, headed by three candidates on leave from the International UAW payroll, took a drubbing at the giant Ford Local 600, UAW-CIO election completed May 7."[511] Stellato was returned to office by an extraordinary margin, winning 18,767 votes compared to 7,930 for Prato and 2,393 for Rice.[512] As *Business Week* admitted, "The one-sidedness of the victory surprised everyone. Reutherites expected that Stellato would lead in this vote but pinned their plans to a belief that he might not obtain a majority, and that the run-off would give them time to overtake their opposition."[513] But Rice -- the potential "left-wing" spoiler -- made no dent and Stellato lost none of the votes which he received when Reuther had let him run unopposed for president in October 1952. The *Wall Street Journal* called Stellato's victory "a blow to Mr. Reuther's prestige" since Prato's campaign program "went down the line in support of Reuther policies" while "Mr. Stellato, on the other hand, plumped for a 'more aggressive attitude'" and "continued his stand for a 30-

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[510] *Business Week* called it a "showdown" destined to "decide [the] stormy battle between Reutherites and left-wingers." *Business Week*, May 2, 1953.
[511] *Wage Earner*, June 1953.
[512] These election numbers were published in the *Worker*. The *Militant* published somewhat higher numbers all around, with Stellato winning 20,139; Prato 8,400; and Rice 2,535. Indeed, by June of 1953, even the *Worker* published a story that used the *Militant* numbers. Either way, the proportions were similar to those reported by *Business Week* which reported a "2-to-1 margin" of victory for Stellato. *Worker*, May 17, 1953; *Worker*, June 14, 1953; *Militant*, May 18, 1953; *Business Week*, May 16, 1953.
[513] *Business Week*, May 16, 1953.

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hour week on a 40-hour pay basis. He told Ford local 600 members the international union should urge this policy on auto makers."[514]

Stellato's entire local-wide slate prevailed. Orr easily beat Samp in the race to succeed Rice as vice-president, winning 13,709 votes to Samp's 6,552. Orr's presence on the ticket did guarantee some CP involvement, with some autonomy from Stellato on the basis of Orr's cultivation of his skilled tradesmen constituency. Grant was returned to office as financial secretary with 17,126 votes compared to 9,005 for Jack Pellegrini. Most significantly, Bill Johnson won more votes than Bill Hood in the race for Hood's recording secretary job, although Johnson's 12,817 votes (against Hood's 10,451) were not enough to oust the incumbent without a run-off election.[515] Hood had made a last-minute ideological flip and obviously had previously established himself as a militant in his leadership capacity within Local 600 and within the NNLC. But ultimately, Local 600 elections were not decided on personal characteristics so much as competing ideological visions of the future program of the American labor movement. In a major upset, Johnson beat Hood in the run-off. The *Wage Earner*, which acknowledged that Hood had been picked up as a Reutherite candidate, called Hood "the surprise loser in this contest."[516]

Actually, the surprise of the contest may have been the one unit-based Reutherite victory of the election round. Horace Sheffield, the black maverick aligned with the Shachtmanite wing of the Reutherite caucus, finally won office when the

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[514] *Wall Street Journal*, May 9, 1953.
[515] The first-round recording secretary numbers were published in the *Worker*. The *Militant* published higher numbers for both candidates, but with similar margins: Johnson, 13,796; Hood, 11,141. *Worker*, May 17, 1953; *Militant*, May 18, 1953.
[516] *Wage Earner*, June 1953.

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incumbent Foundry leader, Bill Johnson, was elected recording secretary of the entire local, leaving a temporary vacuum within the political culture of the massive building. Ultimately, Sheffield's election was the most significant consequence of Hood's defection.[517] With the exception of Sheffield's victory, *Business Week*'s claim -- that "the Stellato slate triumphed generally from major offices down to building units" -- could not be denied.[518] "Stellato," the coverage continued, "with popular support from the rank and file, from the left wing and apparently from at least a few anti-Reuther factionalists, will call the tune from here on Ford local politics."[519]

By mid-year, 1953, the rank-and-file members of Local 600 had once again demonstrated that, when presented with the choice between two competing labor programs -- one corporatist and one syndicalist -- the workers clearly opted for the latter approach. Moreover, the election marked a kind of turning point for the 30-40 movement at the Rouge. By all accounts, Stellato's enormous victory established -- at least for a while -- that with such a solid base at Local 600, he could turn his attention more completely to the task of building a larger base of support for the shorter work week program. It was simultaneously assumed that Stellato had cemented his place as "the hope" for all opposition within the UAW and that the Reuther forces would soon be seen "abandoning the battlefield in Local 600, for a time at least."[520] In other

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[517] *Worker*, May 17, 1953; *Militant*, May 18, 1953.
[518] Although one commentator -- without specifying the building contests to which he referred -- did suggest that "many of the Stellato supporters running for unit posts had extremely close contests." For a retrospective reference to these 1953 contests, see *American Socialist*, February 1954.
[519] *Business Week*, May 16, 1953.
[520] *Business Week*, May 16, 1953.

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words, the battlefield had moved from the internal politics of Local 600 to the wider area of the International Union and beyond.

Only two ominous clouds hung over the horizon. First, Orr's continued success in cultivating a skilled trades rebellion not only gave the CP an independent voice within the Local 600 leadership, but it signified the return of repressed labor market issues. With each day that the UAW refused to confront market leverage issues through the shorter work week, the skilled tradesmen became understandably unwilling to allow their own skill-based leverage to be used as a crutch in lieu of an autonomous strategy capable of defending the position of unskilled production workers. If solidarity meant joining in the mutual aggrandizement of the 30-40 program, then skilled tradesmen could be counted on as a progressive force. But in the absence of real progress on the 30-40 front, solidarity could only mean self-sacrificing austerity. To this demand, the skilled tradesmen responded with the election of John Orr.

Second, the internal political culture of Local 600 was, to some extent, being transformed. Stellato's enormous popularity undoubtedly flowed from his ability to resonate with the rank-and-file. But his dexterity as an opportunistic labor leader flowed from his *obligation* to resonate with the rank-and-file, and this, in turn, had its source in the historic threat of competitive discharge made real for all Local 600 candidates during each round of yearly, contested elections. It was the competitive political culture -- so rare within the American labor movement -- which was at risk.

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In one dangerous sign of oligarchic development, the delegates of the 1953 Convention had empowered local UAW unions to decide whether to hold local elections biannually in place of the traditional yearly ballot. Ford delegates voted against the proposal at the Convention. But Stellato came home to the Rouge and, in a risky reversal, proposed to the Executive Board of Local 600 that the membership be asked to approve biannual elections at the April 12 meeting of the General Council. Stellato, at the high point of his popularity, introduced the motion before the General Council and the measure carried by what *Labor Action* called an "overwhelming vote."[521] Thus, Stellato would no longer face the threat of discharge every year. The move gave opportunists more room to wiggle away from the immediate demands of the rank and file.

Stellato's lopsided victory demonstrated not only that he had won the support of the Local 600 membership, but also that he had done so to such a degree that he seemed invincible so long as he remained faithful to the workers. Stellato's enormous success certainly served to discourage the Reuther administration. During this period of Stellato's union career, it was difficult for would-be challengers to play to Stellato's left. Reutherite candidates had never chosen this path anyway. But after 1953, the Reutherites all but abandoned the local-wide political arena of the Rouge. Reuther and his allies thereby unintentionally handed Stellato greater freedom to abandon the rank-and-file so long as he did not feel the need to use his popularity with the workers as a shield to protect against Reuther's bureaucratic assaults.[522]

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[521] *Ford Facts*, April 4, 1953; *Labor Action*, April 20, 1953; *Labor Action*, May 11, 1953.

[522] This anti-competitive tendency was far less pronounced in the building units where union officers always had to keep on their toes. As is often true in organized labor, those leaders closest to the shop-

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During the summer of 1953, Walter Reuther was on the defensive. Having succumbed to pressure from below in late 1952, Reuther agreed to attempt to re-open the unpopular five-year contracts. When, in May of 1953, the International Executive Board finally negotiated and signed supplemental agreements with the auto companies, it did so in the context of a wave of springtime wildcat strikes. More than 125,000 auto workers were idled by the outlaw strikes. *Fortune* suggested that "wildcat strikes, in fact, plagued Detroit during the summer like heat boils."[523] With the five-year no-strike clauses still in effect, the UAW International leadership refused to authorize the strikes, warning workers -- rather than employers -- that the full weight of the UAW would be brought to bear against them. Indeed, an administrator was assigned to take control of at least one local, Budd Local 306 -- comprised of parts

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floor -- confronted most immediately with the challenge of adequately representing workers -- experienced the greatest turnover rate. The degree of anti-incumbent fervor made it difficult to consolidate a permanent base of loyal support, which in turn, encouraged challengers capable of exploiting the gap between worker expectations and the capacities of union representatives.

In the case of Local 600, support for the contractual bargaining goal of the shorter work week was most explicit as a litmus test for local-wide officers. But within the building units, daily issues trumped larger contractual issues and talk of a shorter work week could sound as removed and irrelevant as an urban mayor's views on foreign policy. Political opportunists seeking support within the Rouge were compelled to campaign for both the shorter work week -- since unit officers did constitute the membership of the local-wide Executive Board and General Council -- *and* were constantly forced to "deliver" on the fight against the speed-up. "Labor fakers" were more easily identified and *challenged* on the everyday issue of the speed-up.

[523] While it may seem a minor point, the reference to wildcats in the context of summer "heat boils" actually contains a false, but common signal. In the classic story of the working class, it is deprivation, misery, violent oppression, and abject poverty which motivates workers to fight. Hence, workers strike against the background of oppressive summer heat.

But in a revisionist version of the story, it is an affirmative and a expansive desire, rather than a will to restored equilibrium and modest "comfort," that moves workers to action. As Michelle Perrot has noticed of French workers in her study of late 19th century strikes, walkouts occur disproportionately in the spring. "In May the factory seems unbearable. Even today a thrill runs through it at the first sight of the sun." See Michelle Perrot (1987) *Workers On Strike*. New Haven: Yale University Press, p.146. See also Stephen H. Norwood (1990) *Labor's Flaming Youth: Telephone Operators and Worker Militancy, 1878-1923*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

In light of this revisionist theory, it is significant that *Fortune*'s retrospective article actually got the season wrong. The outbreak of wildcat strikes in 1953 occurred in May. See *Wall Street Journal*, May 22; May 23, 1953; *Fortune*, October 1953.

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workers crucial to Chrysler and Dodge -- after the local leadership refused to discipline its own membership.[524]

At a National Ford Council meeting in early June, Stellato led a movement in protest against any future 5-year contracts.[525] Then in the third week of July, Stellato began to reach out to potential allies outside Local 600 in an effort to expand the 30-40 program and move it to the top of the UAW bargaining agenda. It was at this point, according to *Fortune* magazine, that "Ford Local president Carl Stellato, ever eager for a political issue, began loudly demanding a thirty-hour week... [and] raised a new bug-bear for union men to worry about: 'automation.'"[526]

First stop for the newly confirmed opposition leader was, appropriately enough, the installation of receptive slate of officers for Chevrolet Local 659. Back in 1951, during his last caucus-building effort, Stellato had reached out to Local 659 for the founding of his Committee for a Democratic UAW. Having spent more than a year combating Reuther's various attempts to sabotage Stellato and the 30-40 movement, Stellato was now back in business. With a similarly militant slate winning rank-and-file support in Local 659, Stellato turned to his natural allies. In fact, it was Stellato who received the invitation to dance when he was invited to be the keynote speaker at the Local 659 installation. He was joined at the podium by Robert Murphy, president of the famously militant Local 659, who had been elected on a program of 30 hours work at 40-hours' pay.[527] Stellato reportedly received additional support

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[524] *Wall Street Journal*, May 22, 1953; *Militant*, August 3, 1953; *Fortune*, October 1953.
[525] *Worker*, June 14, 1953.
[526] *Fortune*, October 1953.
[527] For Murphy's electoral platform, see *Militant*, March 1, 1954.

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that evening from leaders within Buick Local 599 and Plymouth Local 51.[528] But the Stellato-Murphy alliance was a potent brew. It meant that the heart of the Ford and General Motors empires was now crawling with syndicalist proponents of the shorter work week.

Stellato's speech at Local 659 was classic. As he always did when he was at his best, Stellato explicitly contrasted the syndicalism of the shorter work week demand with the dangers of Reutherite corporatism. It was on this night that the Local 600 president took aim at Emil Mazey's pathetic effort to promote Reuther's brand of "military Keynesianism." In a high profile trip to Washington, Mazey was reported to have "stormed into the Capitol to protest the Kaiser [defense department contract] cancellations. Mazey warned that 'the $500-million cutback in tank and truck production means the end of jobs and hardships for many thousands of workers.'"[529] Stellato did not disagree that an end to the war economy would threaten auto jobs. Indeed, Stellato noted that, in addition to military cutbacks, autoworkers also faced the threat of extraordinary technological innovations through which work formerly done by 700 workers could now be done by one enormous machine and approximately 70 workers.

However, Stellato was unwilling to support a fight in *support* of the war economy or to join a reactionary movement in *opposition* to technological innovation. But he well appreciated the threat to the post-war labor market leverage enjoyed by

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[528] *Militant*, August 3, 1953.

[529] *Fortune*, October 1953. In a telegram, Mazey and Ed Cote, director of the Kaiser division, formally stated, "We demand you rescind this cancellation of the Kaiser Motors Corp. aircraft contracts... and give the UAW, as representatives of the workers whose livelihood you have endangered, an opportunity to be heard." *Wall Street Journal*, June 25, 1953.

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autoworkers. "We have not felt the effects of these technological improvements because displaced workers have been absorbed on defense jobs. Darn soon there isn't going to be a shortage of workers." The only solution capable of maintaining leverage without becoming dependent upon the government for war jobs was the reduction of the supply of labor through the thirty hour work week at forty hours' pay. Recalling Reuther's UAW convention attacks on the 30-40 demand, Stellato threatened to build a dissident rank-and-file movement in support of the shorter work week and prophesied that "Brother Reuther will have to change his position in the near future."[530]

One index of Stellato's new boldness and its resonance within the rank and file is the degree to which competing ideological elites deemed the movement sufficiently compelling to warrant a response of some kind. Indeed, it was in August 1953 that both the Socialist Workers Party's *Militant* and the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists' *Wage Earner* began to devote considerable attention to the 30-40 movement.

The SWP had covered events at the Rouge -- especially as an important electoral horse race venue for three-way factional fights between Reuther's right-wing, the CP, and to a lesser extent, the Trotskyists themselves. But beginning with its August 3, 1953 edition, the SWP began extensive consideration of the *program* of the Stellato forces, kicking off the new coverage with three separate articles relating to the shorter work week. One article was devoted exclusively to Stellato and his 30-40 keynote address at the Flint officers installation ceremony.

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[530] *Fortune*, October 1953; *Militant*, August 3, 1953.

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The second article -- a story about a pending economic "slump" and the connection to the "demand to slash hours" -- published on the front page -- was the most interesting. It demonstrated not that the SWP, through a post-revolutionary ideological epiphany, had discovered the importance of the 30-40 program as the basis for effective and progressive class struggle within capitalism. Rather it demonstrated a keen opportunistic eye hovering alongside a dominant revolutionary vision. Most of the article was taken up with reports about an "American capitalist economy...operating on a precarious equilibrium" was faced with "marked signs of slump" and "gloomy foreboding" of crisis. Correctly noting the potential for crises to create sufficient unemployment to break the back of labor and "take the 'starch' out of unions," the SWP congratulated "the alacrity with which the workers *respond*" to the slump with a campaign for the shorter work week.[531] Significantly, the *Militant* had covered the five years of boom-time 30-40 agitation underway since at least 1948, but the socialist mind could not *relate* to a worker fight constructed from a position of affluence, confidence, and market strength. Instead, what animated the SWP was the prospect of working-class desperation and capitalist *crisis*, both of which were necessary ingredients for revolutionary political party formation. Thus the *Militant* article conveniently forgot to mention that the 30-40 movement pre-dated any slump and was not simply a surprisingly well-timed response to the initial signs of economic crisis. Misreading the popular 30-40 program as a quaint but weak response to economic crisis, the SWP nevertheless sought to ride the wave of its popularity. Hence, the third 30-40 article was a straightforward endorsement of the 30-40

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[531] *Militant*, August 3, 1953. Emphasis mine.

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program, entitled "30-40 Is Practical." "The way the Reutherites argue against 30-40 makes us suspicious. They don't say that the demand is too modest. On the contrary, they seem to regard it as a wild and impractical scheme... We advise the workers to stick to their guns on the 30-40 demand. It's practical. And it can be won."[532] What is more, the SWP came increasingly to take credit for having *initiated* the shorter work week movement. *Militant* writers referred to "*our* slogan for a '30-hour week at 40 hours' pay."[533] Indeed, after the August 3 endorsement, *Militant* labor writer Art Preis quickly set out to undo any impression of the SWP as a neophyte in the 30-40 struggle.

> The *Militant* is especially pleased to see the movement of '30 for 40' begin to take on momentum because we initiated this proposal as a part of our program to meet unemployment. We urged the unions to adopt this program back in 1938 and 1939 before Roosevelt 'solved' the depression with a war economy. We revived the slogan in the period from 1945 to 1949, before Truman was able to again avert an economic crash with huge war spending and the Korean War.[534]

But the SWP endorsement -- while appropriately opportunistic -- was undermined by a larger set of ideological principles. Thus, even as the *Militant* sought to capitalize on the popularity of the program, it proceeded -- in the front-page article -- to criticize its inadequacy as an alleged response to crisis, and then attempt to channel the movement's energy toward a more revolutionary project. Thus, even as the *Militant* reported that the "demand for a 30-hour week at 40-hours' pay is gaining

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[532] *Militant*, August 3, 1953.
[533] *Militant*, October 5, 1953. Emphasis mine.
[534] *Militant*, October 26, 1953.

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ground," -- within Local 600 and among the mineworkers -- it suggested that the significance of this 30-40 movement was not as straightforward as it might have seemed.

> The important lesson to draw from this is that in the economic ups and downs that mark the fever chart of a chronically sick capitalist method of production, oscillations short of a major depression can provoke abrupt changes in the conditions of the working class. This can ignite struggles which would open a new chapter in the history of the American labor movement. In such struggles the powerfully organized American workers will bring their strength to bear in the formation of an independent political party. One of the principles of such a party should be that the anarchy of capitalist production cannot be allowed to result in the pauperization of the working class. If the capitalists can't operate the plants under a profit system, then let's nationalize them and produce the things people need in abundance.[535]

Ironically, the Socialist Workers Party's principled commitment to the ideal of ending the "anarchy" of markets and replacing it with nationalized industry and a planned economy shared many features with Walter Reuther's "social unionism" and his social democratic dreams of rational economic planning in place of market relations. So too, the vision of a planned economy had been the basis of Sidney Hillman's "new unionism."[536] Perhaps the two most significant differences between the Hillman-Reuther tradition, on the one side, and the SWP on the other, were not about labor movement strategies at all. First, SWP fidelity to the Soviet project clashed with Reuther's posture as a cold warrior. Second -- and most important in

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[535] *Militant*, August 3, 1953.
[536] See Lichtenstein (1995) and Steven Fraser (1991).

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light of the first difference -- Reuther was "in power" with a commitment to stay there and the SWP would have liked to have been "in power" and was thus committed to opposing Reuther on this basis. If an opportunistic celebration of the 30-40 program could help build a base of support for the SWP (as it had for Stellato), then a celebration was in order. But as a matter of basic principles, the SWP shared more with Reuther's labor program than it did with the market-based assumptions of 30-40 syndicalism.

Indeed, the rank and file was all but alone in its support for militant syndicalism and market leverage through the shorter work week. The Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, considered the 'right-wing' of the Reuther caucus, had its own quasi-socialistic vision of humane and rational democratic sovereignty as an alternative to raw market leverage. While frequently accused by the left-wing of favoring "class collaboration" instead of more militant tactics, ACTU actually shared much of the "vision" which animated the left-wing socialists. Like the socialist program, the ACTU aim was ultimately to replace the free play of market leverage with the sovereignty of rational planning.

As the first of its seven basic "Principles of Economic Democracy" -- reproduced time and again in ACTU literature -- ACTU asserted, "Our economic system will not run itself, and competition alone is not an adequate automatic governor. Production and distribution must be planned and organized for the primary purpose of the common welfare."[537] Moreover, the same idea which motivated the socialist demand that companies "open the books" to workers could also be found in

[537] *Wage Earner*, December 1953.

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ACTU's "profit sharing plan." Both programs favored increased transparency in corporate accounting so that workers could be integrated into the corporate decision-making process.

The only difference between the Catholic profit-sharing plan and the parallel left-wing socialist version was that ACTU was more forthcoming about the potential consequences, were workers to take responsibility for corporate balance sheets. Such transparency, ACTU argued, "will provide greater security for small businesses that are having tough sledding. With the workers always aware of the company's true condition and with the workers always desirous of keeping their establishment in operation, business failures will be few and far between."[538] Similarly, on the question of plant closings, ACTU suggested that if workers had an "equal *voice* in forming broad socio-economic policy" within corporations,

> management could tell labor it would have to pull out of an area if they insist on a raise. But this 'telling' would have to be substantiated by facts showing exactly why they cannot afford the raise. Maybe with this knowledge, the labor representatives will decide to wait for another quarter before pressing their increased wage demands.[539]

Socialists promoted a very similar program in opposition to "business secrets," but pointed more often to its allegedly revolutionary, rather than concessionary, potential. Art Preis, for example, claimed that "the slogan, 'Open the Books of the Corporations,' originated in the program of the Socialist Workers Party.... This

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[538] *Wage Earner*, November 1953.
[539] *Wage Earner*, April 1954. Emphasis mine.

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program had a profoundly revolutionary side, as the corporations well understood, and it put them on the spot as no other command could do."[540] The Shachtmanites, for example, agreed and considered the "open the books" demand to be a step toward socialism *precisely* because the books might show a company in trouble. Such an event would not lead workers to accept wage concessions, but to reply in a revolutionary spirit. "As socialists, we suggest the reply:... If you cannot provide goods in abundance... then step aside. It is clearly time for a working people's government to take over industry and run it, not for private profit, but to satisfy the needs of the people."[541]

Thus, it appeared that the ACTU agenda and the socialist agenda, while differing in mode and tone, shared a great deal, especially relative to the market syndicalism at the heart of the 30-40 demand. But while the SWP opportunistically sought to channel 30-40 support toward its own factional cause, ACTU, as part of the Reuther caucus, chose to join Reuther in actively opposing the 30-40 demand.

The *Wage Earner* -- as a mouthpiece of the Reuther caucus and as a defender of industrial democracy against markets -- felt compelled to respond to the clamor for a 30 hour work week at 40 hours' pay. In a running series of articles, beginning in August 1953 and continuing month after month for more than a year, William A. Ryan, president of the Detroit chapter of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, used the pages of the *Wage Earner* to combat the influence of the 30-40 movement.

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[540] Preis (1964), p.265.
[541] *Labor Action*, September 9, 1957.

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Ironically, these articles are most important for the degree to which they reveal the intensity of the 30-40 campaign and the depth of its support among working people. Indeed, the *Wage Earner* published only a small article, hidden within the pages of its June 1953 edition, reporting without fanfare or great alarm that "left-wingers" had beaten ACTists in the Local 600 election. But by August 1953, it had become clear that the Local 600 election would have significance beyond the Local's formal jurisdiction. In a banner front-page headline, the *Wage Earner* announced the advent of Local 600's newly emboldened 30-40 campaign asking, "Who Does Ford Local 600 Believe It Is Fooling By Beating the Drums for a 30 Hour Week?" The article warned readers, "The leaders of Ford Local 600 are once again beating the drums for a 30 hour week with 40 hours pay. Each time these Local 600 leaders make this proposal workers all over the country set about speculating and wondering" about the proposal.[542]

Ryan, the *Wage Earner* writer, sought to undermine the movement by impugning the motives of its leaders. But he did so by suggesting that the Local 600 leaders might be "playing the trick of politics...where a group of workers ask for something that they have no expectation of getting and maybe do not even want, but which *serves very well* to attempt to embarrass those responsible for negotiations."[543] Stipulating that the Local 600 leaders *were* politically opportunistic, it becomes that much more apparent that they were not an isolated clan trying to force through an unpopular program, but that they were deploying the 30-40 demand because it served

[542] *Wage Earner*, August 1953.
[543] *Wage Earner*, August 1953. Emphasis mine.

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"very well" when seeking to appeal to rank-and-file workers. Such a political tactic would "embarrass" responsible unionists like Reuther precisely because opposition to such a popular demand would undermine his reputation has a militant defender of workers' demands. While attacking the motives of the Local 600 leadership, Ryan acknowledged the mass base of support for the 30-40 program.

In a later article, Ryan began to recognize that he was writing against the current within the UAW. He was forced to address himself, no longer to the small clique of manipulative Local 600 officers , but to "sincere officers and members of Local 600 and sincere officers and members of other locals, however much they are now 'sold' on the idea of a 30 hour week in the immediate future...."[544] The same edition of the *Wage Earner* carried a second, even more defensive article about the 30-40 demand. The article, crafted in the format of a "Question/Answer" session began by admitting that, thus far, the *Wage Earner* campaign against the shorter work week had met with significant resistance among readers sympathetic to the demand. The Q & A article was, therefore, an attempt to respond to "a series of letters, telephone calls and discussions the point of which often amounts to 'you missed the boat on this,' or 'your explanation of that is illogical.'"[545]

However, Ryan actually used most of his reports to argue against the demand, rather than using it to document the movement's progress. But, in light of his arguments, it is safe to agree with his own assertion that "never have there been so many attempts in the labor movement to confuse an issue as has been witnessed on the

[544] *Wage Earner*, December 1953.
[545] *Wage Earner*, December 1953.

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question of the 30-hour week."[546] At his rhetorical best, Ryan was able to falsify the 30-40 demand by conveniently forgetting the "40 hours' pay" part of the program. He thereby characterized the movement as one interested in choosing "free time" at the expense of "more money." ACTU had often, in the past, been known to support a so-called "maximum wage" (and maximum work-hours) in order to preserve the church and family while warding off the allegedly more dangerous degeneration that flows from American materialism and consumerism. But when Ryan turned his guns against the shorter hours movement, he did so first by charging that the shorter work week would lead to a lower standard of living and then by invoking a moving testimonial celebration of the American dream and material abundance. "If a way could be found to limit work to 30 hours and if that were done," Ryan suggested, "the population of this country would suffer a disastrous drop in living standards."[547] Advocates of the shorter work week "are putting themselves definitively and unmistakably on record as being of the opinion that Ford workers and pensioners have a very adequate standard of living, in fact, one that has reached the saturation point as far as improvements go."[548] For American workers, Ryan argued, "the decision is simple:"

> If the pensioners are now able to buy all of the goods they need and if the plant's health insurance plan is beyond improvement and if the workers in the plant have brand new refrigerators, TV's and automobiles and plenty of money to send their children to school, and if all other needs of the workers are now being met, then... lower the work week and provide more leisure time... At this time we don't buy it.[549]

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[546] *Wage Earner*, December 1953.
[547] *Wage Earner*, December 1953.
[548] *Wage Earner*, August 1953.
[549] *Wage Earner*, August 1953.

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Ryan went so far as to endorse, not simply a higher threshold definition for "subsistence," but to imagine a world of infinite desire. He promised to continue his crusade against the shorter work week "until such time as the workers start saying that their standard of living is as high as they want it to go... [but] this writer doesn't expect that to happen in the next couple of generations -- if ever."

Perhaps more modern advocates of the shorter work week accompanied by the simultaneous embrace of the anti-materialistic "simple life" would agree with the terms of Ryan's polemic, but would vehemently attack his paean to luxuriant materialistic abundance. But, in its context, the polemic represented something of a misrepresentation of the terms of the movement for a 30 hour work week at 40 hours' pay. Indeed, one need not stray from Ryan's own articles to illustrate the point.

Indeed, Ryan properly suggested that one way of understanding the 30-40 movement would be that "time and a half would presumably be paid for all work over 30 hours."[550] Moreover, Ryan wanted to "call attention to the fact that what the Local 600 leaders are asking for is a 33% increase in the hourly rate. (That is the only way a worker can work 30 hours and get a 40 hour pay.)"[551] Ryan acknowledged that the 30-40 program would bring a higher standard of living to workers when he accused Local 600 leaders of being "Communist sympathizers who are most anxious to bring about a 30-hour week at this time to impair our defense effort... [since 30-40] would have the effect of raising our defense costs."[552] Those increase costs are increased

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[550] *Wage Earner*, August 1953.
[551] *Wage Earner*, August 1953.
[552] *Wage Earner*, August 1953.

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labor costs. Increased labor costs for the company mean increased wages for workers. It is somewhat difficult to understand Ryan's thinking when he opposed the shorter work week because it would increase labor costs, even as he proclaimed himself to be among those "who say that purchasing power is too low -- wages absolutely must be raised."[553] It is not clear whether Ryan, in advocating such increased labor costs, actually *intended* to "impair our defense effort" in the fight against Communism or whether he simply refused to solve all defense problems on the backs of workers.

But most significantly, Ryan misrepresented the 30-40 program by calling attention to its ability to increase leisure time without simultaneously acknowledging its importance as a labor withdrawal strategy designed to increase market leverage for workers so that they could impose all sorts of demands (relating to wages, pensions, or working conditions) on employers. The threat of future unemployment -- and its impact on the impressive market leverage workers had experienced during and following World War II, worker leverage -- was, to Ryan, of little consequence. Indeed, he attempted to calm readers by suggesting that if one were "to assume that Local 600 leaders sat down with the Ford Motor Co., asked for a 66 cents an hour raise and were given it....

> Local 600 leaders would then have to decide one of two ways: either the 66 cents an hour would be used to reduce the work-week... or the work week could be left at 40 hours and the 66 cents used to buy more goods.... No matter which decision is made any unemployment problem that may exist will be alleviated.[554]

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[553] *Wage Earner*, March 1954.
[554] *Wage Earner*, August 1953.

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Ryan presumes that if the latter decision is made, "the unemployed workers will be put to work producing the increased goods."[555] This, despite the fact that the 30-40 movement was animated, in part, by the recognition that, through automation, companies could increasingly expand output of goods without necessarily incurring a parallel increase in employment.

But more importantly, Ryan here "assumes" precisely what needs to be demonstrated, that is, a strategy which would enable workers to impose wage increases on employers. He dodges the question of leverage at every point. In his August 1953 article, Ryan proclaims,

> This article is not going into the question of whether the Ford Motor Co. and all other companies who would be expected to follow suit can afford to give a 66 cents an hour increase...[and] we are not going into the question of the duration of the strike necessary to force them to do it.[556]

Ryan's rhetoric undoubtedly aims to suggest that such a wage increase would not be possible. This is not only somewhat insincere, given the fact that Ryan simultaneously assured workers of his commitment to wage increases, but it also masks the relationship between leverage and strike effectiveness. Indeed, talk of a "strike" as a *strategy* masks the way in which a strike is a *tactic* which necessarily rests on some other source of leverage. Such talk optimistically presumes that strikes are effective without regard to the dangers posed by a vast army of the unemployed.

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[555] *Wage Earner*, August 1953.
[556] *Wage Earner*, August 1953.

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As *US News & World Report* informed its readers in 1953, "Employers can look for a softening of union demands if business turns down.... Strikes, most leaders agree, will be hard to win and fewer. *Workers out of jobs will be available to break strikes, and unions will be taking fewer chances.*"[557] Moreover, by 1953, labor leaders within the AFL had concluded that the new Eisenhower administration had embarked on a "hard money policy" in order to raise interest rates, slow the economy, and increase unemployment. One AFL resolution warned of "business spokesmen who plainly indicate that they would welcome a mild recession with enough unemployment to permit wage cutting."[558] Local 600's 30-40 demand was intended to preserve leverage *prior* to the onslaught of increased unemployment and to act as a pre-emptive strike against the potential damage brought on by the mere *threat* of unemployment. In this way, unions were not merely able to "respond" to unemployment, but to

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[557] *US News & World Report*, October 2, 1953. Emphasis mine.

[558] *Wall Street Journal*, September 22, 1953; *US News & World Report*, October 2, 1953.

Those commentators who view the post-war era as a golden era of pure Keynesianism -- left unchallenged until Federal Reserve Chair Paul Volker's "hard money policy" was used to break the back of the labor movement between 1979 and 1982 -- will be surprised to discover labor leaders confronting the threat of monetary policy in 1953 and 1954, during the first post-war recession.

In the four decades that have passed, the organized labor movement has yet to confront the challenge of monetarism. Those who recognize the use of the Federal Reserve as a weapon with important consequences for class struggle often dream of replacing "mean" monetarism with "easy" money. The challenge, however, is not to become administrators of monetary policy but to autonomously challenge its utility as a weapon.

Monetarism attacks workers by attacking the corporate growth upon which workers "depend." The "autonomy" of a syndicalist labor movement means nothing more than breaking this "dependence" and thus destroying the utility of "economic crisis" as a capitalist tool for curbing the demands of workers. If high interest rates no longer guarantee declining wage pressure, then monetary policy will be properly restored as an equal and balanced battle between industrial capital and finance capital. If workers are not disciplined by economic slowdown, then industrial capital will not tolerate an unnecessarily "hard" money policy. And finance capital will not tolerate unnecessary price inflation.

Of course, it is not possible to imagine worker autonomy unless worker leverage is based, not upon increased corporate demand for labor, but upon the autonomous reduction of labor supply through shorter hours, etc..

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remove it as an effective weapon in the corporate arsenal, undermining corporate attempts to depress worker demands and lower standards of living.

What, according to Ryan, determines the wage rate? The question is important since he asserts, "If there are unemployed now, it is because certain industries or companies have not *properly* increased wages as productivity advanced. The *solution* in those industries is an immediate "adjustment" increase."[559] Unemployment here represents less of an opportunity for companies to curb the pretensions of labor than some sort of accident resulting from corporate mistakes. It is as though corporations somehow forget to "properly" increase wages. Wage rates increases, according to Ryan, are less of an outcome of worker struggles for leverage than adjustments increased "proportionately to technological advancement."[560]

Ryan warns readers that in debating "the next person who starts to weigh" various labor movement plans, any interlocutor should be made "to start out by telling us how much money he expects to work with."[561] Only then is it possible to ask in what proportions the money should go to buy "consumer goods" or to buy "free time." For Ryan, *this* is the question to debate, since "automation (along with collective bargaining) *merely* decides the *size* of the worker's hourly increase" but not how the increase should be put to use.[562] Here, Ryan is effective at marking off his

[559] *Wage Earner*, December 1953. Emphases mine.
[560] *Wage Earner*, December 1953.
[561] *Wage Earner*, August 1954.
[562] *Wage Earner*, March 1954.

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own position from that of the 30-40 movement, especially with respect to automation and collective bargaining.[563]

In contrast to Ryan, the shorter work week campaigners saw in automation the opportunity for companies to threaten unemployment and thereby *decrease*, rather than increase, the size of the worker's hourly pay rate. Moreover, the 30-40 advocates recognized the degree to which the legal system of collective bargaining purported to guarantee that corporations must bargain in good faith, but it in no way determined the course of bargaining nor did it remove questions of leverage from the bargaining process. If, as Ryan suggests, workers depended upon automation and the legal guarantees associated with collective bargaining to decide the wage rate, they would face a future of diminishing leverage and concession bargaining.

[563] Ryan's suggestion that wage increases were "made possible" in response to automation was more of a corporate line than a labor argument. Even Daniel Bell, writing a glowing report about Walter Reuther in *Fortune* during the spring of 1953, recognized that automation was more an effect of wages than wages an effect of automation. He noted that Reuther's more expensive "labor demands have helped give US capitalism the dynamic quality.... By becoming costly, labor has spurred industry to more efficient planning and to mechanization." *Fortune*, April 1953.

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Chapter 13: Rival Unions & Shorter Hours, 1953

After a summer of wildcat strikes in Detroit and months of emboldened 30-40 campaigning from within Local 600, the Reuther caucus had reason to be concerned that its ability to discipline the rank-and-file during autumn and early winter of 1953 might prove difficult. Reuther's opposition to the popular shorter work week made him vulnerable to all those willing to challenge his authority and don for themselves the mantle of militancy. Of course, Local 600 had been a consistent source of internal political opposition within the UAW. But as Stellato's bold outreach efforts of the summer began to bear fruit, Reuther increasingly faced challenges from beyond the walls of Local 600.

One such challenge emerged as a consequence of the ongoing rivalry between the AFL and the CIO. Talk of unity between the two federations had increased in intensity since November of 1952 when CIO President Phil Murray died on November 9th and AFL President William Green died 12 days later, on November 21st. When Walter Reuther assumed the presidency of the CIO and George Meany was selected as president of the AFL, both were presumed to have a greater commitment to labor unity than their predecessors. But so long as dual unionism persisted, competitive rival unionist tendencies could not be altogether overcome.[564]

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[564] *US News & World Report* headlined Murray's death, "One big labor union? Murray death opens door." While the story was filed before Green's death, it nevertheless anticipated his passing, noting that "Green is expected to retire in February." *US News & World Report*, November 21, 1952.

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The image of the AFL as nothing more than a conservative shadow following behind the brilliant militancy of the CIO undoubtedly must be revised. If nothing else, it remains to be seen in what ways the corporatist impulse of the CIO's "new unionist" leadership actually proved itself to be a more radical labor philosophy than the "pure and simple" or "bread 'n butter" philosophy of the old AFL. But more significantly, the history of the AFL (and the CIO, for that matter) is wrapped up in the history of its competitive position within the labor movement. Thus, one might argue that the AFL was at its worst during those historical moments when its status as the sole voice of labor was left unchallenged by rival voices. Likewise, it is possible to imagine a revisionist history of the AFL in which its odd fluctuations between conservatism and militancy has less to do with the unfolding of a labor philosophy, in and of itself, and more to do with the relationship between the inflection, signification, and deployment of the AFL's labor philosophy during periods when it faced rivals and its inflection, signification, and deployment during periods when all rival unionism had been collapsed into labor unity.[565]

When labor unity prevails and no-raiding pacts have been in effect and supplemented by an administered system of jurisdictional arbitration, the "competitive market" within the labor movement has been diminished, leaving the rank-and-file with

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[565] The classic work on rival unionism remains Walter Galenson (1940) *Rival Unionism in the United States*. New York: American Council on Public Affairs. In a brief history of rival unionism at the start of his study, Galenson indicates that "following the virtual eclipse of the I.W.W. in the post-war period, there was a hiatus of several years during which no inter-industrial alliance purported to rival the A.F. of L." (Galenson 1940:8). In contrast to the years of rivalry (1886-1895, Knights of Labor; 1895-1905, Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance; 1905-early 1920s, I.W.W.), the 1920s -- the period of an unrivaled AFL -- is widely considered the nadir for organized labor in the United States. Militancy did not resume until the Communist party embraced a rival unionist strategy in the years after 1928.

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no "exit" strategy for registering dissent within the labor movement.[566] Under the terms of labor unity (i.e., organizational monopoly), all that is available to the rank-and-file is the burdensome responsibility of political dissent through participatory "voice" strategies (electoral challenges through established democratic forms, rhetorical persuasion in constricted public spheres, dues revolts, etc.).[567]

But there is a history of rival unionism in the United States, and there are at least preliminary signs that -- contrary to scholarly literature -- rivalry, by establishing a marketplace for workers seeking representation, effectively transforms the relationship between the bureaucracy and the rank and file and propels the militancy of both rival unions. Rivalry produces a whole that is greater than the parts.[568] So long as workers can "vote with their feet," bureaucracies are compelled to be more accountable to workers, lest incumbent bureaucrats be trumped by more responsive

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[566] Of course, the exit strategy did not completely disappear in the United States labor movement after the merger of the AFL and the CIO in 1955. But "exit" came to mean exit from the labor movement itself, if not through union decertification, then through a refusal to vote "union yes" in NLRB-sponsored union recognition elections. Wherever "union shop" agreements are legal and in effect, no individual exit strategy remains. Union membership is mandatory and individual dues revolts are grounds for expulsion, not only from the union, but from employment.

[567] The alternative meanings of "exit" strategies and "voice" strategies is best articulated by Albert O. Hirschman in his remarkably simple -- but no less brilliant -- original formulation. See Albert O. Hirschman (1970) *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Of course, what is brilliant about Hirschman is his formulation of these commonsense terms, his own preference for "voice" and "loyalty" over and against "exit" strategies notwithstanding.

[568] This claim runs contrary to Galenson's most basic assumptions. His book, for example, is an evaluation of the effectiveness of various strategies for eliminating rivalry. But the premise of the book, which is merely asserted and not demonstrated, is that the consequences of rival unionism are altogether negative. Indeed, Galenson considered this conclusion to be "obvious" since the "economic and social dislocations resulting from division in the ranks of labor are daily shouted in newspaper headlines. Workers suffer ill-spared wage losses and destruction of hard-won collective bargaining rights." First, the issue at stake in rival unionism might be said to be less "division in the ranks of labor" so much as division -- and competition -- within the leadership of labor. Second, Galenson's assertions about wage losses, while plausible, ignore the equally plausible *upward* spiral of wages resulting from a bidding war among competing labor elites compelled to promise ever-higher wages, etc., in order to secure support from the rank-and-file.

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leaders in a rival organization. While this question remains to be systematically explored, there is reason to believe that the AFL, for example, was itself transformed and emboldened by the formation of the rival CIO.[569] Indeed, the formation of the CIO delivered more of a shot in the arm than a deathblow to the AFL. The dramatic -- and well-documented -- rise of the CIO should not obscure the fact that by 1953, the AFL membership was *double* the size of the CIO.[570] In the first quarter of 1953 alone, there were 168 union recognition elections in which the AFL and the CIO competed for the right to represent workers in collective bargaining. The AFL affiliates won 82 of the elections, a substantial margin above the 67 elections won by the CIO affiliates.[571]

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[569] Evidence of this might be found, for example, in the pages of the AFL newspaper, the *American Federationist*. Henry Fleisher provides tantalizing hints in this regard. "The *CIO News* has adopted many of the innovations brought to American journalism by the tabloids...Its style is pert; its stories generally short and condensed; its editorial pages breezy and vernacular; and it devotes considerable space to pictures and cartoons... The *American Federationist* underwent drastic changes during the 1930s. Once an almost unreadable labor version of the old *Atlantic Monthly*, down to and including a series of full-page advertisements from nonunion and hostile corporations, the *Federationist* was the subject of a complete overhaul about 1935 [the founding year of the CIO's rival unionist movement]. It emerged as a slick-paper, well-illustrated magazine, which... offers the reader a well-balanced selection of articles by labor leaders, government leaders, and other friends of labor." Henry C. Fleisher (1951) "The Union Press--An Inventory" in *The House of Labor: Internal Operations of American Unions* edited by J.B.S. Hardman & Maurice F. Neufeld. New York: Prentice-Hall.

Nelson Lichtenstein has documented similar cases of effective, militant, rival, anti-CIO challenges launched by AFL unions during World War II. In these cases, workers supported the AFL over the CIO because the AFL was willing to champion workers' demands during a period when the CIO was working to discipline its ranks as much as it was working to represent them. AFL victories, in turn, pressured the CIO to abandon its more principled program and embrace the more immediate, militant demands of the rank and file. See Nelson Lichtenstein (1982) *Labor's War at Home: The CIO in World War II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[570] *Fortune*, October 1953. As Robert Zieger has suggested, "the CIO found itself steadily outstripped by its once-lethargic rival. By 1950 the AFL legitimately claimed twice the membership of the CIO, and its organizations of clerks, public employees, and service workers, although hardly models of dynamism, easily outdistanced the CIO's feeble efforts in these fields." Robert H. Zieger (1995) *The CIO: 1935-1955*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, p.359.

[571] It is more, not less significant, that the *Times* indicated that it was unclear "precisely how many of the elections represented competition for newly organized units and how many were cases of raiding -- where one union sought the bargaining rights held by another -- but the bulk of them was believed to be raiding." It is raiding, rather than competition for new units, that was the intended target of unity talks. But "raiding" is at least as important since it offers workers an option *after* they have

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In the context of ongoing rivalry and tentative discussions of potential unity, the shorter work week demand became a contested terrain, aggravated by Reuther's outspoken *opposition* to the demand. This was most pronounced in the case of the CIO International United Brewery Workers Union, its militant rank-and-file, and its relations with the AFL Teamsters.

On Thursday, May 14, 1953, approximately 7,200 brewery workers -- members of Local 9 -- struck at least six Milwaukee breweries demanding "a 35-hour work week without loss in pay, a 25-cent general wage boost and a pension and welfare plan."[572] Management called off contract talks and threatened that negotiations could not continue "unless the issue of the 35-hour week is dropped."[573]

Significantly, the eruption of a shorter work week movement within the Brewery Workers Union occurred at the same time that a parallel insurgency within several of the Brewery locals produced a movement to withdraw the locals from the CIO union and join the more aggressive AFL Teamsters. During the spring of 1953, Brewery Union President, Karl Feller faced a revolt from below for his lack of leadership and support for local fights, especially during the period of the shorter work

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given one bargaining representative a chance to prove itself in deeds as well as words. A world without raiding in collective bargaining is akin to one in which consumers may be exposed to sales pitches and advertisements only in advance of an initial purchase. After that purchase, consumers may choose to continue or discontinue the purchase, but without the benefit of promotions and advertisements from alternative providers. What is so progressive about what amounts to prohibitions on information and communication? For the election results, see *New York Times*, May 26, 1953.

Nor was the first quarter of 1953 an anomalous quarter. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 1952, the National Labor Relations Board reported that the AFL competed in more elections than the CIO (4,711 compared to 2,502) and won a greater percentage of its contests (65.5% to 56%). In AFL vs. CIO elections for the fiscal year, the AFL won 337 while the CIO won only 298. *Wall Street Journal*, July 1, 1953.

[572] *Wall Street Journal*, May 18; July 27; July 28, 1953.

[573] *Wall Street Journal*, May 18, 1953.

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week strike.[574] In a move intended to forestall a direct challenge to his leadership, Feller began "merger" negotiations in June with new Teamster President, Dave Beck. Under a proposed agreement, Feller would deliver his troublesome ranks to the Teamsters; in return, Beck would *appoint* Feller head of a Teamster "brewery division." But in mid-June, New York local leaders, representing the insurgent movement of primarily New York and Milwaukee units, interrupted the proceedings, contacted Beck and voiced opposition to Feller's leadership, saying that Feller could not deliver the locals because the majority of the workers rejected his leadership -- although they did not reject a merger with the Teamsters. When Beck promised to appoint a division head on the basis of a "majority vote" among the Brewery workers, Feller withdrew from negotiations.[575]

Beck, however, continued negotiations with Feller's rivals. He campaigned for their support by promising more impressive leadership in the shorter work week strike. An alliance between these brewery workers and the Teamsters "would guarantee successful solution of the Milwaukee strike and would help achieve on a national level, working conditions to which the brewery workers are entitled."[576] The insurgents, including leaders from 23 locals representing approximately 30,000 of the Brewery workers' 62,000 members, met in Chicago to discuss the merger. On Tuesday, June 30, 1953, the insurgent locals announced that they would soon complete merger agreements to join the Teamsters.[577]

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[574] *Wall Street Journal*, July 8, 1953.
[575] *Wall Street Journal*, July 8, 1953.
[576] *Wall Street Journal*, July 8, 1953.
[577] *Wall Street Journal*, July 1, 1953.

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The combination of the Local 9 shorter work week strike, combined with Beck's willingness to merge with the Brewery insurgents, clearly distressed Walter Reuther. As an opponent of the shorter work week demand, as president of the CIO and as the son of a one-time organizer for the United Brewery Workers, the entire situation was a source of embarrassment which signified not only that the he was out of touch with the rank and file, but that, so long as raiding persisted, workers could vote with their feet and abandon Reuther's shrinking CIO.[578] When notified of Beck's raiding, Reuther -- in Stockholm for a conference of the International Conference of Free Trade Unions -- "authorized a statement in a trans-Atlantic phone conversation with union officials in Washington."[579] Condemning the attacks as the work of irresponsible labor leaders running against the grain of tentative no-raiding agreements between the AFL and the CIO, Reuther warned that the CIO, "now as in the past, is prepared to protect itself from raids such as those of the Teamsters."[580] In truth, Reuther was helpless to protect the CIO from raids so long as he and other "labor statesmen" within the CIO were unwilling to compete with the AFL for the support of militant workers. All he could hope for -- and work for -- is an end to the competition itself.[581]

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[578] For reference to organizing work by Reuther's father, see Sidney Fine (1969) *Sit-down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-1937.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, p.112.

[579] *Wall Street Journal*, July 13, 1953.

[580] *Wall Street Journal*, July 13, 1953.

[581] In the end, the Milwaukee strike ended with the workers -- still in the CIO at the end of the strike -- accepting a partial victory. The shorter work week issue "was settled by a compromise on a paid lunch period that in effect reduces the working time to 37 1/2 hours a week. However, 40 hours will remain the basic schedule for computing overtime." *Wall Street Journal*, July 28, 1953. The most significant shortcoming of this settlement -- while a partial victory resulting from an impressive fight -- was that it did not ultimately succeed in challenging the "norm" of the 40 hour work week.

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During the spring and summer of 1953, agitation begun within the ranks of the American Federation of Labor became public. In mid-May, New York locals of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, already working under contacts calling for a 37 1/2 hour work week, were now asking for a 35-hour week. Shortly thereafter, ILGWU president, David Dubinsky, announced that the shorter work week demand would be made in all upcoming contract negotiations.[582] In mid-June, Elmer Walker, vice president of the International Association of Machinists first floated the balloon of AFL interest in the shorter work week demand. At a meeting of the American Management Association, Walker warned management, "It is not unlikely that a drive for a thirty-five-hour week will spread to all industries." Then, clarifying the difference between managerially initiated, counter-cyclical "short work weeks" and the labor-backed shorter work week demand, he added, "Needless to say, a reduction of hours must not result in a reduction of take-home pay."[583]

Walker's "press leak" about an impending shorter work week campaign was reinforced on September 26th at the 72nd convention of the American Federation of Labor. Meeting in St. Louis, the 700 AFL delegates adopted a resolution committing the federation to a campaign in support of the demand for a shorter work week "without loss of 'take-home' pay."[584]

Of course, the shorter work week demand was not unfamiliar ground within the AFL. Not only had Samuel Gompers long considered the "shorter hours"

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[582] *Wall Street Journal*, May 19, 1953.
[583] *New York Times*, June 18, 1953.
[584] *Proceedings of the Seventy-Second Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, September 21-25, 1953, St. Louis, Missouri*, p.442; *US News & World Report*, October 2, 1953; *Militant*, October 5, 1953.

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movement to be the most effective and popular campaign within organized labor, but it was in response to William Green's 1933 threat to launch a general strike in the United States in support of the 30-hour work week that the Roosevelt administration crafted its corporatist labor regulation program.[585]

For many years, the AFL maintained a Shorter Work Week Committee. Agitation for renewed commitment to the shorter work week came first in January 1949 when Daniel Tracy, president of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and chair of the Shorter Work Week Committee, announced that the AFL intended to move toward that goal in advance of any post-war joblessness.[586] But by 1952, for example, the Committee chairman, Lee Minton, joked that it would be the committee's report, more than the work week, that was likely to be short. Indeed, the report noted that the "Committee has had no resolutions presented to it for formal action."[587]

When the 1953 shorter work week resolution was adopted, it was dismissed by some as a "half-hearted demand," noting that the AFL "traditionally has favored such a policy, officially."[588] Indeed, several major newspapers covering the 1953 convention did not see reason to mention the shorter work week resolution as "news" and even the *Militant*, which hailed the event with a front-page banner headline, acknowledged

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[585] For Gompers, see Harold C. Livesay (1978) *Samuel Gompers and Organized Labor in America*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company. The Green threat and Roosevelt response are discussed in Rhonda F. Levine (1988) *Class Struggle and the New Deal: Industrial Labor, Industrial Capital, and the State*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
[586] Preis (1964), p.379.
[587] *Proceedings of the Seventy-First Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, September 15-23, 1952, New York, NY*, p.479.
[588] *US News & World Report*, October 2, 1953.

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that the "vital action was obscured" by other events at the labor confab.[589] Perhaps the only tangible consequence of the resolution was that it prompted Senator James Murray of Montana to introduce a bill that would amend the Fair Labor Standards Act in order to cut the work week immediately from forty to thirty-seven and one-half hours, then to thirty-five hours after two years.[590]

There is no reason to believe that Meany's new administration -- or the members of the Shorter Work Week Committee -- recommended the resolution to the delegates as an intentional effort to harass Reuther. And Reuther did not feel compelled to respond publicly to the AFL action. However, even *Labor Action*, which supported Reuther and was in no way allied with the shorter hours movement within the UAW, acknowledged in a headline that Reuther had "Some Tough Sledding Ahead." The difficulties to which *Labor Action* referred were not from employers on Reuther's right, but rank-and-file workers -- *and the AFL* -- on his left. Reuther's administration was portrayed as "on the defensive" insofar as the "action of the AFL convention this week calling for a basic 35-hour week can become an embarrassing counter-program by 1955" for the next round of auto industry negotiations. Furthermore, all of this was developing "at a time when the slogan, '30-hour week and 40-hour pay,' is catching fire sufficiently to disturb UAW leaders."[591]

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[589] A.H. Raskin's coverage for the *New York Times* even included a review of resolutions and major actions undertaken by the delegates, but did not mention the shorter work week demand. See *New York Times*, September 26, 1953. The same is true of the *Wall Street Journal*'s summary article by Stephen Galpin. See *Wall Street Journal*, September 26, 1953.
[590] *New York Times*, February 8, 1954.
[591] *Labor Action*, October 5, 1953.

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Indeed, the 30-40 slogan was catching fire. In July, rank-and-file miners were reportedly agitating -- without prompting from the UMW leadership -- for a shorter work week with no cut in pay.[592] In October, a group of California UAW locals took the bold step -- after Reuther's March red-baiting assault on the 30-40 movement -- of announcing their support of the 30-40 demand. These locals included workers in South Gate, in Los Angeles County (Local 216), and San Francisco Bay area workers in Oakland (Local 1031 and especially, Local 76), among others. Activists within these units -- all of them General Motors locals -- then submitted a 30-40 resolution to the UAW-GM council within UAW Region 6. The resolution, which called on Reuther and company "to take immediate action on a program calling for a 30-hour week at 40 hours' pay for all plants under the jurisdiction of the International Union," was adopted.[593] Similarly, in an action distinct from and more bold than the national AFL convention resolution, the Illinois state AFL convention in Springfield voted "overwhelmingly for a 30-hour week at 40 hours pay."[594]

Moreover, the Stellato crew back at Local 600 were now keeping a close eye on the spread of the movement, providing coverage in the pages of *Ford Facts* of shorter work week activity in other unions. The October 31 issue of *Ford Facts* not only provided complete coverage of the California General Motors activity, but also noted support arising in various other unions. The 30-40 program, *Ford Facts* observed, was "gaining general acceptance throughout the Labor Movement. The Garment Workers, the Woodworkers, the United Mine Workers, and now the entire

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[592] *Militant*, August 3, 1953. The *Militant* cites a report from the *Wall Street Journal*.
[593] *Ford Facts*, October 31, 1953; *Militant*, November 9, 1953.
[594] *Militant*, October 26, 1953.

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American Federation of Labor, are asking for a shorter work week."[595] Local 600 had united around the 30-40 program and the labor movement had taken notice.

> The CIO Brewery Workers were on strike and were successful in gaining a shorter work week... Yes, we in Local 600 are proud that we have been in the forefront of organized labor in mapping an economic program... The rank and file workers throughout the country are making their sentiments known. It behooves the International Union; in fact it behooves the leadership of organized Labor generally to become aware of these grass roots rumblings from the dues-paying membership. To lead, one must be in advance and if the leadership does not stay in front of the membership, they will be trampled.[596]

Labor leaders -- inside the UAW and beyond -- were beginning to respond to the 30-40 rumblings. Robert Murphy, the opposition president of Local 659 who had invited Stellato to give the keynote speech at the officers' installation, had since become an extremely active and vocal supporter of the shorter work week campaign and a dissident leader within the UAW. Representing a local of almost 15,000 workers, in the historic nerve center of GM territory, Murphy's independent newspaper, *The Searchlight*, was an important voice for labor concerns neglected by the official literature of the International. Murphy quoted the California GM resolution on the front-page of the November 12 issue of the Local 659 paper and the Local 659 membership proclaimed the 30-40 demand as its number one priority going into the new round of UAW negotiations.[597]

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[595] *Ford Facts*, October 31, 1953.
[596] *Ford Facts*, October 31, 1953. According to a later *Ford Facts* article, the Brewery Workers' shorter work week victory came in July of 1953. See *Ford Facts*, November 6, 1954.
[597] *Militant*, November 23, 1953; *The Searchlight*, November 12, 1953.

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Following in short order came news that the CIO Oilworkers were seeking a reduced work week in negotiations. Then, at a meeting of 450 delegates to the California state CIO convention in San Diego, the delegates gave the 30-40 movement yet another burst of energy and confidence. On November 8, just one week before the opening of the national CIO convention in Cleveland -- Reuther's first as incumbent president -- the California CIO delegates adopted without opposition a strongly worded resolution committing that body to promotion of the "30 for 40" demand.[598]

On the same day, the General Council of Local 600 met to discuss the current state of the movement and to fully articulate its substantive program for action within the UAW and beyond. The program is, in many respects, an exemplary articulation of syndicalist labor theory. In light of constant efforts by Reuther and the Actists to portray the shorter work week movement as an *accommodation* to austerity or a movement in support of greater leisure against higher wages, Local 600 put all such misinterpretations of 30-40 to rest by proclaiming the first point of its program: "MAINTAIN AND RAISE THE LIVING STANDARDS OF ALL WORKERS AND ALL PEOPLE."[599] Moreover, this program point had an added significance in late 1953. Since Reuther had linked wages to a Bureau of Labor Statistics cost-of-living index, the prospect of economic recession and price deflation drove home the point that Reuther's contracts could include nominal wage cuts and seemed to support corporate America's suggestion that even in good times, wage increases should merely offset

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[598] *Militant*, November 23, 1953; *Worker*, November 22, 1953.

[599] This program was printed and reprinted, time and again. Sources include *Ford Facts*, November 21, 1953; *Militant*, November 30, 1953 (excerpted); "Letter from Stellato to Reuther -- November 12, 1953," folder 12, Box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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cost-of-living increases, with static real wages and a motionless standard of living.[600] Thus, even as Reuther seemed prepared to mobilize the union for a bureaucratic skirmish about the method used to calculate the cost-of-living, Local 600 called for "substantial wage increases, not only to offset the high cost of living, but to *raise* living standards."[601] In 1953, such a position was considerably more bold than that occupied by Reuther, who told television viewers that he was "not disturbed" when rising "escalator contracts" became de-escalating wage cuts.[602]

The second point addressed itself to layoffs, automation, the speed-up and the shorter work week. As with the misunderstanding about austerity and shorter hours, there was a reformist version of the shorter hours movement which proposed trading shorter hours for productivity improvements based upon increased effort per hour. Such a trade-off could actually enable companies to simultaneously lay off workers *and* increase the pace of work for those remaining on the job, even with a shorter work week. Rather than a movement against work, such a reform is a concession: work more minutes every hour and work fewer hours per day. Of course, the Local 600 rank-and-file had made it abundantly clear that they wanted to get *out* of the Rouge. But the November 8 program refused to compromise and concede the old fight against the speed-up. Thus, the second point of the program explicitly linked the

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[600] In terms of labor concessions, it might well be argued that corporate appetites come with the eating. Thus, Reuther's willingness to abandon nominal wage increases once escalators turned downward met with neither corporate gratitude nor a love-fest of mutual admiration. Instead, Reuther's concession was followed by an attack, by the National Association of Manufacturers, on the idea that wages should be linked with productivity increases. The industrial group suggested that a true labor statesman would appreciate the value of passing on productivity increases in the form of price reductions rather than wage increases. For the productivity and cost-of-living index controversies, see *New York Times*, April 20 & 27, 1953.

[601] *Ford Facts*, November 21, 1953. Emphasis mine.

[602] *New York Times*, April 27, 1953.

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classic Local 600 demands, promoting "the fight *for* substantial wage increases, *against* speed-up and *for* the shorter work week."[603] Moreover, the manifesto was practically poetic in its discussion of the 30-40 program. The General Council proposed "a 30-hour week, with no reduction in pay, so that workers share the fruits of automation, instead of becoming victims of it. THIS IS THE KEY TO ENLIGHTENED LABOR UNIONS WELCOMING TECHNOLOGICAL IMPROVEMENTS."[604]

Once again, the program was linked with a critique of Reuther's style of military Keynesianism. "We vigorously reject the concept that war or preparations for war offer any permanent solution to unemployment or any other economic

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[603] In classic socialist/corporatist style, the *Militant* picked up on one element "of especial interest": the demand for "competent union time-study men to challenge every new standard." One can only guess that this demand was of such interest because it supposedly implied some kind of evidence of a movement for "worker control" and "worker self-management." Perhaps. But the language is not actually one of active, *formal* participation in managerial decisions so much as an aggressive and *substantive* "challenge" to the speed-up. The difference is significant. The socialist/corporatist tradition is concerned with *how* the decision gets made (e.g., by autocratic managers colonizing the labor process from "outside" or by responsible and, presumably, productive workers on the shop-floor). The syndicalist tradition is concerned with *what* the pace of work will be (e.g., slow, slower, really slow). *Ford Facts*, November 21, 1953. Emphasis mine.

However, it is possible that the similarity to the Reutherite/socialist idea of worker self-management did infect this platform position. That, at least, was the cautionary flag raised by one commentator who *accused* Stellato and the Local 600 leadership of adopting "*the Reuther program on speedup which has been so disastrous to workers in the auto industry*" (emphasis in original). This writer, who hailed the 30-40 program and the "progressive fight against the Reuther administration," nevertheless suggested that the Local 600 demand for the "re-timing of tight jobs at contract termination" was not sufficiently aggressive. "[A]n effective fight against the speedup cannot wait to 'contract termination.' The fight must be made when the problem presents itself." Moreover, the "re-timing" demand was contrasted with the suggestion that Local 600 demand "a flat 15 or 20 percent reduction in work quotas" which would not only fight the speedup, but would "at the same time contribute to the fight against unemployment."

The author further suggested that -- notwithstanding the overwhelming support for Stellato and his broad 30-40 program -- "close contests" within the Rouge building elections reflected dissatisfaction with shop-floor problems. "It is not enough to have a correct program and to lead a worthy fight against Walter Reuther on an international level. It is necessary to give leadership and life to that program within the plants." Indeed, it is possible that the speed-up was given such "programmatic" prominence precisely because the Stellato team in the shops was feeling vulnerable on the speed-up issue. See an unattributed article in *American Socialist*, February 1954, p.18.

[604] *Ford Facts*, November 21, 1953.

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problems."[605] Moreover, as was the case with almost all successful Local 600 officials, the leadership included for ratification a program point explicitly opposing the traditional hierarchies of the labor movement. The program called for an end to "all differentials in the wages of men and women...a model anti-discrimination clause in all contracts" and an end to discrimination against foreign-born workers.[606]

There were two elements in the program which were not like the other ones: a call for Congress to enact a comprehensive public works program and the extension of trade with all nations. The former was, in fact, a call to "take the billions upon billions spent for war and use them for constructive public works projects."[607] This was undoubtedly a page taken from *Reuther*'s old social democratic play book, rather than Local 600's brand of syndicalist labor strategy.[608] Both demands were corporatist in approach, and were undoubtedly signs that the Local 600 leadership still felt compelled to throw a bone to the CP and SWP. The "trade with all nations" line was particularly aimed at socialist loyalists still supporting what the *Militant* referred to as "the new" China, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. CP influence, maintained through John Orr's position within the Local 600 administration, meant that the CP, while not interested in threatening a break with Stellato, was nevertheless autonomous enough -- on the basis of Orr's skilled trades revolt-- to demand inclusion of its corporatist, social democratic, pro-Soviet bloc agenda.[609] In any event, these corporatist themes were not the "headline" issues in the program. While the CP and

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[605] *Ford Facts*, November 21, 1953.
[606] *Ford Facts*, November 21, 1953.
[607] *Ford Facts*, November 21, 1953. Emphasis mine.
[608] *Ford Facts*, November 21, 1953.
[609] *Militant*, November 30, 1953.

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SWP did what they could to promote these schemes, the distinguishing element of Local 600 in *every* civilian (non-CP, non-SWP) account was not its public works proposals or its trade policy, but its 30-40 movement.

Reuther finally responded to the rumblings from below. He announced that the UAW would hold a two-day unemployment conference -- actually billed as a conference about "Full Employment in Peace Time" -- in Washington, DC on December 6 & 7, 1953. Stellato promptly shot off a letter announcing to Reuther that "Local 600 hails the calling" of the conference. "Seeing the handwriting on the wall, the officers of Local 600 have devoted considerable thought to a program to combat unemployment and provide full employment. After considerable discussion at our last General Council meeting, the enclosed program was adopted unanimously."[610] Stellato not only enclosed the Local 600 program in his letter, but he made certain that both the program *and the letter* were widely distributed and discussed in advance of the conference. Indeed, the *Militant* not only supported the program in substance and commended the local for crafting "an all-out hard-hitting campaign for a far-reaching program," but it showered praise on the *Ford Facts* promotional job. "We must state at the outset," the *Militant* proclaimed, "that this is one of the greatest jobs of union journalism we have ever had the pleasure to read." By the time of the conference, it

[610] See "Letter from Stellato to Reuther," in file 3, box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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was well known that Local 600 had presented a complete program for consideration at the conference. Local 600 had effectively put the 30-40 demand on the agenda.[611]

[611] *Wage Earner*, December 1953; *Militant*, November 30, 1953.

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Chapter 14: What's Left? Bert Cochran and the Socialist Workers Party, 1953-54

All the agitation was beginning to have an impact. As president of the CIO Reuther still considered it safe to ignore the issue of the shorter work week. True to form, Reuther did not even mention the idea of the shorter work week during the 1953 CIO convention in Cleveland.[612] But within the UAW, eight months after the messy 1953 Convention, the movement remained strong, despite Reuther's attacks on its legitimacy. Indeed, it was in preparation for the December unemployment conference in Washington that the Reuther administration began a careful *retreat*.

The director of Reuther's research department, Nat Weinberg, was given the task of drafting a new, more accommodating stance. The Reuther administration was still unwilling to adopt the program as its own, and it still attacked the leaders of Local 600, but it backed away from head-on opposition to the *demand* itself, at least in the abstract.[613]

Weinberg's draft statement, which closely parallels the Reutherite response to Local 600 at the Washington unemployment conference, began with an embrace, rather than a repudiation, of the shorter work week. "I believe we will win the 30-hour week. When it comes, I hope we will work four 7 1/2-hour days or three 10-hour days a week and not five 6-hour days as proposed by the top officers of Local 600." Already, with this statement, there is a reversal in terms of *engagement* with the

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[612] Preis (1964), p.489.

[613] For Weinberg's document, see "Final Draft" (November 11, 1953) in "Shorter Workweek, 1956-61" file, box 59, UAW Research Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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details of a worthwhile aim, combined with an effort to *surpass* Local 600's initiative by challenging the norm of the five day week. It is not clear that the Local 600 leadership did, in fact, ever committ itself to the five day week rather than the four- or three-day, 30-hour work week. But there is no question that the Reuther administration was trying to embrace the superior form of the shorter work week demand (since it would simultaneously eliminate the commuting time of at least one round-trip to work).

Of the five arguments used in the 1953 UAW Convention resolution to repudiate the shorter work week demand, a few were now missing. Gone was all the "Kremlin" talk and red-baiting which had challenged the patriotism of anyone who supported the shorter work week. Not only might this have reflected a new level of accommodation between Reuther and the CP, but it also meant that the shorter hour demand itself was already too popular and, thus, impervious to "demonizing" rhetoric. While the Weinberg document expressed some skepticism about the motives of the leaders of Local 600, the charge was one of irresponsible union campaigning more than anti-American subversive activity.

The 1953 convention resolution had also downplayed the likelihood of significant unemployment. Apparently, this position no longer seemed viable, especially in light of the increasingly obvious threat posed, not only by cyclical recession and a post-Korea economic slump, but by automation.

But the Reutherites still opposed the shorter work week demand. The primary reason given at the unemployment conference was that the UAW was already too

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weak to impose serious demands upon employers. Weinberg analyzed the 30-40 demand in terms of the increased hourly wage *rate* necessary to cut worktime by 25% without a comparable cut in take-home pay, and simply concluded that "the arithmetic on that one is out of this world," especially when combined with the other contract demands within the Local 600 program. Nevertheless, referring explicitly to the Local 600 officers, Weinberg conjured up some hypothetical "terms" for a Reutherite capitulation to Local 600 and the 30-40 movement.

> If I thought they could bring back even a sizable fraction of such a package, I would be in favor of putting them on the national negotiating committee. But I would want them first to put up or shut up. I would want them to agree that if they didn't bring back what they now so freely promise, they would resign their local union offices, keep quiet, and get out of the way to let the rest of us take care of the serious business of trade unionism -- advancing and protecting the workers' interests on a sound basis that makes sense.[614]

Of course, no such "terms" had ever been imposed upon to the multitude of grandiose corporatist schemes put forth by Reuther -- and quickly rejected by the auto companies -- over the years. If they had, Reuther would have had to "shut up" and resign from union office years ago. But the idea behind this hypothetical dare nevertheless represented an acknowledgment that the ability to deliver a contract calling for 30 hours of work at 40 hours' pay had become something of a standard by which leaders might be judged. Weinberg's position seemed to be that Reuther was not up to the task and, in all likelihood, neither was anybody from Local 600.

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[614] "Final Draft" (November 11, 1953) in "Shorter Workweek, 1956-61" file, box 59, UAW Research Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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But the threat to give bargaining responsibility to Local 600 was never real. Indeed, for all the complaining about "union politicking," union officers in politically competitive unions were nevertheless at the mercy of all proponents of bold and popular programs. With the rumblings of the shorter work week movement in his ear, it was Reuther who would have to put up or shut up. Simple opposition to the 30-40 demand was an increasingly difficult position. There was, however, the possibility of refuge in delay. The Weinberg document asserted, "I am in favor of launching the fight for a shorter workweek as soon as it makes sense to do so. To me, that means after we have won the guaranteed annual wage."[615]

By the time of the December meeting in Washington, the Reutherite line had become even more accommodating. "We are prepared to say," conceded Reuther, "that while the Guaranteed Annual Wage is first, it does not preclude a shorter work week. You can mark it down for the 1955 pre-negotiations conference. We will be out front leading the fight for a shorter work week when the factors are right."[616] After the Washington event, one commentator observed,

> Reuther has been compelled to make a tactical shift at the recent Washington conference. Rather than take the proponents of 30-40 head on, Reuther retreated from the position of [March 1953] and proposed that the question of a shorter work week with no cut in take home pay be discussed in a 'Pre-Negotiations Conference in 1955.' Reuther now treated the shorter work week demand as legitimate and assured the conference that 'we will be out in front leading the fight for a shorter work week when the factors are right.'[617]

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[615] "Final Draft" (November 11, 1953) in "Shorter Workweek, 1956-61" file, box 59, UAW Research Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[616] *Ford Facts*, December 12, 1953.
[617] *American Socialist*, February 1953.

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According to the same account of the event, the Local 600 leadership and other 30-40 advocates were quite stunned by Reuther's reversal. After the savage assault of the UAW Convention in March, Reuther's concession was undoubtedly somewhat disarming, precisely because it was a straightforward promise to put the shorter work week on the collective bargaining discussion agenda in preparation for the 1955 round. Stellato's report to the rank and file of Local 600 was quite optimistic. While Local 600 had always argued that the demand was an urgent one, and nobody could doubt that Reuther's postponement was still a sign of his resistance to the campaign, the 30-40 proponents at the conference had a difficult time keeping the heat on Reuther when he was already sweating. He had, for all intents and purposes, yelled for mercy. Furthermore, the Washington, DC venue made Reuther's agenda -- primarily legislative -- seem appropriate for the December conference. Stellato reported, "When Brother Reuther took the position that the question of a shorter work week would be re-evaluated in a collective bargaining conference to be held in the latter part of 1954 -- just prior to the '55 contract negotiations -- we were completely satisfied."[618] Local 600's agenda, which was after all a collective bargaining demand rather than a legislative proposal, was now officially on the agenda for discussions of the next contract round. Reuther's concession was a substantial victory for Stellato and the 30-40 movement. Reuther had lost control of his most prized possession: the union's agenda.

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[618] *Ford Facts*, December 12, 1953.

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Reuther had shifted from a strategy of open confrontation to a more subtle use of procrastination and delay. It served him well. The 30-40 issue did not dominate the agenda of the meeting. Indeed, the *Wall Street Journal* did not even report the shift in Reuther's approach to the 30-40 movement. Rather, Reuther's own political agenda and 13-point legislative program received all of the attention. Deploying a political discourse in order to shift responsibility from the question of UAW inaction to governmental neglect, Reuther accused the Eisenhower Administration of "talking instead of taking vigorous action to head off mounting unemployment and a 'depression.'"[619] The 13-point program, adopted by the 900 delegates, called for a Federal housing program, a Federal Anti-Discrimination Act, higher jobless benefits, a minimum wage increase, and other traditional social democratic visions of governmental largesse. All of this made clear that Reuther had not been converted to the shorter hours movement. But he had been moved to recognize its power within the rank and file.

One measure of the significance of the 30-40 movement at this time is reflected in a development within the socialist left. In November 1953, a large group of SWP members (about 18% of the SWP by Cannon's count, with other estimates as high as 40%) broke with the Trotskyist party and were simultaneously expelled.[620] Several issues -- mostly unrelated to each other, were involved in the split, led by Bert Cochran, Harry Braverman (a.k.a. Harry Frankel), and initially, George Clarke.

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[619] *Wall Street Journal*, December 7, 1953.

[620] On Cannon's count, see *Militant*, December 14, 1953. The Shachtmanites reported the 40% estimate, though they considered it "safe to say that the SWP is losing about a third of its organization." See *Labor Action*, November 16, 1953.

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The split, which had been developing since 1951, related to the post-war persistence of Stalinism, the rise of "socialist revolutions" in China and Yugoslavia, and the relationship of orthodox Trotskyism to both. Inspired by larger trends within the Trotskyist "Fourth International" under the leadership of Pablo at the Third World Congress, the Cochranites represented a faction committed, if not to joining Socialist and Communist parties as occurred in some European countries, at least to distance itself from the SWP's alleged "Stalinophobia" and to break with orthodox Trotskyism. Indeed, the Cochranites were part of a larger revisionist movement, while Cannon actually split with this revisionism, remaining faithful to a more orthodox interpretation of Trotskyist writings. Cochran went so far as to accuse Cannon of launching "a war on the World Trotskyist movement."[621]

But exactly what followed orthodox Trotskyism was less well defined. The move toward alliances with Socialists and Communists was not so simple since most Socialists despised the Stalinists of the Communist party. However, since both the Socialists and the Communists had embraced relatively conservative, social democratic positions, the Cochranite move was clearly toward a more "moderate" position than that of the "revolutionary" SWP. For example, the simple fact of becoming "ex-Trotskyists" ignited a vicious feud between the Cochranites and the Cannonites (after James Cannon, leader of the SWP), but also threw the Cochranites -- awkwardly -- into an anti-SWP dialogue with the similarly ex-Trotskyist (but "Stalinophobic") Shachtmanites![622] Cochran played to Shachtmanite sympathies when he accused the

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[621] Wald (1987), pp.295-300; *Labor Action*, November 23, 1953.

[622] Cochran even went so far as to publish a statement in *Labor Action* on November 23, 1953. Much was made of this within the SWP. See *Militant*, November 30; December 14, 1953.

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Cannonites of "thorough-going sectarianism" combined with "two-bit-dictatorial methods" and -- just for good measure -- added some Shachtmanite red-baiting, suggesting that "one has to go to the Stalinist movement for any comparison with this bureaucratic outrage."[623]

This was further complicated, in terms of UAW factional struggles, by the fact that, unlike some in the SWP, Bert Cochran had always been a vocal opponent of Walter Reuther.[624] As a result, the Cochranite perspective on the labor movement was eclectic, if not totally random.[625] The SWP correctly warned that Cochran's political position could lead him to "oscillate wildly" in a dance of ideological "gyrations" that have since been characterized as "thoughtful" but "hard to label."[626]

The Cochranites formed a political "group" called the Socialist Union and, in early 1954, began publishing a monthly journal called the *American Socialist*.[627] What is remarkable about the journal is that -- even though it was totally incapable of crafting a coherent and consistent position regarding the 30-40 movement -- it devoted enormous attention to the movement and its unfolding within the UAW. The second edition of the journal's first volume included a report on the December unemployment conference. The report highlighted, with a sub-headline, that "Reuther reverses

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[623] *Labor Action*, November 23, 1953.
[624] Wald (1987), p.298.
[625] It did not help that Braverman seems to have been far less interested in the labor movement. He began emphasizing the catastrophic implications of labor process dynamics -- especially automation -- while writing in the pages of the *American Socialist*. In this writing, as in his later, more mainstream sociological work, the rank-and-file are characterized as passive, helpless victims of the overwhelming revolutionary impulse driving capitalist technological innovation. Working class struggle plays almost no role in his writing. See, for example, his article "Automation: Promise and Menace" in *American Socialist*, October 1955.
[626] *Militant*, December 14, 1953; Wald (1987), p.300.
[627] Wald (1987), p.300.

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himself on 30-hour week" and provided "some recent labor history" to "help place the matter in better focus." This history recounted Reuther's endorsement of the 30-40 demand during the era when he was "still aspiring to a bigger role in the UAW" and the subsequent reversal on 30-40 once Reuther "arrived as a 'labor statesman.'" Indeed, the *American Socialist* even explained Reuther's opposition to 30-40 by suggesting that Reuther was less opposed to the shorter work week itself than he was afraid of advocating any policies which were sufficiently vague as to "permit considerable juggling and maneuvering in their actual implementation."

> This accounts for Reuther's... attitude toward the 30-hour week with 40 hours' pay, as this demand does not lend itself so easily to manipulation. Even the most inexperienced rank-and-file worker can readily measure progress made in achieving this goal.[628]

The Cochranites contrasted the specificity of 30-40 to Reuther's program of a guaranteed annual wage, characterized as "the kind of demand which can mean all things to all men."[629]

Indeed, harking back to the summer of 1951, the journal published a special profile of the historic and militant fight of Ford Local 600, complete with a photo from the great 30-40 rally attended by John L. Lewis. While critical of the Local's recent record on fighting the speed-up, the profile heaped praise on the 30-40 movement, especially in its capacity as an internal, anti-Reuther, union fight. "Local 600's

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[628] *American Socialist*, February 1954.
[629] *American Socialist*, February 1954.

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leadership must be given full credit for militant defense of the democratic rights of the UAW membership and a progressive fight against the Reuther administration."[630]

Nevertheless, the strength of this endorsement was undermined, to a considerable extent, by several contradictory suggestions. After explicitly praising 30-40 as a "fight against the Reuther administration," in factional language far more incendiary than anything the CP would have condoned after 1952, the *American Socialist* leapt to the defense of Horace Sheffield, "Reutherite President" of the Local 600 foundry unit. Since the adoption of the full 30-40 program by the General Council in early November, Sheffield -- isolated as probably the only black Shachtman-aligned Reutherite ever to hold unit office in Local 600 -- began writing "anti-30-40" articles in his weekly *Ford Facts* column. One column suggested that the demand was too costly.

While Stellato did not have the authority to break the autonomy demonstrated by unit presidents in their *Ford Facts* columns, his editors did publish a slanderous attack on Sheffield, printed as an "introduction" to the column. Stellato's crew crafted a sub-headline suggesting that "Sheffield's Heart Bleeds for the Company" and indirectly accusing Sheffield of demonstrating through his column that "the Company has agents within the union who are speaking for them."[631] Quite understandably, the Reutherite *Wage Earner* attacked the Stellato "introduction" as a "neat-smear job" and defended the substance of Sheffield's argument.[632]

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[630] *American Socialist*, February 1954.
[631] *Ford Facts*, November 21, 1953.
[632] *Wage Earner*, December 1953.

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The Cochranites, having endorsed Local 600's anti-Reuther struggle, nevertheless proceeded to criticize as unfortunate the "baiting and smearing" tone in the *Ford Facts* attack. In itself, this is not bizarre, especially since the attack on Sheffield could easily be seen as racially inspired in its venomous excess. But the Cochranites -- who did not mention any racial angle -- went beyond defending Sheffield's right to free expression. Rather, in an extraordinary "gyration," the *American Socialist* sided with Sheffield's "point of view" and suggested that the 30-40 demand "appears somewhat far-fetched."[633]

On the timing of the shorter work week and its relationship to unemployment, the Cochranite perspective was even more conflicted and convoluted. The 30-40 movement at Local 600 had not arisen in order to remedy an existing unemployment situation. During the war years, the late '40s, and the early '50s, Local 600 had presented the shorter work week demand as a pro-active weapon for reducing labor supply *within* the context of labor market tightness and rank-and-file leverage -- both on the market and, in turn, on the shop-floor. And even in 1953 and 1954, when some Detroit plants were laying off workers during the mild, cyclical, economic slump that followed Eisenhower's "hard money" policy, the Rouge was still running full blast and temporary layoffs resulting from the downturn bypassed Local 600. Indeed, Ford reached a postwar employment high in the summer of 1953.[634] In late 1953, *Labor Action* noted that, even as much of the auto industry was in a temporary downturn, "The Ford company is a major exception."[635] The 30-40 movement took its cues from

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[633] *American Socialist*, February 1954.
[634] *Wall Street Journal*, June 26, 1953.
[635] *Labor Action*, October 5, 1953.

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internal, union political struggles. If anything, it was a leading indicator of labor militancy, not a lagging indicator of economic and employment trends.

But when trying to account for "increased support for the 30-40 demand," the Cochranites said nothing about Stellato's victory over Reuther at Local 600, for example, nor about any other internal, union political dynamics. Rather, the growth of the movement corresponded neatly with "the growth of unemployment, particularly in the auto industry since the UAW convention in March" of 1953.

Leaving aside for a moment the viability of Cochranite efforts to identify the proper variables in accounting for the popularity and growth of the 30-40 movement, it is unclear -- in light of this Cochranite analysis -- when, if ever, a shorter work week movement would be strategically synchronized to the labor market and economic cycles of growth and contraction. Indeed, the Cochranite analysis might lead one to question how the great shorter hours victories of the 19th and early 20th centuries were even possible. On the one hand, the *American Socialist* suggested that a period of strong economic output a strong demand for labor (i.e., a tight labor market) made the shorter work week demand untimely. "Actually," the Cochranites assured readers, "unemployment at this stage has not reached a point to make the 30-hour demand as such realistic. Particularly at Ford and General Motors where workers continue to work overtime hours at present."[636]

Such a sentiment would seem to imply that the demand is best made, not through the leverage of workers in a sellers' labor market, but through the anxious energy and frantic desperation of the unemployed. But the *American Socialist* article

[636] *American Socialist*, February 1953.

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did not leave this question open to speculation. Instead, the Cochranites reversed course, suggested that unemployment *had* already created frantic desperation, and insisted that a cyclical downturn was no time for a shorter work week movement.

> [T]he problems of unemployment are present now and require action now... at the same time strike action to achieve this demand becomes more difficult. Because as layoffs occur, the workers on the job become more leery of strike action. They become anxious to get every minute of available time. As a result division between the employed and unemployed sections of the class becomes more acute.[637]

Thus, the 30-40 demand was "far-fetched" because "unemployment at this stage has not reached a point to make the 30-hour demand as such realistic." On the other hand, the "problems of unemployment are present now" which makes the 30-40 demand "more difficult." For all that, the Local 600 leadership deserves "full credit" for proposing this utterly useless demand! Perhaps this is what the *Militant* meant when it predicted that the Cochranites would oscillate wildly.

The *Militant*, for its part, changed its tone. Perhaps Cochran had helped to contain the influence within the SWP of what he called the "ultimatism and smug braggadocio" of its position. With Cochran's departure, this ultimatism found its way almost immediately onto the pages of the *Militant*. The smug braggadocio -- especially visible in the labor coverage -- was undoubtedly a form of over-compensation for vulnerability within the new SWP. One devastating consequence of the Cochranite split was that when the ex-Trotskyists left, they took with them

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[637] *American Socialist*, February 1953.

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virtually all of the SWP's Detroit branch.[638] In terms of the UAW activity in Detroit, the SWP was now operating without a base. And given its newfound revolutionary bluster, it was unlikely to build a new base of support within the rank-and-file.

Within the *Militant*, coverage of the December unemployment conference was remarkably shrill in its revolutionary rhetoric. Such rhetoric accompanied -- and undoubtedly undermined -- a feeble attempt to ride the 30-40 wave. The *Militant* suggested that Reuther's resolutions were flawed since the "only solution is to reorganize production on a rational plan to produce abundance for all." Several paragraphs later, almost as an afterthought, the opportunism kicks in: "The only attitude labor can take in the face of these drives of the capitalist system, is to adopt the principle contained in the demand for a 30-hour week at 40 hours pay." But even this *non sequitor* gives way to the rather distinct assertion that industries "should be nationalized and operated under the control of the workers."[639] Indeed, the SWP writer hedged on the precise significance of the shorter work week within capitalism: "We think this demand is a good one despite the fact that many who support it do not oppose capitalism."[640]

Moreover, the *Militant* made an extraordinary amendment to the Local 600 program by proposing a "sliding scale of hours" combined with "a rational and planned" economic system. "The sliding scale of hours is the extension of the "30 for 40" demand to its logical conclusion."[641] Apparently, the SWP was comfortable

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[638] *Labor Action*, November 16, 1953.
[639] *Militant*, December 28, 1953.
[640] *Militant*, January 11, 1954.
[641] *Militant*, December 28, 1953.

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imagining a time when workers might volunteer to work more hours per week. The 30-40 proponents at Local 600 never even considered this idea. The 30-40 activists were fighting for an historic reduction in the length of the work week and they were playing for keeps.

In Detroit, the movement continued to gain momentum. In January, Ford Local 900, the smaller Lincoln division Local in Detroit, aligned itself with the 30-40 movement.[642] Each week, the pages of *Ford Facts* were filled with arguments and comments in support of the 30-40 movement, along with reports on the movement's growth and progress throughout the labor movement. Many of the columns written by the unit leaders spoke to the urgency of the issue. Responding to Reuther's suggestion that the shorter work week would have to wait until a time "when the factors are right," the leaders of the Rouge Motor Building declared,

> We are of the opinion that that time has arrived. Industry has made tremendous strides in installing automation which resulted in thousands of workers being laid off every day. We are concerned with jobs for all -- not a guaranteed wage for the few who will be lucky enough to remain at work. We believe that now is the time to begin preparing for the fight for the 30-hour week with 40 hours' pay because we believe that is the only foreseeable solution to create jobs for the jobless... We call on the International Union officers to change their position and join with Local 600 in fighting for a better life for all Americans -- NOW.[643]

Furthermore, the 30-40 movement took on yet another kind of urgency. Local 600 had been beating the drums for a shorter work week as an alternative to military

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[642] *Worker*, January 24, 1954.
[643] *Ford Facts*, February 13, 1954.

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Keynesianism since the earliest days of the Korean War. Now, Stellato felt compelled -- almost uniquely so -- to reject a new "full employment" program: what he called "a shooting war" in a land called "Indo-China." In his presidential column of *Ford Facts*, he declared,

> We entered the war in Korea and under a war-time economy we had three years of artificial prosperity. The parallel is that today the Republican administration is beating the propaganda drums in an effort to condition the American people [for] entrance into a shooting war in Indo-China. We have not heard from any of our labor statesmen.[644]

Once again, the shorter work week allowed for a break in the traditional link that had led labor to become invested in and defenders of the American war machine. Stellato was convincing in his refusal to support "an abortive attempt to hold together the last remnants of French colonialism in Asia" simply to create increased demand for labor in America.[645]

Local 659's paper, the *Searchlight*, became closely associated with the shorter work week movement, and did so with a similar opposition to military Keynesianism. "We in Local 659 are not waiting until our people are in dire need of assistance to take action," the newspaper announced. Robert Murphy, president of Local 659, recalled for readers, "I advocated a thirty-two hour work week with forty hours' pay because the handwriting was on the wall at that time that we were going to go on short work

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[644] *Ford Facts*, April 10, 1954.

[645] *Ford Facts*, April 10, 1954. For the history of anti-war activity at Local 600 during the Vietnam era, see Frank F. Koscielski (1997) *Divided Loyalties: American Unions and the Vietnam War* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation). Detroit: Wayne State University. Chapters 4 and 5 consider the particular role played by Local 600.

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weeks or mass layoffs."[646] "We are now faced with a 32 hour work week with only 32-hours pay... For the past fifteen years our nation's economy has been fed by billions upon billions spent on war materials. This also provided work on a temporary basis.... We must take positive action... to forestall the elimination of our jobs and the security from which we have received some solace since late 1939."[647]

Even in locals where the leadership was Reutherite, anti-incumbent insurgents fought -- with some success -- to carve out spaces for agitation in support of the shorter work week. In California, this took the form of a newspaper called the *Rank and Filer*, published by the Rank and File Caucus of Local 216.[648] Even militant staffers did the best they could. Frank Marquart, an old-time Detroit socialist and Education Director of Local 212 -- the old, militant Briggs local that was now part of Chrysler-- presented readers of the *Voice of Local 212* with his analysis of contemporary union issues. The February issue of the newspaper discussed labor-saving drives underway at Ford, GM, and Chrysler. In response to these developments, Marquart reported, "A growing movement for 30-hours a week with 40 hours pay may soon be just as logical as the movement for the eight-hour day was back in 1886."[649] This was a bold gesture (even for a gadfly staffer like Marquart) in a local whose leadership was firmly established as a core element within the Reuther caucus!

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[646] *Searchlight*, February 18, 1954.
[647] *Searchlight*, February 2, 1954.
[648] See *Militant*, April 5, 1954. By the 1955 UAW Convention, this dissident group had captured all of the delegate seats of the local. See the roll call vote in *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 27-April 1, 1955, Cleveland, Ohio*, pp.420-421.
[649] See *Militant*, March 8, 1954.

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In fact, Reuther was in some danger of losing any grip on the core cities of the auto industry -- Detroit and Lansing. Not only did he confront powerful 30-40 movements within Ford (Local 600 and Local 900) and GM (Local 659), but agitation had begun to make headway in Dodge Main Local 3, where a few Trotskyist militants struggled to be heard. Most well known among the activists was Edith Fox, an early member of the Johnsonite faction who, along with her husband Art (a skilled tradesman at the Rouge), remained an articulate and powerful voice for militant rank-and-file demands within Detroit. Launching a campaign from within the Trim Shop Unit of the local, the activists made an initial splash when the March 13 issue of the *Dodge Main News* included coverage of a resolution adopted by the Trim Shop workers. The resolution suggested that "in the face of mass unemployment the Dodge Main management continues the vicious speed-up drive." The proposed response: "Fighting for a 30 HOUR WORK WEEK WITH 40 HOURS' PAY NOW, as an immediate means of creating more jobs."[650]

Unlike Local 600 and Local 659, Local 3 was operating at minimal staffing levels. Employment had temporarily dropped to about 1,500 workers in a local with almost 20,000 members. In response, Edith Fox and others organized "Unemployment Councils" which, among other things, led a march to Detroit's City Hall. But the unemployed also went on record in support of the 30-40 demand.[651]

Shortly before the union elections at Local 3, Pat Quinn, the left-wing incumbent vice-president, chaired a rally of unemployed Dodge workers. Stellato, the

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[650] See *Militant*, March 29, 1954.
[651] *Militant*, April 26, 1954.

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keynote speaker, told the jobless crowd that the Reuther's Guaranteed Annual Wage proposal was "a fine thing -- something we should fight for -- but it would only help those presently working. But negotiate a shorter work week, and we all can have jobs."[652] Stellato was joined on the podium by Pete Horvath, president of Budd Wheel Local 306, who also championed the shorter work week demand. Sympathetic representatives from other Detroit locals also spoke, including officers from the militant Chrysler Tank Local 1200 along with the presidents of Amalgamated Locals 236 and 351.[653]

When Local 3 union elections were held May 26-27, 1954, the incumbents -- President Joe Cheal and vice-president Pat Quinn -- ran against an insurgent slate of Reutherites. The Cheal/Quinn program listed as its top priority "the 30 hour week at 40 hours' pay."[654] In yet another sign of the support within the rank-and-file for champions of the 30-40 program, Cheal, Quinn, and all but one candidate on their 30-40 slate were re-elected. With the victory at Local 3, Reuther faced the prospect going into the 1955 UAW contract negotiations with opposition "30-40" locals in major automaker hubs throughout the auto core of Michigan.

Strong support for the shorter hours movement also emerged within the CIO's Packinghouse Workers Union. The February 1954 issue of *The Packinghouse Worker* featured a banner headline, "AIM FOR 30 HOUR WEEK -- 40 HOURS PAY." An article by Harold Nielsen, director of District 1 (whose constituency included the heart of the Chicago-based Packinghouse industry) suggested that automation was taking its toll

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[652] *Worker*, May 16, 1954.
[653] *Worker*, May 16, 1954.
[654] *Militant*, June 14, 1954.

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on the union membership. While not opposing the technological innovations, Nielsen suggested that the union needed to respond to the threat to labor's leverage implied by technologically induced layoffs. "The major goal of this union" Nielsen proposed, should be "a 40 hour pay check for 30 hours work."[655] In April, 10,000 packinghouse workers in Chicago joined an hour-long demonstration in support of the 30-40 demand.[656]

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[655] See *Militant*, March 8, 1954.
[656] *Militant*, May 3, 1954.

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Chapter 15: "Thirty-for-Forty" Hits the CIO, 1954

In 1953 and 1954, anti-Reutherite opportunists and predators -- near and far -- circled his administration like sharks reacting to a flesh wound. As the shorter work week movement progressed, Reuther's rivals began to notice that in his opposition to the popular movement, leaders at Local 600 might have discovered Reuther's Achilles' heel. Reuther's greatest strength was that he understood the power of the affirmative. He dominated the UAW by constantly filling its discursive life with various programs, bargaining schemes, and visions. Like Lewis, Reuther knew how to make use of a left-wing brain trust. As the Cochranites suggested, most of these proposals were vague. But Reuther kept on top of the game so long as people agreed -- or disagreed -- with *his* proposals.

The 30-40 demand was different. Thanks to the broad, opportunistic political culture at Local 600 in the late 1940's and early 1950's, Stellato hit upon the *vision* thing. More than any other leader within the UAW, Stellato had been able to resist Reuther's consolidation of power because he managed to affirm a vision and force Reuther into the weakened position of defense and critique. When anti-Reuther rivals got wind of the dynamic made possible by the shorter hours movement, they began to play on Reuther's vulnerability.

This was undoubtedly the case, for example, with David McDonald. McDonald had succeeded Philip Murray as president of the CIO's Steelworkers Union (USW). McDonald quickly established himself as a Reuther foe. He put up Allan S. Haywood, loyal director of organization under Murray's CIO leadership, as a

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candidate against Reuther for the CIO presidency. This contest exposed a CIO ripe for dissent: Reuther was elected at the 1952 CIO convention, but by the slim margin of 52% against Haywood's 48%.[657] For most of 1953, McDonald found himself publicly attacking Reuther, but with little more than personal rivalry to offer as the basis for conflict.

In order to enhance his base of support, McDonald required a substantive labor program. Like others, he discovered that his role, by default, was to comment on Reuther's ideas: opposition to cost-of-living escalator contracts, support for the guaranteed annual wage. Moreover, his own brain trust was of no help. Like Murray, McDonald promoted the labor agenda of ACTU. Indeed, the USW had been the primary font of corporatist labor philosophy since the wartime publication of *The Dynamics of Industrial Democracy*, an explicitly anti-syndicalist defense of labor-management cooperation co-authored by Clinton S. Golden (one of the few USW officers who did not come to the USW through John L. Lewis) and Harold J. Ruttenberg, USW research director.[658]

Within the UAW, however, ACTU remained --uncomfortably at times, no doubt -- loyal members of the *Reuther* caucus. Thus, there was precious little ideological nourishment within the ACTU basket for a leader like McDonald, seeking to differentiate himself from Reuther.[659] The best McDonald could do was try split up

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[657] Zieger (1995), p.336.
[658] For the corporatism of Golden and Ruttenberg, see Clinton S. Golden & Harold J. Ruttenberg (1942) *The Dynamics of Industrial Democracy*. New York: Harper and Brothers. Also, Lloyd Ulman (1962) *The Government of the Steel Workers' Union*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, p.76.
[659] For the personal rivalry and the responses to Reuther initiatives, see Zieger (1995) and *Business Week*, January 10, 1953; January 17, 1953; March 21, 1953. For the ACTU affiliation, see *Labor Action*, July 19, 1954.

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the ACTU/Shachtmanite coalition by red-baiting Reuther and his coterie of socialist staffers.[660]

The Reutherite machine actively embraced the rivalry and was certainly not content to have McDonald benefit from his appropriation of Reutherite programs. In particular, Reuther poked at McDonald when he seized upon Reuther's own guaranteed annual wage demand. In the first week of March 1954, Victor Reuther, Walter's brother and a CIO staffer, was quoted as saying that the "CIO will seek the wage guarantee in... the steel industry this year."[661] Whether an intentional snub or not, such comments made it difficult for McDonald to stick with the guaranteed annual wage as if it were his own. He issued a statement calling Victor Reuther's comment "presumptuous" and "misleading" and suggested that the CIO does not bargain for the Steelworkers and that the USW had not firmly settled upon a labor program.[662] McDonald needed a new program.

The growth of the 30-40 movement within the UAW, and publicity about Reuther's opposition to the movement, caught McDonald's opportunistic eye. Few events signal the popularity of the shorter work week demand as powerfully as its appropriation by David McDonald. Surely McDonald's ACTist, corporatist upbringing under the tutelage of Philip Murray was anything but an internship in the ideology of militant syndicalism. But to pursue his anti-Reutherite ambitions, McDonald needed the rank and file. In 1954, those who needed the rank and file needed the shorter hours movement.

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[660] Zieger (1995), p.336.
[661] *Business Week*, March 6, 1954.
[662] *Business Week*, March 6, 1954.

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In three weeks following McDonald's clash with Victor Reuther, McDonald began to distance himself from Reuther's guaranteed wage proposal and float the demand for a shorter work week. In an attempt to take some of the wind out of Reuther's sails, McDonald suggested that the "Guaranteed Annual Wage" was "misnamed." What Reuther advocated (and McDonald supported) would properly be understood as limited-duration employer supplements to existing state unemployment insurance.[663]

On March 19, 1954, the *Wall Street Journal* reported on the proceedings of the annual convention of the Pennsylvania CIO Council with the headline, "Pennsylvania CIO Urges 6-Hour Day." McDonald introduced a shorter work week resolution which warned of the *strategic* crisis of unemployment. The immediate challenge of unemployment was that "the trade union movement will be the first to bear the brunt of attack in the drive for speed-up and wage cuts." The resolution urged all affiliated unions to strive through contract negotiations to establish a six hour day "with no reduction in pay."[664] In his address to the delegates, McDonald proposed that the shorter work week would be necessary so long as labor market demand "fails to provide full employment with the present eight-hour day."[665]

The Pittsburgh-based convention was a cleverly chosen venue for McDonald's syndicalist foray. The Council was McDonald's well defended bunker within Reuther's CIO and the 1,200 assembled delegates were almost certain to support a shorter work week resolution. In fact, the delegates voted unanimously in support of

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[663] *Militant*, March 22, 1954.
[664] *Wall Street Journal*, March 19, 1954.
[665] *Business Week*, March 27, 1954. See also, *Militant*, March 29, 1954.

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McDonald's 6-hour day resolution. Reuther could not directly control the bargaining agendas of the CIO internationals -- like the Brewery Union. However, since the time of 1951 CIO Convention when Reuther -- as chair of the resolutions committee -- had blocked Stellato's appeal to Ed Lohre of the CIO Woodworkers Union for the introduction of a 30-40 resolution, the shorter work week demand had been silenced within the CIO as an organized federation. Now McDonald had broken the silence.

But the CIO Council was also a relatively safe place for McDonald to raise the issue since the CIO was not itself a collective bargaining agent. On contract issues, the two labor federations functioned as public spheres in which proposals could be floated without requiring that incumbent officers like McDonald actually deliver the goods. *Business Week*, for example, noted that even though McDonald had mentioned the shorter work week on several occasions in the latter half of March, this "probably doesn't mean USW will make any real effort to win a six-hour day in what looks like tough bargaining in 1954."[666]

Nevertheless, the embrace of the shorter work week was an extremely effective part of McDonald's war against Reuther. It was introduced against the backdrop of McDonald's most persistent and dangerous threat: to break away from the CIO. The threat was even more serious than the simple withdrawal of the USW -- and the refusal to make its dues payments -- from Reuther's CIO. McDonald publicly flirted with the idea of joining with the other two bad-boys of organized labor, Dave Beck of the Teamsters and John L. Lewis of the independent United Mineworkers, to form a *third* rival labor federation.

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[666] *Business Week*, March 27, 1954.

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Lewis, the great figure in the history of American labor rivalry, had split with his own "rival" CIO back in 1941 and the Mineworkers had remained outside the fold of either labor federation since that time. Beck and the Teamsters, while formally part of the AFL, were quite estranged from the "unity" bias within organized labor. Meany and Beck were bitter foes and, more significantly, Beck had threatened to withdraw from the AFL if he did not get his way in jurisdictional battles within the AFL.[667] Part of this, to be sure, resulted from the fact that Beck, like McDonald, was new in the presidential suite, having succeeded Dan Tobin who retired in December 1952. Thus, he had to work -- for a while at least -- to establish his own reputation. When Beck took over, he announced an aggressive organizing drive that -- as *Fortune* reported -- "made every other union in America apprehensive."[668] But as early as October 1954, there were reports that Beck was no longer even in control of the Teamsters, having been out-maneuvered by Detroit Teamster leader and International vice-president, Jimmy Hoffa.[669] Friction between the Teamsters and other unions was not about personalities. Rather, most of the chafing was a consequence of the aggressive, entrepreneurial spirit of the Teamsters.[670] By 1953 the Teamsters were fastest-growing union in the country. They were ferocious, not only in their organization of

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[667] *New York Times*, February 20, 1954.
[668] *Fortune*, May 1954.
[669] *New York Times*, October 19, 1954.
[670] This same entrepreneurial spirit was found, not only in relation to organizing and raiding, but also in relations with employers. Indeed, one might agree with those labor leaders who suggested that Teamster raiding was "fanned by selfishness." Teamster officials -- like all officials -- were tempted by the revenue from membership dues collection. But the "payoff" which motivated the Teamster organizing and raiding appetite may have been as much about the infamous -- but lucrative -- extortion of payments from employers as it was about extorting money from the membership. Not surprisingly, then, the crack-down on Teamster racketeering -- led by the government, the AFL, and then the AFL-CIO until the Teamster expulsion in 1957 -- was immediately accompanied by a slowdown in organizing activity. See, for example, *Fortune*, May 1954.

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the unorganized, but in their willingness to compete for the support -- and dues -- of workers already represented by other unions, CIO *and* AFL. In 1953, Reuther had condemned Beck's "raid" on the Brewery Union. Similarly, at the 1953 AFL convention -- which Beck attended as an AFL vice-president -- George Meany assailed Teamster raiding *within* the AFL.[671] Moreover, when the AFL moved to support a no-raiding pact with the CIO as a step toward unity, Beck opposed the unity move and refused to sign the no-raiding agreement.[672] At its March 1954 CIO Executive Board meeting, the CIO was forced to temporarily reject the no-raiding pact. Not only did the Board consider a pact "misleading" with the Teamsters refusing to agree to sign, but-- more importantly -- McDonald refused to sign as president of the USW.[673]

Indeed, the rumors of such an Lewis-Beck-McDonald alliance had swirled around the three men for almost a year. Then, on April 30, 1954, David Charnay, public relations counsel to Lewis, arranged for a high-profile luncheon meeting at which Lewis, Beck, and McDonald joined together and announced a "joint program" for action on unemployment.[674] Moreover, there was at least some possibility that a third, rival federation would use the shorter work week demand to out-maneuver Reuther. Of course, Lewis had been the guest of honor at Stellato's unveiling of his leadership in the fight for the shorter work week back in the summer of 1951. At the sight of Reuther's continuing opposition to the demand, McDonald had come forth as

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[671] *New York Times*, September 22, 1953; *Wall Street Journal*, September 22, 1954.
[672] *Business Week*, May 6, 1954; *Wall Street Journal*, September 22, 1954.
[673] *New York Times*, September 24, 1954.
[674] *Fortune*, August 1954; *Worker*, May 9, 1954.

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an advocate of the shorter work week and Lewis was rumored to support such a fight within the Mineworkers.[675]

As a coordinated assault on Reuther's leadership, McDonald's effort had its intended effect. On March 23, after the second day of a two-day CIO executive board meeting, McDonald had turned up the heat enough to put Reuther on the defensive. A.H. Raskin, the *New York Times* labor reporter covering the meeting, was alerted to "pressure for a thirty-hour week by some CIO affiliates." When Raskin pressed Reuther for a response, Reuther acknowledged that he opposed the demand and said a cut in the basic forty-hour standard would simply mean "sharing the scarcity" when the country's real need was for more purchasing power, not more leisure.[676] He went on to highlight that his own "ten-point program" -- Reuther's standard list of public works, minimum wage, housing, small business tax credits, etc. -- had been adopted by a unanimous vote of the CIO board. But it was no use. The *New York Times* ran a front-page story with the headline, "Reuther Opposes Thirty-Hour Week." However much he tried to talk about his own game plan, Reuther was, in fact, stuck playing defense.

The *New York Times* article, although lacking in details, was a high profile renunciation for Reuther. Hitherto, the 30-40 movement had been a story of dissident agitation within the UAW, obscure AFL resolutions, and contractual struggles in small

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[675] McDonald was far more vocal and visible in his appropriation of the demand, but *Ford Facts* also reported the possibility that Lewis would fight for a shorter work week for the Mineworkers. There was probably not much to this, but in the context of inter-rivalry and bidding wars, even speculative rumors could have tangible effects. One reason why Lewis was less vocal than McDonald was undoubtedly the fact that, unlike McDonald, Lewis had no "safe" space to irresponsibly champion militant demands. As an independent labor leader, it was only in his capacity as an officer with bargaining responsibilities that he could speak.

[676] *New York Times*, March 24, 1954.

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CIO outfits like the Brewery Union. Of course, Reuther had spoken out about the 30-40 demand for several years. But he had done so wearing his hat as UAW president handling internal union squabbles. When Raskin compelled Reuther to respond to McDonald's agitation, Reuther did so as the president of the CIO. Unavoidably, Reuther's renunciation simply called attention to the fact that the 30-40 movement had finally become -- especially for the mainstream media -- an important *issue* within the American labor movement.

By mid-April, *Business Week* ran a special article entitled, "Shorter Work Week: A CIO Paradox." The essay began with a puzzle: "Opposition to the 30-hour week, enunciated by Walter Reuther as CIO policy, appears to have occasioned some surprise in management circles. It has always been assumed that the unions have a tradition-honored commitment to a shorter work week."[677] Ironically, the unidentified writer seemed far more inclined to defend the shorter work week than Reuther. Indeed, unable to make much sense of Reuther's "surprise" announcement, the writer essentially covered for the CIO president. "As a trade unionist, Reuther has not repudiated the shorter work week as a labor goal. His position against it now is based on short-run, tactical considerations." In particular, the article argued that *if* Reuther were convinced that the threat of unemployment was serious, "he would be leading the voices demanding a 30-hour week."

> There is, after all, no other way to maximize employment in a job scarcity period. But Reuther must, at heart, doubt that such a period is at hand.... The vigor and vehemence with which he asserts [his opposition to the 30-hour week] should not disguise

[677] *Business Week*, April 17, 1954.

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> the fact that it is a transitional point of view. If unemployment becomes a more acute problem, look for the CIO's position on shorter work week to change..."[678]

This extremely generous explanation of the Reuther "paradox" was in stark contrast to the explanation proposed by the *Militant*. The SWP suggested three reasons for Reuther's repudiation of the shorter work week demand. First, "it isn't a controlled movement, cooked up by the Reutherite brain trust." Second, winning the demand "means struggle! And Reuther has other plans." Third, "in effect the demand says, 'If you [employers] curtail production... don't expect us [workers] to become paupers in the process.'"[679]

Labor Action, the *Militant*, and *Business Week* all suggested a fourth explanation for Reuther's opposition to the demand within the UAW. Combined with his support for the Guaranteed Annual Wage, Reuther's position amounted to a divisive defense of high-seniority workers against younger workers who would be left to flounder in a flooded market. *Business Week* suggested, "The backbone of UAW strength is a large group of 'old-timers' who like Reuther himself, came into the organization when it was established in the 1930s."[680] It might have been more precise to say that the mostly-white, skilled, "old-timers" constituted the backbone of Reuther's bureaucratic machine. This explanation was, in fact, confirmed in May of 1954 when the UAW International Executive Board officially announced its opposition to the shorter work week. The Reutherites called the demand "morally

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[678] *Business Week*, April 17, 1954.
[679] *Militant*, January 11, 1954.
[680] *Business Week*, April 17, 1954. See also, *Labor Action*, March 8, 1954; *Militant*, January 11, 1954.

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unjust and economically unsound" and, according to the *New York Times*, proposed, in its place, layoffs of employes with low seniority to provide full work for regular, long-seniority employes."[681] But such proposals -- including the "guaranteed wage" for the already employed -- did not sit well in the Axle unit of the River Rouge plant. In response to these proposals, two unit leaders asked the pivotal question, "In that event, what's going to happen to all the young workers coming up on the labor market each year?"[682] Eventually, they become anti-union scabs -- not because *they* lack a capacity for solidaristic action, but because organized labor "matures" into a private club from which a new generation of workers are excluded.

Whatever the explanation for Reuther's repudiation of the shorter work week, it nevertheless continued to draw the attention of the media. It was after March 1954 that articles began speculating about future duration of the work week. A special *New York Times Magazine* essay, written by Stuart Chase, captured the utopian excitement of the vision in its title, "Forty, Thirty -- or Five-Hour Week?" Chase dutifully began the piece by reporting, "we are beginning to hear the cry for shorter hours as a way to check any further loss of jobs. Steel workers, for instance, with 200,00 laid off, are reported to favor a six-hour day." But after noting McDonald's provocation, Chase came to what he considered the heart of the matter. "Walter Reuther, however, says that a cut in the prevailing forty-hour standard would simply 'share the scarcity.'"[683] Chase took up Reuther's skepticism and announced that "the thirty-hour movement... will probably go nowhere today... I think enough is known about hours of work to

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[681] *New York Times*, May 7, 1954.
[682] *Ford Facts*, February 20, 1954.
[683] *New York Times Magazine*, May 30, 1954.

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[suggest]... the trend of the work week is... unlikely to go to a very low figure because man is, among other things, a biological machine designed for work."[684]

In July 1954, *Fortune* printed a long article about the shorter work week entitled, "The Four-Day Week: How Soon?" The article, like others, took its cue from the McDonald-Reuther row. The recent shorter work week movement began to appear "early this year. Even in the CIO, which is generally opposed to the theory of work sharing (Walter Reuther calls it 'sharing the scarcity'), the pressure to reduce hours grew fairly strong. Several months back the Pennsylvania CIO... passed a defiant resolution in favor of trimming the work week."[685]

It is the *Times Magazine* article, the *Fortune* article, and many others like them which an entire generation of young people from the 1950s remembers as having suggested that someday the work week would be substantially reduced. But following the rhetoric of Reuther himself, Chase discussed the issue as one determined by factors "quite apart from organized movements." The shorter work week would arrive as a blessing from above rather than a struggle from below. The question turned on "what the economic situation is and whether the worker likes his job."[686] As Reuther had argued many times, the length of the work week *could* arrive only as a result of technological innovations (but not as a spur to them) and would only arrive if workers chose to "buy" more leisure with their productivity bonus.[687] There was no

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[684] *New York Times Magazine*, May 30, 1954.
[685] The article, written by Daniel Seligman, was a bit conflicted on some points. "In a rising economy," Seligman asserted, "unions are almost always content to leave weekly hours as they are, and take their gains in the form of higher income." But he also suggested that "the six-day week began to go out of vogue around the time of World War I" when labor markets were extraordinarily tight! *Fortune*, July 1954.
[686] *New York Times Magazine*, May 30, 1954.
[687] *Fortune*, July 1954.

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entertaining the prospect that the technological innovations might create slack labor markets, reduce the leverage of workers in the market and on the job, and thereby jeopardize any wage increase or productivity bonus.

Ironically, such articles appeared alongside, but relatively disconnected from articles about automation and its capacity to cut labor costs. Indeed, the *Wall Street Journal* referred to "a keen cost-cutting weapon: Greater automatic operation... The prime target of the current movement is direct labor cost.... When they're asked how many men the new machines can do the work of, auto company executives are inclined to shudder. They say they don't want any complaints from the powerful CIO United Auto Workers, the union that represents their factory employees."[688] But the executive need not have worried about the UAW president. "Automation," Reuther told *Fortune*, "is more of a social and political than a trade-union problem. As long as the economy keeps expanding, the immediate problems of automation will work themselves out."[689]

Even though most writers followed Reuther's substantive points, the attention could not have been welcome. McDonald had put Reuther on the spot. But for McDonald, such a maneuver was not without its risks. The recent history of the 30-40 demand had demonstrated to the "Man of Steel" (so named by his official biographer) that considerable popular support could be harvested by those who would champion the cause. But in planting the shorter work week seed, McDonald could easily lose control of its growth. Like a weed -- or a virus -- the demand threatened to crop up in

[688] *Wall Street Journal*, March 28, 1954.
[689] *Fortune*, August 1954.

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unintended places. McDonald had intended to keep some distance between his advocacy of the shorter work week within the CIO and his bargaining responsibilities within the United Steelworkers Union. But by May of 1954, the shorter work week movement had reached a fever pitch and even in a union as top-heavy and bureaucratically controlled as the USW, the 30-40 demand began to break through from below.

Local unions within the USW had little way of participating in the bargaining process. However, the union did have some formally democratic structures, including a 170-member Wage Policy Committee comprised of delegates from various areas. Inland Steel Local 1010, located in East Chicago, Indiana, had historically been a militant and relatively autonomous local.[690] The activists quickly moved to put pressure on McDonald to bring his militant posture home to the USW. Local 1010, along with several other Chicago-area locals, prepared demands to submit to the 14 delegates sent to represent the locals on the Wage Policy Committee. The top demand: a 30-hour week at 40-hours pay.[691]

When the Packinghouse Workers Union met in Sioux City, Iowa for its convention at the start of May 1954, the International Executive Board submitted a resolution on collective bargaining policies. Crafted under the leadership of Ralph Helstein, the eight-point bargaining program began with a demand for a "substantial" wage increase plus a "reduced work week with maintenance of take-home pay." The

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[690] For background history on Local 1010, see Philip W. Nyden (1984) *Steelworkers Ranks and File*. South Hadley: Bergin & Garvey Publishers.
[691] *Worker*, May 6, 1954.

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Wall Street Journal got the headline right: "Packinghouse Workers to Weigh Demands for Pay Hike, Shorter Week.[692]

Early May also saw conventions of the CIO Textile Workers Union (TWU), followed by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union (ACWU), both in Atlantic City. Just after Reuther delivered a speech at the TWU convention, the delegates approved a resolution calling for "a 35-hour work week in the industry at 40 hours pay."[693] Significantly, the TWU convention, led by the union president Emil Rieve, was drawn in two distinct directions in confronting the challenge of contemporary and projected unemployment. On the first day of the convention, Rieve floated the possibility of protecting labor markets by joining with the domestic textile industry in seeking high tariffs to restrict textile imports from "countries like England and Japan."[694] This nationalist-corporatist strategy was challenged by one progressive labor market alternative: the shorter work week.

Still, neither the TWU nor the ACWU leadership allowed the delegates to commit the union's officers to the shorter work week demand for any upcoming contract negotiations. The TWU resolution called for a tripartite labor-management-government agency to set hours and wages, while the ACWU passed a resolution calling for legislatively mandated 35-hour work week, "without a reduction in pay."[695] Such resolutions did not arise from intra-union political challenges, but from inter-

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[692] *Wall Street Journal*, May 3, 1954. In an inspired slight of hand, however, Meyer Stern, director of the New York district, suggested to the 600 delegates that they leave the bargaining demands "open" in order to facilitate the formation of "joint demands" with the AFL Amalgamated Meat Cutters. *Daily Worker*, May 7, 1954.
[693] *Wall Street Journal*, May 6, 1954.
[694] *Wall Street Journal*, May 4, 1954.
[695] For TWU, see *Wall Street Journal*, May 6, 1954; *Daily Worker*, May 6, 1954. For ACWU, see *Daily Worker*, May 12, 1954.

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union competitiveness. The TWU's Rieve and ACWU's Jacob Potofsky held firm control of their unions and factional wars were already the stuff of historic nostalgia. Rather, the pressure for such resolutions came from the persistence of rival unionism, particularly Dubinsky's well-publicized shorter work week initiatives within the AFL's ILGWU.

By May 1954, *US News & World Report* concluded that any alleged Reuther-CIO shorter hours "paradox" found by *Business Week* had now been overshadowed by the force of the shorter work week movement in other unions. "The campaign for a shorter work week is on again." Citing the events within the Textile Union and the Packinghouse Union, the article found further evidence of momentum in a shorter hours strike by the AFL Bakers Union.[696] The Baker and Confectionery Workers Union strike included 1,500 workers in a strike against five major New York bakeries. The primary union demand: reduction of the work week from 40 to 37 1/2 hours.[697]

Reuther, consistently hailed as the vanguard leader in the realm of collective bargaining, was caught looking apprehensively over his shoulder, as the shorter work week movement threatened to overtake the CIO president. Recent action by the Textile and Clothing Unions, the Packinghouse Union, and other shorter hours initiatives caught Reuther's attention. In June 1954, Reuther turned to his research director, Nat Weinberg, instructing his aide to "get a listing of all the Unions which

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[696] *US News and World Report*, May 14, 1954.
[697] *Wall Street Journal*, May 10, 1954.

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have gone on record, or taken official action, with respect to a short work week (shorter than 40 hours)."[698]

By the end of July, Reuther received his report. It was a relatively comprehensive inventory of postwar shorter hours agitation, within CIO unions as well as AFL and independent unions. Reuther was confronted with a movement that had spread far and wide. CIO international unions mentioned included the Brewery Workers, Clothing Workers, Communication Workers, Furniture Workers, Oil Workers, Packinghouse Workers, Rubber Workers, Textile Workers, and Woodworkers. AFL initiatives had developed within the Auto Workers, the Bakery Workers, the Electrical Workers, the Hosiery Workers, the Ladies' Garment Workers, the Machinists, and the Paperworkers. Weinberg reported independent union agitation in the Longshoremen, the expelled, ex-CIO Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers, the Mineworkers, and the United Electrical Workers.[699]

The importance of the report was, of course, open to interpretation within the Reuther administration. In many respects, it is an impressive list. But Weinberg made an effort to suggest that some of the proposals were "purely pro forma pronouncements" while others were less 30-40 proposals than "share the misery" schemes "without such wage increases" as demanded by the 30-40 movement. Furthermore, the report, which only included international unions, downplayed one source of agitation: Dave McDonald's shorter hours publicity stunt within the CIO

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[698] "Inter-Office Memo" in file 18, box 87, UAW Research Special Projects Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[699] "Recent Union Proposals for Shorter Workweek" in file 18, box 87, UAW Research Special Projects Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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federation itself. Weinberg made no mention of this in his abbreviated list of shorter work week activity, but in a more developed annotated "description" within the report, Weinberg included a *Fortune* magazine quote. Hidden within a section entitled, "Textile Workers," Weinberg inserted the *Fortune* report that the Pennsylvania CIO "passed a defiant resolution in favor of trimming the work week" since this was seen as somehow related to the Textile Workers' shorter work week move.[700] Weinberg may not have wanted to seem like an alarmist in his report. It is not clear whether or not he succeeded or how Reuther experienced the report. Ultimately, however, the significance is less in the findings of the report than in the fact that Reuther was moved to commission such an inventory.

Reuther was not the only one who, by May 1954, had noticed the growing support for the shorter hours campaign. Cochran's *American Socialist* could not resist joining the parade. The journal overcame its own earlier hesitancy and began its fifth issue with an editorial essay entitled, "The 30-Hour Week: Answer to Layoffs."[701] In the prior issues, the shorter work week was criticized as unrealistic. Now, the journal rebuked its own defeatism. "One might object that this is quite a package and will take quite a bit of doing" but the labor movement had conjured up the "effort, work, sacrifice, and struggle" to win the eight-hour day, despite the persistent warnings of "plenty of faint-hearts in those days."[702]

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[700] "Recent Union Proposals for Shorter Workweek" in file 18, box 87, UAW Research Special Projects Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[701] *American Socialist*, May 1954.
[702] *American Socialist*, May 1954.

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The Communist Party also jumped back into the fray. The CP labor writer, George Morris, couldn't help noticing that the competitive process within organized labor had created a potential division within the CIO. Referring to the TWU resolution, Morris suggested, "the decision clearly puts the union on the path of emphasizing the shorter work week as distinct from the policy of the top leaders of the auto union, who say an active effort for the shorter work week would 'divert' attention from the 'main goal,' the guaranteed annual wage.[703] In another column, Morris called the growing shorter work week movement "interesting" because "it contradicts the position of Walter Reuther -- that the time isn't ripe for a shorter work week."[704]

While it never amounted to much, the CP did make some effort to ride the shorter work week wave now that it had spread beyond the walls of the UAW and grown too large to ignore. The *Daily Worker* even ran an editorial announcing "the cry for a shorter work week is growing" and assuring readers that "we heartily approve of this policy."[705] It even added "a short work week" to its basic four-point "Program to Defend America," reprinted periodically throughout CP literature.[706]

Within the Michigan State CP, where the leadership was most keenly aware of the power of the shorter work week demand, the discussion was even more frank. In a report from the Spring of 1954, the Michigan CP leadership noted that after the

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[703] *Daily Worker*, May 6, 1954.
[704] *Daily Worker*, May 17, 1954.
[705] *Daily Worker*, May 7, 1954.
[706] See for example, *Daily Worker*, May 12, 1954. This demand, like all other labor demands, was subordinated to the first demand -- and ultimate priority -- which remained, as always, "a Big Five pact of peace."

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UAW's December 1953 Washington unemployment conference, "we contributed towards a constructive approach by fighting to avoid a factional struggle on the controversial issues of the Guaranteed Annual Wage and the shorter work week." This was done by promoting "all-out attention and unity" on the issue of "increased unemployment compensation" rather than the shorter work week.[707] Nevertheless, the report noted that, on the ground in the UAW, "the Left and progressives have advanced the demand for the 30-hour week with 40-hours pay."

> This demand arises from the real needs of the masses. It has a powerful appeal. The movement for a shorter work week without loss in pay is bound to grow even more rapidly. This is so because the present unemployment is in large measure due to automation, and other technological changes and to speed-up all of which makes possible a smaller working force even without reducing the volume of production. The question is not, as Reuther puts it, whether the workers want more leisure or more purchasing power.... *However*, in the recent period, the discussion around this demand has developed into a factional position... [W]e continue the agitation for shorter work week, spread this movement but as part of a series of issues... [and] support such measures as the Murray Bill, which calls for a shorter work week.[708]

There is no question but that the call to support legislative action on the shorter work week was designed to enable the CP to champion the cause *without* putting any pressure on Reuther to deliver the shorter work week through immediate contractual negotiation.

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[707] Michigan State CP Report, in "CP: State Party Papers, Mich.-Ohio-Ill.-NJ" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[708] Emphasis added. Michigan State CP Report, in "CP: State Party Papers, Mich.-Ohio-Ill.-NJ" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

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Ironically, however, the CP, which had boldly asserted the "30-40" demand back in 1948 was now so distant from the movement that one *Worker* article referred to the fact that "the '40 for 30' demand is spreading."[709] Did the CP think it was a demand for 40 hours work at 30 hours' pay? The CP did not even have the kind of institutional memory of its earlier involvement to invoke its decisive role in postwar shorter work week agitation. Indeed, the CP suggested that the movement for a shorter work week had been developing at Ford Local 600, not for six years, but "for months."

Moreover, it was still reluctant to challenge Reuther. In a rare moment of courage, Morris did criticize the Guaranteed Annual Wage for its potential to create "a two-class system of workers -- the guaranteed and the unguaranteed... privileged and unprivileged... youth and the long-service workers...."

> One of the most serious dangers in those plans that are based on some being in the 'magic circle' and some out, is the adverse effect it would have upon the Negro workers who in most cases are among the lower seniority workers.... The same holds with respect to women workers.[710]

Morris went so far as to report that -- unlike the UAW -- national steel union leaders "have come around to favoring the six-hour day" and that "no union can escape bargaining for higher wages and shorter hours."[711] However, the CP defensively reminded readers, it "doesn't view the shorter work week and higher hourly pay as a

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[709] *Worker*, May 9, 1954.
[710] *Worker*, May 9, 1954.
[711] *Worker*, May 9, 1954.

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SUBSTITUTE for GAW, but as complementary to it."[712] While it is true that few labor activists actually opposed any form of unemployment insurance, the important point is how cautious the CP remained about making waves or, more to the point, criticizing Reuther.

Even as the CP became little more than a specter of its former self, it was a ghost that haunted labor politics in Michigan. In January 1954, a Michigan Republican congressman named Kit Clardy announced that he would bring a new round of House Un-American Activities Committee hearings to investigate Communist infiltration in Michigan. Almost immediately, the General Council of Local 600 passed resolutions denouncing the proposed hearings as an attack on organized labor.[713] In March, Stellato's administration went so far as to purchase an advertisement in the *Detroit News* in which much of the Council's language was used to condemn the investigations, suggest that Congress spend its time investigating the problem of unemployment, and publish the Local 600 program -- especially the 30-40 demand.[714]

But in early May it became clear that while some in Local 600 would be subpoenaed to testify, the main HUAC target was not in Dearborn but in Flint.[715] The *Flint Journal* reported that Robert Murphy's Local 659 had been named by a witness as "the nerve center of the Communist Party in the Saginaw Valley."[716] The largest

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[712] *Worker*, May 9, 1954.
[713] *Worker*, January 17, 1954.
[714] *Detroit News*, March 12, 1954.
[715] The recording secretary of Local 600, William Johnson, was call to testify. Stellato publicly announced that he wouldn't mind if Johnson went before the committee and that he had the support of the local if he wanted to tell the Congressmen to go to hell. In fact, the *Worker* was "surprised" to learn that Johnson volunteered information to the committee, admitted past party membership, and had even named two other Foundry leaders. *Daily Worker*, Mach 5, 1954; *Worker*, May 16, 1954.
[716] *Worker*, May 2, 1954.

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GM local at the center of the GM empire in Flint -- with 15,000 members -- Local 659 may well have been a base for the CP, the SWP, and any number of other subversive organizations. If any of the left-wing parties actually served as a brain trust for the leadership of Local 659, it would most likely have been the SWP, not the CP. Local 659's newspaper, the *Searchlight*, was explicit in its attacks on the Reuther administration. This posture, combined with its enthusiastic embrace of the 30-40 demand, did not reflect the CP's cautionary stance so much as SWP vehemence.

Local 659's most serious offense had not been subversion of the United States government or subservience to a foreign power. Its real crime was not anti-American activity, but activity in opposition to the policies of Walter Reuther. As was true in 1952, HUAC's investigations merely served as a backdrop for Reuther's most aggressive bureaucratic repression. Murray Borod, a member of Local 659 called to testify, spoke out at the hearings. "This is an anti-labor committee," he charged. "You are trying to put fear into people so they won't fight for higher wages and shorter hours."[717]

But Clardy's HUAC committee was not alone in this endeavor. On May 9, just before local elections, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the Reuther administration had suspended all further publication of the *Searchlight* and placed an administrator over the big Chevy local.[718] Two years and two months after Reuther's failed assault on Local 600, he tried again in Flint. Fourteen officers and members of

[717] *Worker*, May 23, 1954.
[718] *Wall Street Journal*, May 10, 1954; *Labor Action*, May 17, 1954; *Worker*, May 23, 1954.

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the local -- including the president, Robert Murphy -- were charged and put on trial by the UAW Executive Board.[719]

Emil Mazey insisted that the administratorship, which was put in place just a few days before Clardy's hearings were set to begin, had nothing to do with Clardy's agenda. But the Reuther crew was simply doing Clardy's bidding in an effort to placate the committee. Like true grown-ups, the UAW could clean its own house "without the assistance of a bumble headed politician."[720] But the *Militant* and the *Worker* were quick to note that Local 659 had been the most vocal GM Local in support of the 30-40 demand. The CP had little to say about the attack, calling it merely "unfortunate" and suggesting that the timing was regretful. After all, Clardy's witch hunt was arriving in Flint when "almost simultaneously" the Chevy Local was placed under an administratorship. "This has tended to divide the workers further."[721] In contrast, the *Militant* ran an editorial, condemning the Reutherite dictatorship.

> We don't want to defend every line in the *Searchlight*... But we have often been impressed by progressive, solidly pro-union proposals contained in the *Searchlight*. Among these is its advocacy of the 30-hour week at 40 hours' pay... Is it mere coincidence that a union local which has raised this slogan against the opposition of the Reuther machine has been selected for bureaucratic suppression?... Obviously, Reuther has deliberately taken advantage of the anti-labor [Clardy] witch hunt to strengthen his personal machine.[722]

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[719] *Labor Action*, June 14, 1954. See also, Stieber (1962), pp.142-143.
[720] *Daily Worker*, May 26, 1954.
[721] *Worker*, May 30, 1954.
[722] *Militant*, May 24, 1954.

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News flash! Reuther's intentions impure! That the SWP seemed startled by Reutherite mischief actually betrayed a kind of sweet spot for Reuther. It was as though they had retained hope all these years that there was some substance behind all of his lofty liberal rhetoric. By 1954, such stupefaction on the part of the SWP bordered on the pathetic. The 30-40 movement was the most significant challenge to Reuther's entire agenda and his authority within American labor. He had repeatedly demonstrated his willingness to attack the movement and its supporters. The only thing even mildly interesting about Reuther's move was that -- notwithstanding his 1952 failure at the Rouge -- he thought the maneuver would be successful.

Labor Action was concerned with precisely this latter angle. Upon hearing of the administratorship, the Reutherite journal drafted a strategic plan for the complex scheme. There were two basic charges against the Local. First, the *Searchlight* had printed attacks on the policies of the Reuther administration and had campaigned in support of the shorter work week. The official "charge" was that the newspaper had violated a 1951 ban on supposedly anti-union articles within UAW local newspapers. That ban had, in fact, been instituted after Local 659 unsuccessfully led a Convention appeal to a 1951 IEB crackdown on *The Searchlight*. The second charge was an accusation of "unnecessary expenses to members of the shop committee" (i.e., a political patronage system within the Local 659 bureaucracy).

As strategic consultant to the Reuther administration, *Labor Action* warned its client against pursuing the first charge. "That the leadership of Local 659 is highly critical, in fact bitterly anti-Reuther, is well known in Flint. It was elected by the rank

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and file on that basis. That the newspaper *Searchlight* of the union local prints highly critical articles... is also old stuff."[723] *Labor Action* suggested that while the "UAW move in Flint may be just inspired politically," the charge of financial mismanagement might be a more effective avenue for Reutherite ambitions. "The importance of this charge in the Local 659 case cannot be overemphasized, for the only hope that the UAW leadership has of winning over the ranks is precisely on the financial issue."[724]

Reuther could champion the issue of bureaucratic financial accountability and "good government." But the risk was that the Local 659 leaders, following the moves of the Local 600 leadership in 1952, would simply ignore the financial charges and trump Reuther with their own affirmative campaign for local union democracy and militant support for the 30-40 program. But Reuther had learned from his experience at Local 600. Reuther not only followed the *Labor Action* strategy and refrained from *attacking* the militancy of the local, he sought to *co-opt* the spirit of militancy.

First, rather than placing a personal aide like Jack Conway in command of the local, as he had at Local 600, Reuther -- brilliantly -- named Robert Carter as the administrator.[725] Reuther sought to play to, rather than against, the militancy of the rank and file and Carter was the perfect choice. He was the elected regional director for the Flint area, not a staff aide. As recently as the early 1950s, he had been elected to his post with the support of the militants of Local 659 as an *anti-Reuther* IEB member. He was generally perceived as having quietly slipped into a comfortable relationship with, but not within, the core of the Reuther caucus. Moreover, his

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[723] *Labor Action*, May 17, 1954.
[724] *Labor Action*, May 17, 1954.
[725] *Wall Street Journal*, May 10, 1954; *Worker*, May 23, 1954.

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credentials as an anti-Reuther militant went all the way back to the "super-minority" Rank and File Caucus that had led the campaign against the wartime no-strike pledge. Second, Reuther moved relatively quickly to hold local elections.

In a remarkable concession to the popularity of the shorter work week movement, the Reuther-backed candidate, Everett Sides, ran with the election slogan, "Overtime after 30 hours in the week." Sides went on to win the presidency.[726] Reuther managed to get "one of his own" into the presidency, but he was unable to directly attack the substantive program supported by the rank and file. Indeed, Local 659 and many of its officers were humbled by the experience -- Local 659 was never in the forefront of the 30-40 movement again -- but neither was Reuther able to arrest the militant aspirations of the rank and file.[727]

Even as Reuther moved to chase the militant spirit out of Flint, the irrepressible zeal of Local 659 and the 30-40 movement came back in through the side window. Just prior to Reuther's administratorship, Local 659 had submitted several resolutions in advance of an upcoming Flint CIO Council meeting. In late May, *after* Reuther took control of the Local, the CIO Council's executive committee recommended adoption of Local 659's 30-40 resolution. In a stinging rebuke to the CIO president, the Council adopted the resolution and went on record in support of the 30-hour work week at 40 hours' pay.[728]

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[726] "Special Auto Supplement," *The Worker* (no date) in Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[727] Indeed, at the 1955 UAW Convention, only the president, Everett Sides, and two other delegates -- out of twenty -- supported Reuther's administration. Sides and one of the other delegates even supported Stellato's efforts at the Convention. See the roll call vote in *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 27-April 1, 1955, Cleveland, Ohio*, pp.420-421.
[728] *Militant*, May 31, 1954; *Worker*, May 23, 1954.

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By the Fall of 1954, the movement for a shorter work week appeared stronger than ever. In early September, the AFL's 625,000-member International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers met in Chicago for a convention, led by its new president, J. Scott Milne. Milne had succeeded Daniel W. Tracy, the IBEW president who had chaired the AFL's reawakened Shorter Work Week Committee, but had resigned in March 1953.[729] Now Milne, the former secretary-treasurer, sought to establish his reputation, not so much within the union as within the AFL. Milne, for example, tried to create an image of himself as competitive organizer to rival the feared and admired Teamster president, Dave Beck. Like McDonald and Beck, Milne was part of a new generation -- not of ideological radicals, but of novices not yet confident in the solidity of their succession.[730]

In considering bargaining goals, the delegates set forth as a prime objective that they would seek to "cut the work week without cutting... weekly pay."[731] On this, there was no dispute. Consensus had emerged to such an extent that the real question posed to the delegates was the form of the shorter work week. Delegates considered three proposals including: an industry-minded, gradual reduction of half an hour every six months until a 30-hour week was reached; an immediate 30-40 demand through the six-hour day; or the maintenance of the eight-hour day with a new four-day week at five-days pay. The Milne administration advocated the four-day week, but the delegates voted in favor of the six-hour day.[732]

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[729] *Business Week*, March 27, 1954.
[730] *Business Week*, September 18, 1954.
[731] *Business Week*, September 18, 1954.
[732] *Business Week*, September 18, 1954.

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This was followed in short order by an even more high-profile expression of shorter hours agitation. In 1953, the AFL had passed a shorter work week resolution, but it had, for the most part, been ignored by the mainstream media. But in 1954, the shorter work week issue had moved beyond the domain of the Shorter Workday Committee to the convention's far more visible opening annual "Report of the AFL Executive Council." This year, the Council itself went on record in support of reducing, legislatively, the length of the basic work week. It proposed that under both the Fair Labor Standards Act and the Public Contracts Act, "the requirement of overtime rate of pay of one-half times the regular rate be made applicable to all work done in excess of 35 hours per week. Such a maximum hour requirement should be made fully effective within two years."[733]

The Shorter Workday Committee concurred with the Executive Council, adding that, in addition to the Executive Council's "immediate" resolution, the AFL also resolved to "adopt as a legislative goal the enactment of a 30-hour week."[734] Never far from its anti-statist inclinations, the Shorter Workday Committee further resolved that "all unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor continue unabated their efforts to reduce hours of work in their respective trades and crafts, because only through trade unions and collective bargaining contracts can we be

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[733] *Proceedings of the Seventy-Third Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, September 20-27, 1954, Los Angeles, California*, p.82.
[734] *Proceedings of the Seventy-Third Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, September 20-27, 1954, Los Angeles, California*, pp.544-545.

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guaranteed full protection against the proponents of reaction and the enemies of freedom."[735] Finally, the Committee also took note of a new unemployment threat.

> "As leaders of 10,000,000 American workers, we must also take into account the effects of 'Automation,' a new word of which we are all going to hear a great deal more in the future.... It is our duty to see that American inventive genius is permitted to give us the benefits of increased production without plunging us into the chaos of unemployment...."[736]

In 1954, the AFL action was front-page news. In the *New York Times*, A.H. Raskin penned an above-the-fold story with the headline, "AFL Asks 35-Hour Week."[737] Of all the resolutions and proposals within the 348-page report distributed to the press, the *Wall Street Journal* was similarly convinced of that the lead was clear: "AFL Asks 35-Hour Week."[738] Not only did the *Journal* -- like the *Times* -- highlight the shorter work week demand in its post-convention wrap-up of "major convention action," but its editorial page felt compelled to craft a response to the AFL move. Predictably, the opinion piece, entitled, "Jumping the Gun," was alarmed.[739] While granting that "it's an appealing idea," the *Journal* nevertheless sounded the alarm against such a move, "forced by the political pressure of a special interest before

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[735] *Proceedings of the Seventy-Third Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, September 20-27, 1954, Los Angeles, California*, p.545.
[736] *Proceedings of the Seventy-Third Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, September 20-27, 1954, Los Angeles, California*, p.545.
[737] *New York Times*, September 20, 1954.
[738] *Wall Street Journal*, September 20, 1954.
[739] For the convention wrap-up articles, see *New York Times*, September 25, 1954; *Wall Street Journal*, September 27, 1954.

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the economy as a whole is ready for it" especially since it could result in "a huge pay boost for many millions of employes."[740]

By November, Reuther's continued opposition to the 30-40 demand became indefensible, even for his defenders. B.J. Widick broke with *Labor Action*'s long-standing position of loyalty at any price to the Reuther caucus. While this perspective was still represented within *Labor Action* by another UAW correspondent, writing under the name Ben Hall, Widick was finished. In the headline of an article published in advance of the forthcoming UAW "International Economic Conference" -- the meeting scheduled to discuss collective bargaining demands for the 1955 round of contract negotiations -- Widick finally proclaimed, "Labor Needs Shorter Work Week." Not only did he endorse the shorter work week, but he directly attacked the UAW leadership, especially the Guaranteed Annual Wage plan as spelled out during its April 1954 Education Conference in Chicago.[741]

> The auto work force is going downward... In the face of this, for the UAW to concentrate mainly and exclusively on winning concessions for those employed -- at the current 40-hour or more work schedules -- would be fatal shortsightedness. Automation demands that the UAW revise its Guaranteed Annual Wage plan to include as an integral part the concept of a shorter work week with higher pay... some major concession, not to Stellato but to the economic and production trends, is a vital necessity for the UAW... But will the UAW... demonstrate its willingness to fight for more jobs by reducing hours and

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[740] *Wall Street Journal*, September 21, 1954.

[741] For extended -- and excellent -- discussion of the education conference, see *Worker*, May 9, 1954.

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increasing pay? Its future course as a union depends on those questions and answers.[742]

[742] *Labor Action*, November 8, 1954.

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Chapter 16: Victory and Its Aftermath, 1954-1955

The conference met at the Masonic Temple in Detroit with 1,100 delegates in attendance. All day Friday, November 12, was devoted to selling and discussing Reuther's Guaranteed Annual Wage Demand. It was unanimously endorsed as a demand for 1955.[743] But everyone new that the drama of the confab was reserved for Saturday, the second day of the two day meeting, when the agenda included a discussion of a UAW report on "Automation and the Shorter Work Week." The last time the IEB had explicitly placed the shorter work week on the agenda was the 1953 convention and the rhetoric of that shorter work week resolution -- with all its repudiations -- had been sufficiently polemical to recall the contentious UAW conventions in the days before Reuther consolidated his control.

At the UAW unemployment conference in December of 1953, Reuther had conceded that at some point in the future, after the GAW demand had been won, the shorter work week demand could find a place on the UAW bargaining agenda. Now, Reuther's first move -- aimed at keeping the demand *off* of the 1955 agenda, was to suggest that any delay of the shorter work week need not be a *long* delay. The item immediately preceding the shorter work week report was a discussion of contract duration. Reuther moved to put the UAW on record opposing any more five-year

[743] "Proceedings of the International Economic Conference, UAW-CIO, November 12-13, 1954, Detroit, Michigan" in box 75, UAW Region 6 Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives, pp.42-79.

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contracts and restricting future deals to a duration not in excess of two years.[744] In itself, this was a significant concession to the widespread opposition to Reuther's five-year deals.

Reuther made much of this concession, suggesting to the delegates that "the question of automation and the question of the short work week... are tied together with the duration of our contracts... the duration of the contract means that that determines when next we can begin to press" for other contract demands.[745] Reuther then turned the floor over to Jack Conway, who proceeded to read aloud the entire contents of a pamphlet on automation, a document that every delegate had already received. It was, essentially, a series of quotes about how dramatically automation was transforming the labor process. Its significance as a report addressed to what Conway referred to as a "collective bargaining" conference was unclear given that Reuther had recently suggested that automation was not actually a trade union issue.

In addition to all the quotes from experts, the report contained five areas of relevance to UAW action. First and foremost, it pitched the GAW as "the most essential" response to automation in that, among other things, it would -- as all unemployment insurance would -- temporarily "cushion the shock of layoffs" for

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[744] "Proceedings of the International Economic Conference, UAW-CIO, November 12-13, 1954, Detroit, Michigan" in box 75, UAW Region 6 Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives, pp.130-134.

[745] "Proceedings of the International Economic Conference, UAW-CIO, November 12-13, 1954, Detroit, Michigan" in box 75, UAW Region 6 Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives, p.135.

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displaced workers thrown out into the labor market.[746] In the discussion that followed the reading of the report, nobody took up this point.

The report also included a section on "Automation and Political Action" that proposed an increase in the minimum wage, vocational training and retraining, improved unemployment compensation, and "if it proves necessary," earlier retirement benefits under the Social Security Act. The report did not even follow the AFL in suggesting legislative action on the shorter work week. In the discussion, Paul Silver, Reuther's most loyal "opposition" figure, was able to take up his position to Reuther's "left" by proposing a shorter work week amendment to the Wages and Hours Act.[747] There was also a brief section calling for further studies of automation. Nobody disagreed.[748]

One area of the report concerned "Manpower Displacement, Job classifications, and Wage Structures." The primary idea of this section were that as the labor process is changed, and jobs are reclassified, wage rates for automated jobs should increased. However, the same section recognized the degree to which automation had been "seized upon by management... to break down the lines of

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[746] "Proceedings of the International Economic Conference, UAW-CIO, November 12-13, 1954, Detroit, Michigan" in box 75, UAW Region 6 Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives, p.139.
[747] "Proceedings of the International Economic Conference, UAW-CIO, November 12-13, 1954, Detroit, Michigan" in box 75, UAW Region 6 Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives, p.149 & 166.
[748] "Proceedings of the International Economic Conference, UAW-CIO, November 12-13, 1954, Detroit, Michigan" in box 75, UAW Region 6 Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives, p.149.

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demarcation between the skilled trades" and other production workers. The response to this, proposed by the report, was job training and broader seniority agreements.[749]

This thinking did elicit one strong response from the assembled delegates. Richard Ryan, shop chairman from Local 913 in Sandusky, Ohio, spoke frankly against the notion that wage rates could be changed by fiat, without regard to the questions of market leverage that had always undergirded the wage premium for skilled labor.

> Our entire wage structures are being distorted and disrupted due to automation. We can't argue where a job is changed, where the skill has been reduced in that job, where the responsibility is reduced, where the human effort is reduced, for higher wages... As far as skill is concerned, the skill is in the machine. It isn't in the individual any more. Our entire wage structure, the basis on which we had to argue our wage demands... has been disrupted... The shorter work week is going to have to become another approach.[750]

Ryan had stated something essential about the broad outline of the modern labor movement. While the Reuthers and the Hillmans had dreamed of a time when labor would rule by political decree, Ryan had stated the obvious: that the UAW, and the industrial union movement as a whole, had never confronted the persistence of the labor market and its ultimate arbiter, *market leverage*. If skilled wage rates were relatively high, it was to the precise extent that employers were dependent upon skill

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[749] "Proceedings of the International Economic Conference, UAW-CIO, November 12-13, 1954, Detroit, Michigan" in box 75, UAW Region 6 Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives, pp.139-146.

[750] "Proceedings of the International Economic Conference, UAW-CIO, November 12-13, 1954, Detroit, Michigan" in box 75, UAW Region 6 Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives, p.158.

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and that skilled *trade* unions struggled to *reduce* the supply of skilled labor, relative to that demand. Within this domain, a portion of the population -- and always, necessarily, only a portion -- had found a temporary lever for extracting a good wage. Now, employers were learning to be less dependent on skill, and less dependent upon living labor itself.

Reuther had not simply refused to support the "30-40" demand, as an arbitrary repudiation. What Reuther had refused was the necessity for leverage. Even this refusal could never have persisted if based simply on cowardice. Rather, it was based on the dream of *sovereignty -- a power beyond leverage*.

Reuther was not transformed by Ryan's powerful analysis or, for that matter, by the several years of movement and agitation in support of the shorter work week movement. But in 1954, he did feel its leverage. Reuther, himself, had become a kind of sovereign as president of the UAW. But even his personal dream of sovereignty was now challenged by a market for sovereigns! He was not the only king. There were competing kings. Some, if not his own sons, were -- like Stellato -- within his own family. Others, like McDonald, Beck, and even Meany, were from rival kingdoms. Reuther was no amateur in this marketplace. Immediately after the war, he had leveraged his own presidency by appealing to the militancy of the rank and file (and championing the cause of the shorter work week) in his competition with Thomas and Addes.

Now, almost exactly seven years after Reuther had declared himself a labor statesman -- an unrivaled king no longer accountable to his subjects -- and renounced

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the shorter work week, the rank and file had exerted its force. It had not primarily done so through "voice and loyalty," through a civil and democratic conversation. Nor had the membership "taken control" or "taken responsibility" of the kingdom. They had not "spoken" as subjects within a polis. Rather, they found their success as consumers within a competitive political marketplace, in a world of competing union candidates and rival unionism, inside the world of organized labor. And in this, they found leverage.

In the section on "Automation and the Shorter Workweek," the report promised that the UAW "will not stand idly by while the era of automation produces mass unemployment instead of higher living standards and increased leisure.... The shorter work week will take its place at the top of our collective bargaining agenda along with the continuing fight for higher living standards."[751] It hedged on the timing, suggesting that the strategy "must of necessity remain flexible at this time." The shorter work week demand would follow *after* the guaranteed annual wage, and would depend "on the rate of acceleration of productivity advances." Additionally, all such commitments could only proceed "barring an increase in international tensions requiring greatly increased diversion of economic resources to defense production."[752]

But in the discussion that followed, Reuther tried to explain why the GAW should come first, suggesting that to do anything else would be "to put the cart before

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[751] "Proceedings of the International Economic Conference, UAW-CIO, November 12-13, 1954, Detroit, Michigan" in box 75, UAW Region 6 Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives, p.148.

[752] "Proceedings of the International Economic Conference, UAW-CIO, November 12-13, 1954, Detroit, Michigan" in box 75, UAW Region 6 Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives, p.148.

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the horse." He couldn't actually find an explanation. He vaguely suggested the "in the absence of the guarantee, industry can give you a shorter work week with the same money and manipulate the economy to take the gains back, and therefore it is a matter of timing."[753] Not only was it difficult to discern what Reuther meant about industry manipulating the economy and take the gains back (lower interest rates, to create production bottlenecks and consumer inflation?). Nor was it clear how any manipulation would be prevented by supplementary unemployment benefits.

Undoubtedly flustered, Reuther simply skipped any further explanation and made his most concrete concession. "At the coming Convention... we are prepared to commit our Union... by a Convention mandate, that the next basic demand beyond the guaranteed annual wage... should be the historic struggle for a shorter work week."[754]

In the discussion that followed, nobody -- not one delegate -- spoke out against the shorter work week. Some delegates, including two unit leaders from Local 600 -- Walter Quillico and Alex Semion -- and a few others from various locals, protested the delay and advocated immediate action in 1955 on the shorter work week demand.[755] The only real spat came when Semion suggested that any delay was a betrayal of presently unemployed workers. Semion, who had been active in organizing councils of the unemployed at Local 600, asked, "Can we tell them to wait for two

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[753] "Proceedings of the International Economic Conference, UAW-CIO, November 12-13, 1954, Detroit, Michigan" in box 75, UAW Region 6 Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives, p.150.
[754] "Proceedings of the International Economic Conference, UAW-CIO, November 12-13, 1954, Detroit, Michigan" in box 75, UAW Region 6 Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives, p.150.
[755] "Proceedings of the International Economic Conference, UAW-CIO, November 12-13, 1954, Detroit, Michigan" in box 75, UAW Region 6 Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives, p.164.

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years until the 1957 Convention and then we will initiate the shorter work week and place you back to work?" Reuther responded, "If you had a thirty hour week tomorrow that would not be a magic wand either, Brother. Don't try to kid anybody it would be." "It would come pretty close to a magic wand," said Semion. "That's what you think," Reuther replied, putting the fight to rest.[756]

One of the more interesting comments came from Alfred Granakis, a delegate from Local 1250, the bargaining agent for workers at the famous Cleveland plant where the Ford engineers had coined the term "automation." Indeed, Granakis told the assembled delegates that he had arranged for Reuther's famous tour of the plant, during which a Ford executive noted that robots don't pay union dues and Reuther quipped that they don't buy cars. Granakis, a loyal member of the Reuther caucus, poignantly instructed delegates that "the guaranteed annual wage, as far as Ford is concerned... can actually be construed as a severance pay.... Let me say to Walter that I think the reduced work week is a must."[757]

Stellato, for his part, made a vague amendment to the report. Most of the other delegates -- including Reuther -- considered it an attempt to leave open the possibility that the 1955 Convention could opt for making the 30-40 demand an

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[756] "Proceedings of the International Economic Conference, UAW-CIO, November 12-13, 1954, Detroit, Michigan" in box 75, UAW Region 6 Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives, p.164. On Semion's efforts with the unemployed, see *Worker*, January 3, 1954.

[757] "Proceedings of the International Economic Conference, UAW-CIO, November 12-13, 1954, Detroit, Michigan" in box 75, UAW Region 6 Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives, pp.151-152. For Granakis and the Reutherite loyalty of the Local 1250 leadership, see the roll call vote in *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 27-April 1, 1955, Cleveland, Ohio*, p.566.

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immediate demand in the 1955 negotiations.[758] But Stellato seemed resigned to fact that Reuther had successfully co-opted the energy of the movement. He welcomed the report as "progressive."[759] Rightly or wrongly, he concluded that he could go home and declare victory, and that it would be difficult for potential critics to suggest that Reuther's concession had been anything else.

But for all that, Stellato did not simply bask in the warmth of Reuther's retreat. Nor did he attack Reuther's lofty GAW proposal. Rather, he used his remarks to shine a light on a dark moment that had already signaled the depths of the crisis facing the UAW. In the wake of the Kaiser crisis of late 1953, and a separate incident at Studebaker in the summer of 1954, the UAW had turned an extraordinary corner in the history of postwar labor relations. In response to employer pleading (they opened the books!), the UAW had agreed to real wage reductions at these companies, in order to try to save jobs. Concession bargaining had begun within the UAW.[760]

Stellato articulated the outrage of many labor activists, but the news had been particularly bitter at Local 600. This was precisely the kind of weakness that would result from begging for jobs, rather than fighting for shorter hours. Back in August 1954, after the Studebaker deal, *Ford Facts* featured a front page rejection of "this idea of accepting wage cuts in order to enhance the competitive position of

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[758] "Proceedings of the International Economic Conference, UAW-CIO, November 12-13, 1954, Detroit, Michigan" in box 75, UAW Region 6 Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives, p.153 & 167.

[759] "Proceedings of the International Economic Conference, UAW-CIO, November 12-13, 1954, Detroit, Michigan" in box 75, UAW Region 6 Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives, p.153.

[760] The Studebaker concession, in particular, triggered a frank debate about corporatist labor strategies. This debate extended into the Reuther camp itself. See *Labor Action*, August 23, 1954. For a discussion of Kaiser and Studebaker, see Preis (1964), pp.501-502.

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employers.... We in Local 600 do not intend to stand idly by while wages in the auto industry are cut."[761]

Now, in the midst of a discussion about automation and the shorter work week, Stellato resurrected the specter of concession bargaining.

> I want to point out... that where Studebaker and Kaiser... are not advanced or where they don't have as much automation... the workers in Studebaker, Packard, Kaiser and the rest of them can work for nothing -- they don't have to take a fifty cent wage cut. They could work for nothing and they still wouldn't put the Studebaker Corporation in competition with Ford, General Motors, Chrysler and some of those that do have automation and do have the money to spend on automation.[762]

Stellato was applauded by the delegates. The UAW had not only embarked down the slippery slope of concession bargaining, but it had done so in an effort to subsidize technological inefficiency.

Indeed, after Stellato and others had spoken, Reuther all but acknowledged that he had led the UAW into a position of relative weakness. Earlier, he had tried to provide some vague explanation for refusing to make the 30-40 demand an immediate part of the 1955 negotiations. Now he was more clear.

> I would like that thirty hour week with forty hours pay. I would like to even go them one better. As a matter of fact, I'd like a twenty hour week. But I know damn well we are not

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[761] *Ford Facts*, August 28, 1954.

[762] "Proceedings of the International Economic Conference, UAW-CIO, November 12-13, 1954, Detroit, Michigan" in box 75, UAW Region 6 Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives, p.154.

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> going to get it in 1955, and I don't want to make any worker believe that we are even going to try, because we can't.[763]

Reuther ended the conversation in the same way that he responded to Stellato. He suggested that there was no need to amend the report and that the delegates could trust that Reuther's commitment to the shorter work week in 1957 "is made in good faith."[764]

Fall-out from the conference was interpreted in very different ways by different camps. The *Wall Street Journal* apparently thought that Reuther would have been well within his reach to make the demand. The *Journal* suggested, not so much that the automakers now faced an ominous threat in 1957, but that they could take "solace" from the fact that "the union will not press for a shorter work-week in next year's contract talks."[765] Ironically, the *American Socialist* expressed some outrage that the UAW leadership "apparently is still intent on sidetracking the mounting sentiment in the ranks for the shorter work-week." It argued that Reuther's new approach was "designed to take the wind out of the sails of the section of the union led by Ford Local 600."[766] There is no question that the *Militant* would have agreed with the Cochranite analysis of Reuther's intent, but the SWP nevertheless hailed

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[763] "Proceedings of the International Economic Conference, UAW-CIO, November 12-13, 1954, Detroit, Michigan" in box 75, UAW Region 6 Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives, p.167.
[764] "Proceedings of the International Economic Conference, UAW-CIO, November 12-13, 1954, Detroit, Michigan" in box 75, UAW Region 6 Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives, p.154 &168.
[765] *Wall Street Journal*, November 15, 1954. See also, *Business Week*, November 20, 1954.
[766] *American Socialist*, December 1954.

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"Reuther's Retreat" as a substantive victory for the 30-40 movement.[767] The CP all but ignored the shorter work week issue in its coverage of the confab.[768]

On the left wing of the Reuther caucus, the Shachtmanites continued to break apart on this question. Ben Hall, the more sympathetic Reuther reporter, suggested that the UAW president had "made big concessions to the opposition elements who have been campaigning inside the UAW for the slogan, 'Thirty-Hour Week with Forty Hours Pay.'"[769] Widick, who was familiar enough with the opposition to know that the slogan was for "Thirty Hours Work" not "Thirty-Hour Week," agreed that Reuther had "grappled seriously" with the shorter work week but insisted he had not done so "to every critic's satisfaction, including ours."[770]

The right-wing of the Caucus, represented in the pages of ACTU's *Wage Earner*, was also split in the wake of Reuther's reversal. William Ryan, who more than anyone had led the opposition to the shorter work week, was flabbergasted. Ryan dutifully reported that the UAW "had opened the door a few inches for negotiations on a shorter work week," but in so doing, they "left unanswered... most of the usual objections to a shorter work week."[771] Ryan then proceeded to list all the objections he had articulated for more than a year in the pages of the *Wage Earner*.

But now Ryan came under attack in those same pages. In a separate article, accompanying Ryan's, a distinct faction crafted the headline, "Writers' Opinion on Work Week Not Unanimous." Ryan had apparently been arguing from a principled

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[767] *Militant*, November 22, 1954.
[768] *Daily Worker*, November 15, 1954.
[769] *Labor Action*, November 29, 1954.
[770] *Labor Action*, December 6, 1954.
[771] *Wage Earner*, December 1954.

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opposition, while others within ACTU had simply been standing by Reuther, right or wrong. Now those who had been uncomfortable with ACTU opposing an issue so popular within the rank and file were relieved that Reuther had retreated. The new, more opportunistic ACTist faction went so far as to dig up the memory of the late John A. Ryan and his advocacy of "an eventual 30 hour week in the early New Deal days."[772] Subsequently, articles in support of the ACTist philosophy of the shorter work week, written by Reverend Karl Hubble, included headlines like "Short Week Rates Study" and "History of Work Week Points to Less Hours."[773] However, such articles continued to be published alongside conflicting perspectives, expressed in headlines suggesting, "Work Can Be a Continuous Prayer" and complaining, "Discussions on Shorter Work Week Ignore Social and Religious Aspects."[774]

Back at Local 600, Stellato and company celebrated what victory there was to declare and asked the rank and file to do the same. "We in Local 600 feel that even though our program was not adopted in its entirety, the conference was held in a democratic manner, allowing full voice and expression to all shades of opinion, and that it now behooves each of us to solidly close ranks behind the majority thinking on the 1955 economic demands."[775] Stellato could have suggested that the 30-40 movement finally had Reuther on the run and that now was the time for an extraordinary mobilization effort. Indeed, with a new Local 600 election coming in early May, Stellato might have been expected to rally the troops. But he did not.

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[772] *Wage Earner*, December 1954.
[773] *Wage Earner*, October 1955; December 1955.
[774] *Wage Earner*, October 1955; November 1955.
[775] *Ford Facts*, November 20, 1954.

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The reason? Either formally or informally, Stellato and Reuther had come to an understanding involving mutual concessions. All of the sparring between Stellato and Reuther in the years since Stellato abandoned the Reuther camp had occurred during a period where both men were relatively free from the two most difficult elements of the union officers' job: deliver the goods at the bargaining table and sell the deal to the membership. But 1955 was contract time.

Contract negotiations were the most precarious time for the maintenance of authority within the UAW. Indeed, they were potentially far more destabilizing than union-wide elections. Within the UAW, Convention elections had become a mere formality. Reuther had been elected by acclamation, without any challenger, since the late 1940s. The rank and file had no direct vote in union-wide elections and Reuther had long-since established powerful political machines in locals sending delegations to the UAW. Even in those rare, small locals that nevertheless had developed a competitive political market and high turnover rates in local-wide elections, delegates arrived at an out-of-town Convention -- often alone or maybe with a half-dozen associates. Few had prior contact with other local officers from around the country and fewer still felt compelled to initiate rebellions.[776] Finally, none -- save, perhaps, Stellato -- had any name recognition nationally. None had Reuther's status. The historic snapshot of a bloodied Reuther in the "battle of the overpass" and the 1948 attempted assassination gave Reuther the rare status of being a "living martyr,"

[776] In 1959, for example, nine out of every ten delegates to the UAW convention were union officers. Twenty-five percent were local presidents. Nevertheless, "fully 45 percent were attending their first convention as delegates." See Stieber (1962), p.17.

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prepared to give his life for the UAW cause. After 1947, Reuther never again faced any serious threat of "competitive discharge" from his presidency.

But contract ratification was an entirely different matter within the UAW. First, the rank-and-file members of each local voted to either ratify or reject all tentative contract deals.[777] Second, contract ratification votes were inherently more substantive than union elections. In contract votes, members would not be rating the leadership potential or responsiveness of one person against another but something simultaneously more substantive and more urgent: the agreement governing compensation and working conditions.

For all that, of course, even full-blown rank-and-file rejection of contract terms would not actually threaten union leaders with "discharge" from office. There was, for Reuther, something more serious -- although less formal -- at stake in the contract ratification process. Contract rejection would challenge his -- or any leader's -- legitimacy within the rank and file and, consequently, undermine his authority over the rank and file. A union leader who could not persuasively claim to represent the membership and who, more importantly, could not "deliver" membership consent to contract terms, would be increasingly irrelevant to the bargaining process. Reuther's leadership status was maintained, not simply by his formal title, but by his ability to negotiate as the legitimate representative of workers. If Reuther told employers at the bargaining table, "OK, you've got a deal," but was then unable to deliver a rank and file willing to work under those terms, his negotiating would have been for nothing.

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[777] Stieber (1962), p.101.

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Moreover, in the case of a corporatist like Reuther, failure to deliver stable, predictable, industrial harmony and labor peace to the employer would have undermined his value within the corporate enterprise. Reuther's five-year contract was a valued stabilizing force to industry precisely because it functioned to further remove contractual considerations from the volatility and militancy of the rank and file (hence, Reuther's commitment to two-year contracts was a significant concession). Contract time was crunch time. Each time it rolled around, it carried with it an implicit threat to Reuther's legitimacy.

Reuther's fear of this militancy and its capacity for disrupting upcoming 1955 contract negotiations undoubtedly contributed to his decision to make a concession on the shorter work week. It was, after all, a substantive -- if only partial -- concession. But it was only one of the two concessions Reuther made in preparation for negotiations. The other was a concession made, not to the rank and file, but to Stellato -- at the expense of the rank and file.

Reuther needed Stellato. Any tentative Ford contract would have to win the approval of the National Ford Negotiating Committee. Because of its size, Local 600 was given three seats on this Committee of thirteen members. Formally, the Committee was governed by majority rule and dissenters were required to sign a contract in accordance with the will of the majority.[778] But a divided Committee could nevertheless create enormous difficulties. Rather than providing a united front in a tightly controlled sales pitch to the rank and file in advance of a ratification vote, a divided committee would break down the wall of promotional discourse that would

[778] See Stieber (1962), pp.100-101.

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otherwise make any tentative contract agreement appear to the membership to be an already accomplished fact. An opportunistic Committee delegate -- Carl Stellato, for example -- could easily lobby against ratification and even articulate alternative, enhanced features that *ought* to be in a contract. As one observer later commented, "The local can almost dictate the terms of any contract settlement with Ford -- or at least reject whatever agreement is brought in by Mr. Reuther."[779]

Reuther moved to guard against such unfortunate dissent by appeasing his opportunistic friend. For the first time since he began his career as an opposition candidate, Stellato went into union-wide elections without facing a major assault sponsored by the Reuther administration. In the 1953 election, Reuther had poured International resources -- especially the muscle of full-time International staff representatives -- into a high-profile campaign to oust Stellato. Now, in 1955, there was no such campaign. In 1953, the anti-Stellato candidate was Gene Prato, a high level UAW official within the Reuther caucus and the elected chair of the National Ford Council. Now, in 1955, Stellato faced Frank Thorpe, Jr., an unknown figure with no discernible ideological or institutional base of support.[780] When the election results were tabulated in mid-May, Stellato trounced Thorpe. Stellato won 24,490 votes to Thorpe's 4,235 -- by far the widest margin of Stellato's tenure at Local 600. His entire slate of union-wide candidates won, including his new vice-president, John Orr, who beat his opponent 21,889 to 5,482.[781]

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[779] For this assessment, see *Wall Street Journal*, July 17, 1958.
[780] *Militant*, June 6, 1955; *Ford Facts*, May 14, 1955.
[781] *Ford Facts*, May 14, 1955. See also, "Ford, 1955" file in box 4, Nat Ganley Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. Bill Grant, the vice-presidential incumbent did not run for the vice-

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Of course, Stellato's victory was not simply a result of Reuther's peace gesture toward Stellato. Stellato had effectively led a shorter work week movement and had overcome Reuther's opposition to the point where the 30-40 demand on the bargaining agenda of the UAW -- if not the entire American labor movement. Stellato was justifiably popular in his own right and his electoral triumph over Reutherite challenges in 1952 and 1953 undoubtedly made Reuther reluctant to come back for more embarrassing defeats in 1955. Similarly, Stellato's substantive accomplishment in winning a shorter work week agreement -- even one delayed until 1957 -- made him a difficult target for any ideological faction inclined to challenge his leadership at this triumphant moment.

The timing of the election also aided Stellato's electoral effort. Stellato sailed into office just a few weeks *prior* to the completion of contract negotiations and, thus, did not have to run on his accomplishments as a responsible negotiator at the bargaining table. Rather, he could run on his four-year record as a militant and provocative dissident agitator within the UAW. Indeed, Stellato even maintained the posture of a militant insurgent during the run-up to the contract agreement -- and the union election. As the *American Socialist* reported, "Stellato, president of Ford Local 600, loomed up as a veritable workers' hero in the first weeks of the Ford negotiations when he was putting pressure on Reuther... as the independent militant responding to the wishes of the ranks."[782]

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presidency in 1955. But he ran for office as financial secretary on the Stellato team and was elected to that post.

[782] *American Socialist*, July 1955.

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There were signs, however, that Stellato was -- as always -- playing the angles, signaling his willingness to behave in return for relief from unsettling scrutiny of competitive union elections. The clearest warning sign came in late March, when 3,000 UAW delegates met in Cleveland for the International's fifteenth Constitutional Convention. One of the items on the 1955 Convention agenda was the administration's decision to increase the number of International vice-presidents from two to four. Like succession votes, such contests tend to be slightly more unstable because there is no "inertia bias" for an entrenched incumbent. Nevertheless, the administration had designated its own, hand-picked candidates for the spot. The Reuther caucus printed posters and signs with its slogan, "Solidarity in the Rank, Teamwork in Leadership," and its slate: Reuther, Mazey, Gosser, and Livingston (the incumbents) and Leonard Woodcock and Norman Matthews, the new vice-presidential candidates.[783]

In a surprise disruption of the smooth-running Reutherite tradition of election-by-acclamation, Pat Quinn -- the Local 3 vice-president who had organized the 30-40 rally of the unemployed -- took the microphone and nominated Carl Stellato. In a further rebuke to the administration, Nathaniel Turner, a leading black activist from Flint Buick Local 599, was nominated for the other new vice-presidential spot. His election would have integrated the all-white IEB, a move persistently resisted by the Reutherites.[784] Still, his bid was a long shot. Not only was he did he challenge the

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[783] *American Socialist*, May 1955.

[784] *American Socialist*, May 1955. As Nelson Lichtenstein has suggested, "All of Reuther's problems on the racial front were symbolized by the union's failure to elect even one African-American to serve on its 22-man executive board." But he mistakenly suggests that Reuther was a "prisoner of the institution" on this issue since "the only alternative seemed to be the creation of one or more new

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white-supremacist ideology of the assembled delegates and the UAW rank and file, but he also ran -- with little or no name recognition -- as an anti-Reuther dissident.

Turner accepted his nomination and gave a compelling speech in which he intimated that the UAW could never move industry on racial discrimination so long as the union remained a *lagging* indicator on race questions. In contrast, Stellato was clearly reluctant to play the dissident and had to be pushed to accept the nomination. When Quinn nominated Stellato, "a spontaneous demonstration began, participated in by at least half the convention, that literally forced the latter to accept the nomination. It was the most enthusiastic demonstration seen in any UAW convention since 1947, and was, by all odds, larger and more spirited than the one received by Reuther."[785]

Stellato did give a decent speech. On the question of collective bargaining, he recalled the 1953 Convention attack on his leadership and the 30-40 movement.

> Did you notice what the position is on the shorter work week today? Two years ago some of us were called tools of the Kremlin or opportunists. Today, thank God, the International, I hope, will go on record in this Convention that our next major objective is going to be a 30-hour work week for 40 hours' pay. Quite frankly I am still of the opinion as an individual that that should be our major objective in this set of negotiations. However, the majority of this International Union has decided

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posts on the executive board, an option the Reutherites had steadfastly opposed as 'reverse Jim Crow.'" Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that Reuther was willing, but politically *unable* to simply replace one the two "right-wing" incumbents from his victorious 1947 slate -- Gosser and Livingston -- with a loyal, African-American, *Labor Action*-Reutherite like Horace Sheffield.

Lichtenstein fails to mention, in this context, that in 1955 the International *did* create "one or more new posts on the executive board" *but* Reuther elected not to use the opportunity to escape from his alleged prison. Instead, Reuther aggressively filled at least one slot -- Woodcock's -- with an old socialist, a gesture unlikely to appease the ACTist faction of the Reuther caucus. Reuther called the shots within his caucus in 1955. Lichtenstein's claim notwithstanding, Reuther was no mere prisoner of institutional forces in 1955. See Lichtenstein (1995), p.375. For Woodcock's socialist past, see Lichtenstein (1995), p.156.

[785] *American Socialist*, May 1955.

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> that the Guaranteed Annual Wage is our major objective and we are for it and with it 100 per cent.[786]

This reconciliation rhetoric had been his position since November 1954. As the *Militant* reported with obvious disappointment and frustration, "The truth was that the Local 600 leadership had decided several months ago that they would not fight Reutherism at this convention."[787] But Stellato went even further, signaling his willingness to behave and explicitly giving a nod to the terms of his peace pact with Reuther in advance of the Local 600 elections. "I did not come into this Convention to challenge anybody and I was not seeking anyone to challenge me or challenge my Local Union."[788]

Nevertheless, Stellato seemed surprised and even moved by the unexpected show of support for Quinn's nomination speech. The *Militant* reported that Stellato "still appeared undecided as he rose to speak after being nominated."[789]

> "Quite frankly I want to thank all of the delegates that have urged me to accept. I want to thank those of you that engaged in the demonstration. I don't know how to put it. It makes an individual feel mighty fine when fellows who have never seen you before come up to you and say, 'Carl, I believe in the things you stand for, I believe in the things you have been fighting for.'"[790]

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[786] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 27-April 1, 1955, Cleveland, Ohio,* pp.194-195.
[787] *Militant*, April 11, 1955.
[788] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 27-April 1, 1955, Cleveland, Ohio,* pp.194-195.
[789] *Militant*, April 11, 1955.
[790] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 27-April 1, 1955, Cleveland, Ohio,* pp.194-195.

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He cleverly put his most factional comment in the words of nameless "other" delegates who had said to him, "Many of us think it is not fair... that we should wake up one day in January and see across the headlines of the Detroit newspapers that the Executive Board of our great Union has selected this individual or that individual to become vice-president. We don't think that demonstrates democracy." And, in his own voice, he also suggested that the IEB could use "some honest, constructive objection" from someone who would "once in a while raise a voice" for some alternative proposals. He even went so far as to accept the nomination, saying "I would like to be that someone." But even this was embedded within accommodating suggestions. "I want to repeat," Stellato said in his concluding remarks, "I didn't come in here to fight anyone."[791]

Notwithstanding all of his hesitancy, Stellato's acceptance speech "unloosed another ovation." It also unloosed attacks by Woodcock and Matthews, both of whom told the delegates that they "resent very greatly" Stellato's remarks. Matthews began to suggest, "If Brother Stellato could only sit in --," but he was shouted down.[792] In a procedure which must have seemed like a page taken from the dusty Convention Proceedings of the 1940s, the Convention actually had to schedule a roll call vote -- rather than a simple voice vote -- for an International election. The Reuther caucus had made its position clear, but there were, nevertheless, a large number of defections -- especially since Stellato had not campaigned for the position

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[791] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 27-April 1, 1955, Cleveland, Ohio,* pp.194-195.
[792] *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 27-April 1, 1955, Cleveland, Ohio,* pp.194-195.

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and had all but renounced his own credentials as a militant and a dissident.[793] Stellato and Turner surprised most observers. Turner got about 10 percent of the votes cast. Stellato polled 31 percent of the total vote. He received a total of four thousand and fifteen votes -- or about 40 percent of the total received by each of the two Reutherite candidates.[794]

The *American Socialist* called the results "remarkable."[795] The *Militant* reported that even Stellato "expressed surprise that his vote was so big. This only showed he had underestimated the scope of anti-Reuther sentiment... Stellato and the group associated with him threw away the opportunities present at this convention."[796] While Stellato had a keen sense of the militancy of the rank and file at the Rouge, he may, in fact, have underestimated the power and popularity that accompanied his position as leader of the 30-40 movement. If Stellato -- castigated by critics for his opportunism -- ever missed an opportunity for advancing his own career within the UAW, the 1955 Convention may have been the only time he so miscalculated.

The vote was fascinating as an index of support for the shorter work week movement, but it is not actually clear that a Stellato victory would have advanced the

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[793] Ernest Mazey, a dissident UAW activist -- and brother of the UAW secretary treasurer, Emil Mazey -- reported that the so-called 'pork-choppers,' the paid international representatives, worked all night [the night before the roll call vote] and half the next morning, trying to get the situation under control." See *American Socialist*, December 1955.

[794] The roll call vote lists the voting record of each delegate and is one of the most useful documents for identifying those locals committed to the Reuther machine (voting for Livingston and Matthews), those left-wing locals united in opposition (voting for Stellato and Turner), those locals with delegates who, at the least, felt compelled to go on record in support of the 30-40 movement (voting for Stellato, but not Turner), and those locals split open with factional disputes (some delegates voting one way, some another). *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 27-April 1, 1955, Cleveland, Ohio*, pp.376-575.

Stieber noted that this was "the last and most serious" challenge to the vice-presidential candidates faced by the Reuther administration. See Stieber (1962), p.62.

[795] *American Socialist*, May 1955.

[796] *Militant*, April 11, 1955.

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cause of the movement. As a full-time vice-president, Stellato would have been even less accountable to the rank and file and would have had even less incentive to press the 30-40 demand. The *Militant* dreamed of "an opposition caucus that could become a serious force." Ironically, the worst thing that could have happened to such a caucus would have been its electoral triumph -- and assumption of sovereign power -- within the International.

In UAW negotiations, officers inevitably reached a point where they would declare victory at the bargaining table, return to the ranks, and try to "sell the deal" as the best possible outcome. The opportunity for any competitive opposition -- when it existed -- was the exact opposite. In a game of one-upmanship, the opposition would try to win support among the ranks -- and undermine the incumbents -- by suggesting that the membership reject the pact and hold out for a *better contract*. Such a strategy would not work, however, if the incumbent leadership is more "advanced" or more militant than what could hypothetically be described as a conservative and complacent membership.

But neither Stellato nor Reuther were actually pushing a reluctant rank and file toward militancy. On the contrary, the Stellato-Reuther negotiating team had their hands full trying to satisfy the demands of the Ford workers in 1955. In the process of negotiations, the Ford membership voted in favor of a request by the Ford negotiators for strike authorization and a strike deadline was set for 12:01 a.m. on Thursday, June 2. At the last minute, on Wednesday, June 1, Stellato spoke before a huge rally at Local 600. He announced that the strike deadline would be pushed back four days, to

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Monday, June 6. But, the *Militant* reported, he met with enthusiastic cheers when he "promised to keep fighting for their demands and to call a strike... if a satisfactory settlement wasn't reached" by Monday.[797]

On Monday, Stellato emerged from negotiations in time to tell a noontime gathering of 15,000 Rouge workers that negotiators had reached a settlement. But as Stellato reported to the enormous crowd of workers at the historic overpass outside Gate 4, his explanation fell flat. At several points in his presentation, Stellato was roundly booed. Stellato tried to build some enthusiasm for the deal, calling on workers to ratify the contract in two weeks (June 20-21) when the vote would be conducted. His suggestion met with little enthusiasm. He then told the assembled members to return to work. But instead, the rally turned into a wildcat strike. Fewer than 5,000 of the 30,000 day shift workers returned to work and the plant shut down.[798] Indeed, as *Fortune* later reported, "workers' resentments spilled over into a series of wildcat strikes" throughout the Ford empire.[799] By Tuesday and Wednesday, there were strikes in 37 of Ford's 67 plants and 74,000 of Ford's 140,000 workers were idle.[800]

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[797] *Militant*, May 23, 1955; June 5, 1955;
[798] *American Socialist*, July 1955; *Militant*, June 13, 1955.
[799] *Fortune*, August 1955.
[800] Martin Glaberman, the great labor figure within the Johnsonite faction, discussed the 1955 wildcat strikes in his monograph, "Union Committeemen and Wildcat Strikes." The figures cited, however, are taken from an essay published years later. See Martin Glaberman (1984) "Vanguard to Rearguard" *Political Power and Social Theory* 4:37-61.

On CP observer went so far as to characterize the wildcats as "unprecedented in scope and breadth." See "Estimate of the 1955 Contract Struggle in Auto" in the "Labor -- UAW Auto 1954" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

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Fortune was puzzled by the "paradoxical fact" that -- even as industry balked at the auto settlement -- "Reuther was having trouble selling the Ford and General Motors contracts to his own membership."[801] The *Detroit News* noted that labor leaders hailed the agreement, but "the people who pin on badges each morning, punch a time clock and turn out the cars... They are not impressed."[802] Even the *American Socialist* suggested that the settlement contained "some definite concessions" to labor and "may very well have been the best contract obtainable without a strike." Nevertheless, the Cochranites were compelled to ask, "Why is there then such widespread dissatisfaction with it in the union ranks?" As a general response, the journal concluded,

> After a five-year wait [workers] simply do not think that enough has been won in the new contract... The auto workers, it has been commonly accepted, have been conservatized in recent years because of steady work and improved living conditions... but as the rash of strikes at GM and Ford demonstrates, these evaluations should not be pressed too far. Beneath the surface of complacency, great dissatisfactions are building up and... the latent militancy of the ranks comes to the fore, the many suppressed grievances are brought to light, and satisfaction for them is demanded.... It was not fortuitous that... [Stellato's] stock went down when he decided to drop his previous manner and to do a 'salesmanship job' for the new contract.[803]

More specifically, the contract included many elements that were troubling to the membership. Even if, as the *American Socialist*, suggested, the workers were

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[801] *Fortune*, August 1955.
[802] Cited in *American Socialist*, July 1955.
[803] *American Socialist*, July 1955.

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"never particularly excited or even very much interested, in the supplementary jobless-pay proposition," the settlement fell short, even on Reuther's own terms. Reuther had demanded that the benefits last for one year following a layoff. The settlement cut the unemployment supplement from the proposed 52 weeks to half that, a maximum of 26 weeks. In its proposed form, the supplement was supposed to begin immediately after a layoff and was supposed to bring unemployment compensation up to the worker's full wage. The settlement included no benefits until the second week of a layoff, benefits equal to 65 percent of take-home pay for four weeks, and then only 60 percent of take-home for the remaining 22 weeks. Finally, low-seniority workers -- the most vulnerable to layoffs -- would have to work for approximately 3 1/3 years before becoming eligible for the maximum 26-week layoff supplement.[804]

In general, there was also a sense of betrayal in the fact that the tentative contract deal was a three-year agreement, which -- shorter than the five-year deal of 1950 -- was nevertheless in direct violation of the Convention mandate for contracts not more than two years in duration.[805] And on basic shop-floor demands like the speed-up, the contract made no progress on the old company security clause. "Employees participating in unauthorized work stoppages or slowdowns... shall be subject to discharge."[806] The contract did deliver a sizable increase in the form of monthly pension benefits. Even when other bargaining areas fell flat, Reuther had little trouble getting the company to agree to make the pension more attractive.[807]

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[804] *American Socialist*, July 1955; *Fortune*, August 1955; *Militant*, June 13, 1955.
[805] *American Socialist*, July 1955.
[806] Quoted in *Militant*, June 20, 1955.
[807] *American Socialist*, July 1955.

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However, even the CP's George Morris -- hardly Reuther's toughest critic -- noted that the UAW rank and file was "already quite handicapped by the pension system that requires a worker to have [30] years service with the same company... at age 65, to qualify. Many workers nearing the pension deadline are inclined to be submissive, and even drop union activity, to 'safeguard their pension.'"[808]

But the greatest anger came from the skilled workers. The skilled trades revolt, led by John Orr (now Local 600 vice-president) was based upon the fact that by 1955, Ford skilled tradesmen earned 70 cents an hour below the maximum rate for comparable work in independent shops. The demand, going into negotiations, had been for a 30-cents-an-hour raise. The settlement included an additional 8 cents per hour. Having withdrawn the shorter work week as a contract demand -- a demand which would have signaled commitment to enhancing the leverage of production workers -- the negotiators continued to exploit the leverage of skilled workers in the Big Three in order to subsidize production workers, at the direct expense of the skilled. When informed of the contract terms, the Tool and Die unit leaders recommended that skilled workers stay out of the plant, even as others began to return to work.

It was at this point that Stellato first clashed directly with the rank and file. He denounced the walkout and the Tool and Die leadership and ordered the wildcat strikers back to work. But not only did the Tool and Die workers refuse to obey, they were joined on strike by workers from other skilled trades departments (including

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[808] *Worker*, May 9, 1954.

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Maintenance and Plastics).[809] On Wednesday, June 8, the workers called off the strike, but simultaneously voted to conduct a campaign to reject the new contract.[810] With a week and a half between the agreement to mobilize a "No" vote and the scheduled dates of the ratification vote, the workers were able to muster 8,236 votes against the contract. This represented 32 percent of the votes cast in the ratification process.[811] *Fortune* almost certainly understated the sentiment of the rank and file when it characterized the "No" vote as representing a "coolness" toward the contract.[812]

Stellato's clash with the Local 600 membership was somewhat risky in that it opened up a vacuum to his "left" and created an opportunity for challengers willing to champion the cause of the ranks. However, the "cause" that motivated the most serious rebellion was not a particularly progressive one. The skilled trades revolt -- while intelligible -- represented a kind of return of the repressed within the labor movement. Skilled tradesmen had been instrumental in helping organize production workers during the formation of the UAW. And the shorter work week movement had been led by skilled tradesman, drawing on a long syndicalist tradition of shorter hours agitation within craft unionism. But they did so in an effort to increase the autonomous leverage of the production workers, not to be dragged down by them or

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[809] *Militant*, June 13, 1955; "Estimate of the 1955 Contract Struggle in Auto" in the "Labor -- UAW Auto 1954" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[810] *Militant*, June 13, 1955; *American Socialist*, July 1955.
[811] *Fortune*, August 1955; *Militant*, June 27, 1955.
[812] *Fortune*, August 1955.

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subsidize them. If a progressive syndicalism (i.e., 30-40) was not on the agenda, then a more reactionary, exclusive and hierarchical syndicalist tradition would assert itself.

The SWP downplayed the progressive potential of the 1955 skilled trades revolt and dismissed the Tool and Die revolt as "a *minority*" movement that lacked a mass base.[813] But as early as 1950, John Orr and the CP had moved to capitalize on skilled trade resentment in order to try to salvage a base of support within Local 600. Thus, the CP was well positioned to exploit Stellato's weakness. When the contract rebellion hit the Rouge, the old CP activists from Local 600 figured prominently. Indeed, one of the most powerful elements of the "No" vote initiative was a leaflet issued by the legendary CP leader, Bill McKie.[814]

This activity, however, was quickly and sharply condemned by the Communist Party apparatus. But the CP objection to the rebellion was not that the skilled trades revolt was a "reactionary cause" that demanded to be met with intensified shorter hours agitation. Rather, the CP rejected the attempt to exploit *any* rank-and-file clash with Stellato. Moreover, the CP went so far as to suggest that "a negative estimate of the contract settlement... made by Party and progressive forces... in a number of areas and in particular in the Michigan district" had been a "wrong estimate."[815] And what of the wildcat strikes? "The strikes were viewed as movements against the national

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[813] *Militant*, June 13, 1955.
[814] "Estimate of the 1955 Contract Struggle in Auto" in the "Labor -- UAW Auto 1954" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[815] "Estimate of the 1955 Contract Struggle in Auto" in the "Labor -- UAW Auto 1954" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

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agreement when in reality the work stoppages were not directed mainly against the national contract or the international union leadership, but against the companies."[816]

In an extraordinarily revealing document by an unnamed CP authority, the Party spelled out several elements of its position on the events surrounding the 1955 contract. The CP had supported -- rather than exploited -- Stellato's decision to back away from his earlier call for *immediate* action on the shorter work week in 1955. Within Local 600, the CP acknowledged that "Stellato unnecessarily undertook to 'sell' the contract to the workers at the Rouge. He clashed sharply with masses of workers in his union who were fighting for a better settlement, instead of giving them leadership in their fight... Stellato did a disservice." But for all that, "left sectarian and tactical errors" left some left forces "mistakenly pitting the rank-and-file movements against Stellato."

> This strain was further expressed in the fact that the Left, through the isolated act of the Bill McKie leaflet and through other means, called for a 'No' vote on the settlement. The Stellato forces were trying to get out a large 'Yes' vote for the agreement... Correct policy in this situation would have required of the left forces to fight for agreement... regardless of the outcome of the ratification vote... [and] should have found the ways and means of avoiding any head-on clash and deep split between the left and Stellato forces.[817]

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[816] Emphasis in original. "Estimate of the 1955 Contract Struggle in Auto" in the "Labor -- UAW Auto 1954" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

[817] "Estimate of the 1955 Contract Struggle in Auto" in the "Labor -- UAW Auto 1954" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

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The translation from "Stalinist double-talk": in a clash between the rank and file and Stellato, stick with Stellato. The document noted that those on the ground at Local 600 who went beyond "friendly criticism" of Stellato had "forgotten in this particular situation... lessons previously learned in the struggles of the Rouge workers as developed by John Swift in *Political Affairs*."[818] In 1955, a review of the Michigan Communist Party's rightward drift demanded, "The last remnant of our left-sectarian approach to the UAW leadership must now be eliminated."[819] The *Militant* noticed that the 1955 fight had revealed a concerted effort on the part of the CP to join Reuther's corner. In response to several Morris articles in the *Daily Worker*, the SWP concluded, "Morris does a job from the left for the labor statesman. Acting as a water boy for Reuther... knowing full well that [he] won't acknowledge the service publicly, is no deterrent to Morris."[820] Perhaps more significantly, the "right-wing" CP accomplished its ideological transformation only by attacking its own shop-floor activists who could not hold onto union office without some accountability and responsiveness to rank-and-file militancy.

But even a vital, opportunistic left-wing syndicalism would have had some difficulty effectively exploiting Stellato's performance as a labor statesman. Even though his "stock had gone down" with the contract settlement, he had nevertheless been elected by an overwhelming margin by a rank and file that *knew* Stellato had

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[818] "Estimate of the 1955 Contract Struggle in Auto" in the "Labor -- UAW Auto 1954" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[819] "Michigan Communist Party, 1950s," file 31, box 31, Nat Ganley Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[820] *Militant*, August 1, 1955.

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settled for a long-term, rather than immediate, victory on the shorter work week.[821] True, the three-year pact moved the shorter work week demand back one more year, from 1957 to the new contract expiration date in 1958. But there was no denying that Stellato had won a major victory for the 30-40 movement. He would be relatively safe in his office until crunch time came again, in 1958.

[821] On the other hand, there was -- as usual -- a fair amount of "churning" within the unit elections in 1955. Since the 30-40 movement had effectively succeeded in its goal, "bargaining demands" became less of a litmus test used by candidates to differentiate themselves in unit elections. Shop-floor issues became even more decisive and Stellato's coat-tails could not carry his allies who did not deliver on the ground, on a daily basis. Five incumbents aligned with Stellato were defeated. Horace Sheffield, the African-American Reutherite who had captured the militant Iron Foundry in 1953, lost his presidency to Godfrey Franklin in 1955. See *Militant*, June 6, 1955; *Ford Facts*, May 14, 1955.

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Chapter 17: The Long Wait for '58

Much transpired during the long wait for '58, almost none of it good. In fact, the constellation of forces which gave the shorter work week movement its greatest power were never more firmly established within organized labor than it was in the middle of 1954. While the movement developed sufficient momentum to make it appear to pick up speed -- especially after Reuther's November 1954 agreement to make 30-40 the top demand in the next contract round -- the engines of movement had already begun to break down. If the movement velocity increased after May 1954, it is because its future was downhill. But the movement did not ebb in response to a shift in rank-and-file sentiment. Rather, what changed was the relationship between the rank and file and the organized labor movement. What declined was the responsiveness of organized labor itself as it turned its back on, and moved to thwart, rank-and-file demands.

This transformation took hold as a result of a tragic rush toward "labor unity." In a powerful blow to the vitality of the American labor movement, 1955 witnessed the merger of the AFL and the CIO. In 1954, unity had seemed less likely than ever. With the Lewis-Beck-McDonald alliance under consideration, the American labor movement seemed on the verge of a new era of rival unionism with three rival federations. At the very least, the Reuther-Meany unity efforts already underway in 1954 seemed haunted by the possibility that a Lewis-Beck-McDonald alliance would constitute a second federation, even if AFL-CIO unity was achieved.

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The first blow to the future of rivalry came unexpectedly and dramatically in September 1954, on the occasion of the seventh biennial convention of McDonald's United Steel Workers. USW officials had spread a rumor, in advance of the convention, that the 3,000 assembled delegates "will be asked to give Mr. McDonald and his fellow officers power to quit the CIO."[822] By the time of the Convention, McDonald was considered to have positioned himself as an obstacle in the way of unity, especially since he had opposed the no-raiding pact and had then refused to sign the agreement.[823]

Not one CIO official had been invited to address the 1954 USW Convention, but a long message sent by John L. Lewis was read in its entirety. Lewis explicitly advocated the formation of a new, rival federation. In a sharp attack on Reuther's GAW idea, Lewis lashed out at the CIO leadership (Reuther, et. al.) as "intellectual inebriates in frantic pursuit of butterflies of their delusions." He suggested that continued affiliation with the CIO was a mistake and that the USW was unnecessarily "limited by such associations." Lewis asked the convention delegates to "devote itself to a discussion of this subject with the thought in mind of exercising a larger influence in the councils of the American labor movement."[824]

But during the course of the Convention, McDonald reversed directions. The USW president, who spent most of the convention hidden away in his hotel ("ill of the

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[822] *New York Times*, September 20, 1954. The assertion that USW officers had leaked the rumors to the press was made by the Stanley Levey, the *Times* reporter assigned to cover the USW confab. See *New York Times*, September 24, 1954.

[823] This assessment differs from Robert H. Zieger's account of the merger process. He mentions neither McDonald's early opposition to the no-raiding pact nor his refusal to sign. Consequently, he also fails to note McDonald's dramatic reversal. See Zieger (1995), pp.357-362.

[824] *New York Times*, September 24, 1954.

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grippe" since the convention opened), spread new rumors that there would be no physical split and no disunity resolution.[825] The primary reason given for McDonald's retreat from the brink was that since 1942, the USW had poured millions of dollars into the CIO and it would be irresponsible to walk away from such an investment.

On the final day of the Convention, McDonald emerged from seclusion and announced, "I have been in the construction business all my life. I am a little too old to go into the destruction business." His reversal was actually quite aggressive. He switched from harassing Reuther with the threat of a break to harassing the CIO president with the assertion that Reuther was insufficiently committed to the CIO and, likewise, to labor unity with the AFL. While admitting that, hitherto, he had been a "derelict member" of the joint AFL-CIO unity committee, McDonald now declared, "We are going to get something for our investment. Do you know what that is? We are going to get complete immediate organic unity... If this is not done, I am sure that the United Steelworkers of American will laugh at the excuse-makers. Do I make myself clear?"[826]

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[825] *New York Times*, September 23, 1954.

[826] *New York Times*, September 24, 1954. Zieger's tries to suggest that Reuther was an unwilling agent in the merger process. Rather, the CIO president was pressured into unity talks, not only as a defensive gesture in response to McDonald's withdrawal threats, but because McDonald favored unity. But, according to the contemporaneous observations of the *New York Times*, this was not true -- publicly at least -- until 1954. Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that Zieger's only direct, contemporaneous evidence of McDonald's pro-unity stance comes from McDonald's September 1954 speech.

All other evidence -- from USW minutes from 1955 and from oral history interviews conducted in 1979 -- is from later recollections. That such recollections differ from the contemporaneous record is not surprising. McDonald almost *instantly* began to cover the tracks of his prior secessionist posture. To the surprise of Stanley Levey, the *New York Times* reporter who had been on the receiving end of leaks by McDonald's own official spokesmen, the USW president even went so far as to deny responsibility for the withdrawal rumors, and accused reporters of "building up stories, mostly figments of their imagination." *New York Times*, September 24, 1954.

It is possible that Zieger might have simply passed over the reversal as ultimately unimportant. This would be understandable. After all, Zieger reports that even McDonald himself

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McDonald's effort to seem threatening was absurd. He had, in fact, yielded to Reuther's unity effort. After McDonald's reversal, the merger proceeded quickly. Committees met in October 1954 and January 1955, documents were signed in February 1955, a constitution was drafted in May and the first unified convention of the AFL-CIO was held in December 1955.[827]

What accounted for McDonald's decision to switch from his public posture as a secessionist and rival unionist to his, perhaps more sincere, position as a merger advocate? Of course, it would be easy enough to suggest that the secessionist posture was based, not on the entrepreneurial hunger that drives rival unionism, but on McDonald's far more personal hatred of Reuther. McDonald was simply tormenting the little red-haired UAW leader, rival *unionism* aside. But like most bullies, McDonald's aggressive posture toward Reuther may have served to hide a vulnerability of his own. Specifically, McDonald may have been motivated in both his

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later told historians that the talk of an alliance with Beck and Lewis had been a pro-unity ploy. "All I was doing was playing some cards in order to bring about a merger."

But Zieger's account seems generated by something more than neglect. Specifically, Zieger makes a concerted effort to suggest that Reuther never pursued the merger, but was brought to the merger -- and, especially, the no-raiding pact -- against his will. "In the final analysis," Zieger suggests, "Reuther had little choice." Such an account -- if true -- would save Reuther from responsibility for a merger which Zieger rightly considers to have been a failure. Thus, Zieger asserts, at least three times, that McDonald, and not Reuther, "played a more central role" in the process.

McDonald did *eventually* push extremely hard for unification. But most of the machinery -- including the no-raiding pact -- had been set in motion between January 1953 and September 1954, during a period when McDonald *publicly* opposed this process (regardless of his private motivation for doing so). Thus, Reuther's active role in pursuit of unification cannot be so easily dismissed. For theoretical reasons, it is important to know why *both* Reuther and McDonald ultimately favored unity. Such an account might help explain something about why, as Zieger observes, the merger failed not ignite a new spark of militancy and vitality within organized labor. See Zieger (1995), pp.357-362; 473-474.

[827] For the chronology of events, see Preis (1964), pp.512-519.

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secessionist posture *and* his unity moves by fear of the rival *unionism* of the Teamsters.

At the same Pennsylvania CIO convention where McDonald urged the delegates to go on record for the 6-hour day, he had also issued a sharp statement condemning Beck's "raiding" of the CIO Brewery Workers Union. He introduced a resolution denouncing the "abuse and gangster tactics" of the Teamsters and their "infamous record of raids against the CIO." Moreover, the resolution was explicitly concerned that the Brewery Union was "apparently only the first on the list of possible future raids." Finally, McDonald promised that he would use "every weapon" to prevent additional raids.[828]

Did McDonald fear that the Teamsters had designs on USW jurisdictions? If so, his fears may not have been unreasonable. For example, as soon as the McDonald-Beck alliance fell through, Beck went on to sign a "mutual aid and assistance pact" with the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers union.[829] The Mine, Mill union was one of the small, left-wing unions expelled by the CIO in 1949 and 1950. It had not only survived as an independent union but had survived effectively rebuffed raiding attacks by the Steelworkers. The Steelworkers suffered several "humiliating defeats at the hands of Mine, Mill when it sought to take over the latter's locals in Montana and Connecticut."[830]

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[828] *Wall Street Journal*, March 19, 1954.
[829] *New York Times*, December 4, 1955. Discussions between the Teamsters and Mine, Mill were first reported back in March 1955.
[830] Zieger (1995), p.290.

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Arguably, McDonald wanted to end Teamster raiding, either through a McDonald-Beck-Lewis independent pact or, barring that, an AFL-CIO no-raiding agreement. In February 1954, Beck refused to sign the no-raiding pact between the AFL and the CIO. McDonald expressed his fears about Teamster raiding in March, but also refused to sign the AFL-CIO no-raiding pact and pressured the CIO Executive Council to reject the pact as well. One month later, McDonald met for lunch with Beck and Lewis to consider the possibility of an alliance with Beck that, presumably, would have included a no-raiding pact. But by later in 1954, McDonald had reason to doubt that Beck could even restrain the aggressive raiding of Jame Hoffa, Teamster boss in the Midwest. McDonald apparently concluded that he would need the help of Reuther and Meany in the effort to pacify the Teamsters.

A three-way rivalry for the allegiance of American wage-earners would have been extremely threatening to monopolistic union bureaucracies. Taking a page from the sweat shops of the garment industry and the poultry plants of the south, incumbent labor leaders struggled to keep workers captive by figuratively locking the "exit" door of rival unionism.

Such monopolistic enclosure efforts withiin the UAW, for example, developed when the skilled tradesmen working in the big auto manufacturers recognized that Reuther and the UAW were doing nothing to enhance the leverage of production workers, but instead seemed content to use their skill-based leverage as a crutch with which to prop up the increasingly vulnerable production workers. The skilled tradesmen surveyed their options.

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The first option was, quite literally, voice. Delegates could speak up at meetings and conventions. When this had failed to effectively transform the UAW bargaining strategy, they sought to mobilize a vote for rejection of the 1955 tentative contract. While they found some allies among production workers, the skilled workers were a minority, and thus, did not have the leverage -- within the UAW -- to stop the contract ratification process.

But there was still the "exit" option. Several sections of UAW skilled trades workers had requested and were granted decertification elections prior to the 1955 contract sell-out. In these elections, the UAW was defeated by AFL and independent unions. For example, at Ford, the "patternmaker" group had switched to the AFL Pattern Makers Union.[831] After the contract settlement, a rival organization, the International Society of Skilled Trades (ISST), developed in the large UAW auto plants and there were reports from Detroit that, in the aftermath of the 1955 settlement, the UAW would face decertification elections and lose its bargaining rights for skilled workers in "hundreds of plants."

Even that option was limited by the long duration of UAW contracts, since National Labor Relations Board barred decertification elections during the life of a collective bargaining agreement.[832] But the final blow came just as the three-year 1955 contract approached its 1958 expiration date. Reuther managed to lock the "exit" by *joining with the auto industry* to argue that the NLRB should not carve craft units out of industrial units. The NLRB ruled for the UAW and the industry.

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[831] *American Socialist*, May 1956.
[832] *American Socialist*, May 1956.

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"Monopolistic unionism" was maintained, and the skilled tradesmen were restricted to the strategies of "voice" and "loyalty."[833]

The merger of the AFL and the CIO had its critics, but none defended rival unionism.[834] Nobody seemed prepared to suggest that the rivalry between the AFL and the CIO had kept *both* federations on their toes and made each more effective than it would have been without the other. Mike Quill, the only CIO leader who raised any objections to the merger, argued that the AFL was a federation committed to racism, racketeering, *and raiding*. Quill was not concerned to preserve rivalry, but to end it.[835]

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[833] *American Socialist*, May 1956; *Labor Action*, June 2, 1958. See also, Lichtenstein (1995), pp.415-416.

In a minor oversight, Lichtenstein suggests that the organization, dual unionist skilled trade revolt "disintegrated in 1957 when the NLRB ruled for the UAW and the auto companies." However, the UAW and the industry actually interrupted negotiations in late May *1958* -- just days before the expiration of the contracts -- to make a joint appearance before the NLRB and fight off 93 petitions (representing 12,000 skilled trades workers), brought by five different organizations. See *Labor Action*, June 2, 1958.

As Lichtenstein reports, the term "monopolistic unionism" was used by the ISST to describe Reuther's strategy.

[834] It is fitting that, in his 1970 book, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, Albert Hirschman mentions the AFL-CIO no-raiding agreement as an example to demonstrate his thesis. Implicit in the pact, Hirschman argued, "is the judgment that the disadvantages of exit-competition outweighed in this case its possible efficiency-inducing advantages and *perhaps* the assumption that these advantages can be better secured via the alternative mechanism -- voice."

As further evidence Hirschman cites a study in which statistical analysis demonstrated that over a two-year period, NLRB certification elections included an equal number of "CIO petitions to displace an AFL union to displace a CIO union." Hirschman seems to suggest this had been a futile exercise for both the AFL and the CIO unions. Fair enough. But, the study further asserts that the *election campaigns themselves* may have created "unrest and disunity... among the workers." The question is whether the alleged "disunity" among workers was as serious as the "unrest" revealed when workers were presented with exit options. Or is it the unsettling consequences of one-upmanship among competing unions that leads incumbent leaders of all kinds to find "disadvantages" in exit competition? See Hirschman (1970), p.29.

[835] Preis (1964), p.516; Lichtenstein (1995), p.323.

Of course, as Quill feared, the Teamsters did not stop raiding after the merger. According to Lichtenstein, Reuther "turned livid" when Jimmy Hoffa refused to abide by the no-raiding agreement. "The Teamsters and the building trades assumed that with the merger, industrial union jurisdictions were now fair game. Thus, when Reuther complained to Jimmy Hoffa that Detroit Teamsters had never picketed UAW factories when they were in separate federations, Hoffa shot back, 'You're damn

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This consensus was evident, to a remarkable degree, among the left-wing ideological groups associated with the labor movement. In discussing the potential of a Lewis-Beck-McDonald alliance, the CP warned that the moved was "marred by divisive efforts aimed at AFL president George Meany and CIO president Walter Reuther." Such rivalry could create "a serious split in the CIO and a weakening of that organization."[836] Some on the left saw the merger as nothing more than an unimportant diversion. Others expressed lukewarm support for the no-raiding pact. In an article for the *Nation* Sidney Lens wrote, "History decreed that labor unity was a necessary and progressive step."[837]

Art Preis suggested that the merger occurred "with no great clamor from the ranks for organic unity, although a majority of unionists were pleased with the prospect of 'one big organization.'"[838] Preis was one of the only observers to raise a warning flag. He suggested that the aim of the labor leaders who set the merger in motion was "better defense of their union power and prerogatives, and a unified front against both their Republican political opponents and the union ranks."[839] But even Preis demonstrated the ambiguity of his position on the merger by hinting that, while bad for the relationship between the bureaucracy and the ranks, it might be of use in

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right.... We are going to treat you just like we used to treat each other in the AFL.'" Lichtenstein (1995), p.351.

It is impossible to know just how much more quickly the AFL-CIO would have declined without the provocative, competitive spirit of the Teamsters. The Teamsters no continued in the spirit of rival unionism after the merger until they were reincarnated as a true rival union after being expelled from the AFL-CIO in 1957.

[836] *Daily Worker*, May 3, 1954; *Worker*, May 9, 1954.

[837] *Nation*, December 17, 1955.

[838] Preis (1964), p.513. Preis's phrase was, no doubt, intended to signify the strained analogy between the merged AFL-CIO and the old I.W.W. dream of "One Big Union."

[839] Preis (1964), p.512.

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mobilizing political support against the Republican party. And not even Preis actually defended rival unionism. The left could not see the benefits of rivalry itself because it was too closely tied to one or another rival faction. For left-wing labor activists of all stripes, the great thing about the formation of the CIO had been the CIO, not the rivalry between the AFL and the CIO.

For proponents of the shorter work week movement in various International unions, the merger turned out to be a disaster. Progress in the 30-40 movement had not been made through some new spirit of rank-and-file *participation* in union affairs. Nor had it been made by masses of rank-and-file workers "taking ownership" and "claiming responsibility" in the "self-management" of their "own" unions. American workers had shown as much enthusiasm for such democratic political ideals inside their unions as they had in the workplace. Indeed, the 30-40 movement was popular because its strategic labor logic in no way conflicted with the laziness and decadence of the American worker.

Rather than becoming sovereign masters of their own fate, the rank-and-file had preferred to simply play one so-called sovereign master off another (in the case of rival unionism) and one incumbent against various challengers (in the case of union electoral rivalries). It was a strategy of power through political market leverage, rather than through democratic self-sovereignty.

Leverage is the preferred power of the lazy. It implies all the advantages of sovereignty, but none of the responsibilities and hang-ups associated with sovereign rule. In any event, the consumer can only exert leverage through exit strategies.

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When the labor federations merged, many of the exit strategies associated with rival unionism disappeared.[840] With diminished rivalry between unions, the progress of the 30-40 movement would now depend far more on union electoral rivalries. In most International unions, contested elections were rare indeed.

Moreover, potential rival unionists of all kinds would have had difficulty exploiting the 30-40 demand between 1955 and 1958, with Walter Reuther on record as supporting the demand for the 1958 round of contract negotiations. Given the centrality of the automobile industry to the economy, Reuther's move instantly put him, as promised, in the vanguard of the labor struggle for a shorter owrk week.

Even with Reuther formally committed to the 30-40 demand, there were some skirmishes. At one point during the summer of 1956, Stellato chose to demonstrate his fidelity to the Local 600 program by publicly criticizing Reuther. "Walter goes around making speeches that we'll have a short work week in 10 years... This causes a bad reaction among the rank-and-file. We need a short week now.... It's not a personal fight... but if our International officers don't want to go along with us, we'll get some officers who will."[841]

At the same time, Reuther continued to move as best he could against internal sources of dissent. By May of 1956, two years after placing an administratorship over Local 659, the Reuther administration had still not managed to win control of the

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[840] The merged AFL-CIO actually held a meeting of research directors from the International affiliates, devoted to a discussion of the shorter work week. But without rivalry as a spur, the issue went nowhere. The conversation was extremely weak. A unified bureaucracy is a motionless bureaucracy. See "The Shorter Work Week: Papers Delivered at the Conference on Shorter Hours of Work Sponsored by the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations" (published in 1957 by Public Affairs Press, Washington, DC) in Tamiment Institute Library Collection.

[841] *Detroit Free Press*, July 1, 1956.

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local, or its newspaper. At an IEB meeting in May of 1956, the Reuther administration once again accused *The Searchlight* of violating the 1951 ban on supposedly anti-union articles within UAW local newspapers. This time, Reuther assigned the flint-based UAW publicist, Herbert W. Hoover, as administrator over the *Searchlight*. With Reuther in control of the paper, the editorial policy changed dramatically. Soon the rank-and-file were cut off from a powerful source of critical reporting on UAW policy, as the *Searchlight* began carrying editorials praising Reuther and the policies of the International.[842] But there were gains, as well as losses during this period. Pat Quinn, the most militant supporter of the 30-40 program within Dodge Local 3, was elected president of that local in 1956.[843]

And then, in 1957, various signs seemed to suggest that Reuther might not be very enthusiastic about the shorter work week fight. On April 7-12, 1957, ten years after Reuther had consolidated his presidential power, the UAW Convention returned to Atlantic City. In his opening remarks to the Convention, Reuther asked that the delegates delay a full discussion of collective bargaining demands until January 1958 when the International would convene a "Special Convention" for the development of the 1958 demands.[844] It was yet another delay, but it didn't seem unreasonable. After all, the 1954 "Pre-Negotiations" conference had been something of triumph for the 30-40 movement. But there were other disturbing signs -- quite literally. In prior years, there were always enormous signs -- huge banners -- constructed on the stage at UAW

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[842] Stieber (1964), p.143; *American Socialist*, March 1958.
[843] *Detroit Free Press*, July 1, 1956.
[844] *Proceedings of the Sixteenth Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, April 7-12, 1957, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.19.

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Conventions. Reuther had always used the signs to announce the upcoming bargaining demand (GAW, Pensions, etc.). But the 1957 hall featured a sign reading, "Peace, Freedom, Justice, Brotherhood" with no mention of "30-40" or a shorter work week.

Nevertheless, Reuther did promise the delegates,

> When we go to the bargaining table in 1958 we need to strike a blow, a powerful blow, to begin to shorten the work week, but we are not going to fight for a shorter work week with the same take-home pay. We want a shorter work week with more take-home pay, because we need more purchasing power.[845]

More than anything, Reuther's little one-upmanship demonstrated that *he knew* how to compete for the support of the rank-and-file when he thought he needed to do so. Indeed, in his new position as a supporter of the shorter work week, he got all the rhetoric right. He didn't bother to try to sell the delegates on the shorter work week as a demand for more leisure rather than more money. Rather, he sold a shorter work week that was a "win-win" demand (i.e., simultaneously a means for tightening labor markets and raising wages, as well as an end unto itself). "The only realistic alternative to the involuntary and barren idleness of widespread unemployment is the voluntary and constructive leisure that flows from rational reduction in the hours of work."[846]

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[845] *Proceedings of the Sixteenth Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, April 7-12, 1957, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.19.

[846] Quoted -- from the 1957 Convention Proceedings -- in *American Socialist*, December 1958.

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Moreover, the Collective Bargaining Resolution -- which provided the mandate for the January 1958 Special Convention -- did suggest that since the "foundations of guaranteed employment have been laid... we reaffirm the decision of the 1955 Convention to make the shorter work week with increased take-home pay... the next major collective bargaining objective of our union."[847] The only argument during the discussion of the resolution came from a delegate, Tony Dallesandro from Chicago's International Harvester Local 1307, who announced, "I am glad to hear that this Convention is coming out or a shorter work week, but I believe that when we started organizing the CIO back in the '30s our goal at that time was for 30 hors. It seems like we are about 24 years behind... we should come out with a 24-hour week." The resolution was adopted without much further discussion.[848] During the election of officers, a delegate from Local 3 nominated for president of the International "a man that has put the life back into the 30 for 40... Carl Stellato." But Stellato declined the nomination and refused to challenge Reuther.[849] *Business Week* called it "perhaps the quietest, most obedient UAW convention on record."[850]

Stellato was clearly finished playing factionalist games. With Reuther supporting the 30-40 demand, he could avoid alienating Reuther and still appear loyal to his own members at Local 600. When a so-called "Stellato" caucus meeting was held at the UAW Convention in Atlantic City, a crowd of approximately 400 delegates

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[847] *Proceedings of the Sixteenth Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, April 7-12, 1957, Atlantic City, NJ,* p.159.
[848] *Proceedings of the Sixteenth Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, April 7-12, 1957, Atlantic City, NJ,* pp.163-168. Dallesandro's comment also made it into *Business Week*, April 20, 1957.
[849] *Proceedings of the Sixteenth Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, April 7-12, 1957, Atlantic City, NJ,* p.243.
[850] *Business Week*, April 13, 1957.

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jammed into a room designed to hold about 250 delegates. But, as the *Militant* reported, neither Stellato nor Pat Quinn "made proposals for voting on particular resolutions or outlined a strategy for the convention floor." Stellato did little more than recount the history of the 30-40 fight at Local 600. When one delegate proposed forming a formal dissident caucus, Paul Silver, Reuther's standard loyal opposition figure, responded, "That's just what we want to do. Everyone take down the address of Local 600 and write in when you get home." Rather than begin organizing a caucus with everyone in the room, Silver promptly ended the meeting.[851]

After the Convention, Stellato returned home to face another local-wide election. Once again, Stellato was allowed to run without the interference of the International. With the Reuther caucus neutral and most of the other 1955 conditions unchanged, Stellato beat five minor challengers, winning 21,233 votes -- more than 80% of the votes cast.[852] But there was trouble in one of the unit elections. Paul Boatin, one of the five found guilty of loyalty to the Communist Party at the 1953 convention and forbidden from running for union office, had been reinstated as a member in good standing in 1956.[853] During Boatin's absence from the leadership

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[851] *Militant*, April 15, 1957.

[852] *Ford Facts*, May 11, 1957; *Business Week*, May 18, 1957.

[853] See "Memo from Boatin to Mazey" in file 20, box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

Boatin had long since broken with the CP and was more or less working as an independent militant within the Rouge. He had "formally" been expelled from the party in 1949 -- although this might have initially been an effort to free Boatin from the burden of public association with the party in the climate of the purges of Communists from the labor movement.

But by 1952, internal party documents show that Boatin was not only an independent agent, but that he was fouling up CP coalition arrangements -- a difficulty exacerbated by the fact that many workers still identified him as the representative of the CP within the Motor unit.

Also, by 1957, Boatin actually cooperated with yet another congressional committee investigating CP infiltration of the labor movement. Even as other witnesses with CP affiliations refused to cooperate, Boatin volunteered information without hesitation. He freely admitted to his party membership and even discussed the gradual disintegration of his relationship with the party

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circle of the Engine Unit, Stellato had successfully assisted the political career of his brother, Tony Stellato, who was elected president of the unit. According to a hand-written note, circulated later by Carl Stellato, Boatin's first move upon returning to union life was to ask Stellato to "put me on the staff.... If the answer is No -- I've got some plans of my own to carry out."[854] It was not, to be sure, the most subtle way to ask for a job, but the threat was clear: hire me or I'll run against your brother in the 1957 unit elections.

In fact, Carl Stellato must have called Boatin's hand since Boatin did run against Tony Stellato. Moreover, he had not been bluffing -- Boatin easily defeated Tony Stellato (1,989 to 1,383) in the unit elections held from May 1-3, 1957.[855] As *Business Week* suggested, the defeat could easily move Stellato to "get rough with the left again in the next two years -- in part because he blames them for his brother's defeat, in part to block their possible resurgence."[856] But matters were actually far more serious.

On Monday, April 22, 1957, just a few days after the UAW Convention in Atlantic City, Boatin allegedly issued a campaign leaflet titled, "Boatin Fights $10,660 Bribe" in which he charged that Carl Stellato offered staff jobs to Engine Plant members willing to campaign against Boatin.[857] However, Boatin issued the leaflet

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after his formal expulsion. See "The Defeat of Reuther in the Elections of #600" in "Reuther #4" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division; United States Senate, Committee on the Judiciary (1957) *Scope of Soviet Activity in the United States*. Washington: US Government Printing Office, p.4031.

[854] "Who's For Sale?" Leaflet in the Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

[855] *Business Week*, May 18, 1957.

[856] *Business Week*, May 18, 1957.

[857] *Wage Earner*, September 1957.

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without preferring charges within the local. In response, Carl Stellato preferred formal charges within the Dearborn Engine Plant against Boatin and 16 other signatories of the leaflet, and issued his own leaflet, reproducing Boatin's September 1956 request for a staff job.[858]

A trial committee was established within the Engine Unit and the committee found the 17 accused members not guilty, but also fined Carl Stellato $100. When the verdict of the trial committee was brought before a full membership meeting of the Engine Unit, the membership upheld the acquittal, set aside the fine, but also found Carl Stellato guilty of filing "frivolous charges with malicious intent."[859] Faced with this conviction within the Engine Plant, Stellato appealed to the General Council. There, Stellato's allies overwhelmed Boatin's Engine caucus. The Local's largest governing body upheld Stellato's appeal.

But the Stellato caucus wanted revenge. The General Council took yet another step, reversing the charges once again, and found the 17 members guilty of the original charges preferred by Stellato. In response, Boatin and the 16 others brought a "constitutional inquiry" before the International Executive Board of the UAW. Boatin, whose own experiences with Local 600 trial committees had kept him from union office since 1952, had followed IEB policy closely. On April 26, 1955, the IEB had ruled that where a trial committee is properly established and reaches the verdict

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[858] "Who's For Sale?" Leaflet in the Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

[859] "UAW International Executive Board, Minutes from October 1957 Meeting," in box 11, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. See p.134.

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of acquittal, the accused is automatically acquitted when the trial committee makes a report to the membership and that "no further action can be taken on the case."[860]

All of this put Stellato back in an uncomfortable position. This one-time dissident now was forced to appeal to the IEB for assistance. The importance of the event was not lost on *Business Week*, which ran the headline, "Stellato Turns to Reuther for Aid in Brush with His Own Ford Local."[861] The IEB must have enjoyed the prospect of lending a hand to Stellato, just prior to the 1958 Special Convention. Indeed, at an October 1957 meeting of the IEB, Doug Fraser read a rather straightforward "constitutional interpretation" finding that the action of the General Council was "in violation" of the UAW Constitution. But when Fraser finished, Emil Mazey presented the more important, political angles in great detail. "Brother Stellato points out," Mazey reported, "that... the action taken by the General Council was illegal, that... in effect would say that he was guilty of improper conduct and that he was guilty of corruption and other charges that had been implied in the leaflet that was distributed by Paul Boatin."[862] Whatever the IEB perspective on Stellato, the Local 600 president and the Reuther administration shared a common enemy in Boatin.

Mazey suggested that the IEB "not just handle this as a simple constitutional interpretation, because it seems to me that the Local as a whole could be damaged if we merely answer it on a constitutional basis." Instead, he suggested "we ought to state that we are not reviewing the decision of the Trial Committee... and I feel that we

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[860] "UAW International Executive Board, Minutes from October 1957 Meeting," in box 11, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. See p.134.
[861] *Business Week*, August 10, 1957.
[862] "UAW International Executive Board, Minutes from October 1957 Meeting," in box 11, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. See p.135.

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ought to make some comment that the filing of allegations in the form of leaflets... is not proper union conduct."[863] In this way, it was agreed that the IEB would intervene to assist Carl Stellato.

In all likelihood, Stellato had already become informally aligned with the Reuther administration. The IEB may have been gambling that Stellato would be sufficiently humbled by his debts to the Reuther administration, or it may have been bailing out an ally who had already demonstrated his fidelity during the contract struggle of 1955. In either event, the UAW IEB now considered "problems" for Brother Stellato to be synonymous with "damage to the local union."[864]

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[863] "UAW International Executive Board, Minutes from October 1957 Meeting," in box 11, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. See p.136.
[864] "UAW International Executive Board, Minutes from October 1957 Meeting," in box 11, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. See p.135.

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Chapter 18: "An American First," 1957-58

In early May 1957, Reuther took his first affirmative step toward making the shorter work week demand. In keeping with his cherished social-democratic assumptions, Reuther invited the auto industry to join the UAW in the formation labor-management committees to study "the many phases of the problems related to the reduction of the work week." The call for cooperation suggested, "we have always believed that collective bargaining should be based on economic and technological facts rather than upon economic force."[865] Within two weeks, General Motors and Ford rejected Reuther's study proposal. Apparently, the industry was well aware of "the problems" related to the shorter work week, required no further study of the "economic and technological facts," and was ready to move on to the question of "economic force."[866]

As late as June 1957, however, Reuther seemed on track to demand the shorter work week. In an address to the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO -- essentially the special home (where Reuther served as president) for the former CIO Internationals -- he declared, "Soon, we of organized labor will take up the cudgels for a shorter workweek." Responding to the industry's rejection of his cooperative labor-management committees, Reuther suggested, "Already, the men of little faith are pulling their hair and gnashing their teeth... They say, as they have always said, it can't

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[865] *Business Week*, May 11, 1957; *Wall Street Journal*, May 3, 1957. "UAW Press Release, Thursday May 2, 1957," in box 6, Ken Bannon Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[866] *Wall Street Journal*, May 8, 1957; May 14, 1957; *Business Week*, May 11, 1957.

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be done." Now, as a 30-40 advocate, Reuther even demonstrated that he had understood all along that the shorter work week was a *spur* to productivity growth based upon technological innovation. "We got the 8-hour day and living standards rose more than we ever dreamed of with a 16-hour day."[867]

But soon after this address, stories began to emerge suggesting that Reuther was preparing to retreat from his shorter work week commitment. The first public indication came in the form of a rumor from the anti-labor reporter, Victor Riesel. On July 8, 1957, Riesel told a radio audience that General Motors had secretly "offered to make a terrific money settlement to get Walter Reuther to quit the fight for the four-day week at five day's pay. It has offered to put down... an unprecedented 25 cents an hour wage increase... It has been reported that Walter Reuther is considering taking this."[868]

About six weeks later, on August 18, Reuther dropped what newspapers called "a bombshell."[869] Ignoring the UAW Convention mandate for a shorter work week and the official UAW bargaining program adopted there, Reuther sent a letter to GM, Ford, and Chrysler suggesting that the UAW would reduce its contract demands if the auto companies would cut auto prices an average of $100 per car. Reuther's price cut proposal was not only an attempt to divert attention from the shorter work week demand, but as a defensive gesture in response to anti-trust proceedings in

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[867] For a transcript of the address, see "UAW Union Democracy" file, box 17, Daniel Bell Collection, Tamiment Institute Library.
[868] "Radio Reports, Inc. Memo to UAW" in file 4, box 59, UAW Research Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[869] *Business Week*, August 24, 1957; *Wall Street Journal*, August 19, 1957; *Militant*, August 26, 1957; *Labor Action*, August 26, 1957.

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Washington. A Senate sub-committee on Anti-Trust and Monopoly was holding hearings on administered prices.

Labor had long ago shifted from a movement aligned with populist anti-trust sentiment to a bureaucracy dependent upon and committed to winning a share of monopoly profits from those core industries with unfettered pricing power. Indeed, organized labor had "won" its first state-guaranteed, monopolistic collective bargaining rights in return for labor's acquiescence to the anti-trust policies at the heart of Roosevelt's New Deal. But now Senator Estes Kefauver and a group of anti-trust Democrats proposed breaking up GM and Ford in order to end the practice of administered pricing within the oligarchic American auto industry.[870] Reuther's opposition to anti-trust action exposed one of the more disturbing element's of the UAW's corporatism. Labor's peace pact with Big Business had made the labor movement dependent upon monopolistic corporations, a gesture which never inspired as much "gratitude" as hoped. Notwithstanding Reuther's willingness to restrain UAW demands, Ford, Chrysler, and GM all immediately rejected Reuther's price cut proposal.[871]

With his price-cut proposal, Reuther sought to accomplish two goals. First, for the old *Labor Action* crowd, he sought to resurrect the spirit of the "open the

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[870] Lichtenstein argues that Reuther "won a national spotlight for his critique of big business" when he testified before the subcommittee. If so, he was able to do so while *defending* monopolistic tendencies within industry. Indeed, he argued for more regulation and less market competition. Lichtenstein himself reports, "Kefauver and other antitrust Democrats wanted to break up GM and Ford, but Reuther favored a public commission to put big business price policy in a 'fishbowl.' In effect, Reuther wanted to regulate the automobile industry... subject to an open set of political negotiations." See Lichtenstein (1995), p.352.

[871] *Wall Street Journal*, August 23, 1957; August 26, 1957; *Business Week*, August 31, 1957; *Militant*, September 2, 1957.

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books" demand. But by this time, *Labor Action* was divided on the question and once again ran two parallel articles covering the price-cut proposal. In one article, Widick suggested that, should the proposal have been accepted, "Reuther would have been behind the eight ball in terms of the politics within the UAW, for any scaling down of UAW demands for the 1958 negotiations in advance of them would have been rather unpopular with the ranks." Moreover, he worried that Reuther was, "in effect, proposing to arbitrate the 1958 contract" by proposing that should the International and the industry fail to agree on a contract package, "an impartial three man committee would be set up to review the bargaining proposals of both sides."[872]

In contrast, Herman Benson was clearly exhilarated by the Reuther move. His article ran under the headline, "UAW Leads Cause of Whole People."[873] In a letter to Eisenhower, Reuther suggested that if industry profits fell below a "reasonable" level in the aftermath of a price cut, "then our proposal irrevocably commits us to scaling down our collective bargaining demands."[874] But somehow, according to Benson, in agreeing to reduce UAW demands Reuther's proposal "raises collective bargaining into a dramatic struggle between two classes over price control and into a fierce competition for the loyalty of millions victimized by inflation." This constituted "a step forward in labor's great struggle to curb the anti-social power, the 'prerogatives,' of monopoly capitalism."[875]

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[872] *Labor Action*, September 9, 1957.
[873] *Labor Action*, September 9, 1957.
[874] *Wall Street Journal*, August 20, 1957; *Labor Action*, September 9, 1957.
[875] *Labor Action*, September 9, 1957.

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Benson was correct in suggesting that Reuther sought to use his proposal to make peace with the victim of corporate pricing power, the American consumer. But Ford and the other auto companies went on the offensive and quickly exploited Reuther's willingness to subordinate UAW demands to the demands of consumers. It was a "no brainer," really. Ford simply took Reuther's thinking to its logical conclusion: if wage cuts could deliver price cuts, then it was reasonable to blame high car prices on the high wages of autoworkers. Similarly, Chrysler simply asked, "Would it not be just as logical for the automobile industry to ask members of the UAW to take an immediate and sizable wage cut?"[876]

But the real aim of the price-cut proposal was to divert attention away from the shorter work week demand. Indeed, *Business Week* noted, "Bit by bit, the major area of conflict between the United Auto Workers and the automobile industry... is being narrowed down... [as] this week the trend setting issue of the shorter work week [was] lost in the running fight over whether wages push up prices or vice-versa."[877] *Fortune*, like Widick, suggested that "if any of the companies had evinced serious interest in the scheme, Reuther might well have faced some embarrassments within his union."

> For in the past year, after prolonged public discussion, the Ford, Chrysler and GM divisions of the UAW had all gone on record overwhelmingly in favor of heavy wage and fringe-benefits increases and substantial reductions in hours... there was no mention of automobile prices in any of the union's statements of

[876] *Business Week*, August 31, 1957; October 26, 1957; *Wall Street Journal*, November 5, 1957.
[877] *Business Week*, October 26, 1957.

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> objectives. When Reuther... replaced these objectives... they did so without consulting the members.[878]

The question, of course, was not *why*, but *how* Reuther would seek to drop the shorter work week demand without risking more rank-and-file rebellion. At least one factor, the cooperation of Carl Stellato, seemed certain. But how would Stellato survive? Herman Benson's *Labor Action* article suggested that, in a recent issue of *Ford Facts*, "Stellato solidarizes himself with Reuther under the headline, "Let's Look at the Books in '58."[879] In fact, Stellato may have wanted to cuddle up to Reuther, but he dared not do so publicly in *Ford Facts*. In fact, the call to "look at the books" was not put in Stellato's mouth, as Benson had indicated. The full headline read, "Reuther Tells Ford, GM & Chrysler: Let's Look at the Books in '58." Moreover, the article responded to Reuther's proposal in bold print.

> **This is Our Position!!! We want to make it crystal clear where we in Local 600 stand. Whether prices are raised, lowered or remain the same we will be seeking the fulfillment of our contract demands as adopted by the General Council and the membership of Local 600**. We in Local 600 are prepared to stand firm on the [1958 Collective Bargaining] resolution... in which the delegates made it clear that the shorter work week with increased take-home pay will be the key demand for 1958.[880]

Stellato was playing the militant for his restless rank-and-file. He had no choice. But Stellato did publicly warm up to International *officers* who had personally bailed him

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[878] *Fortune*, October 1957.
[879] *Labor Action*, September 1957.
[880] *Ford Facts*, August 24, 1957.

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out of a jam. For example, Stellato wrote an article in *Ford Facts* encouraging Local 600 members to attend a mass meeting to hear UAW vice-president Leonard Woodcock. Woodcock was described as "a dynamic speaker who knows the score and is dedicated to the labor movement."[881] Interestingly, *Ford Facts* editor James Watts later reported that the mass meeting had been "very good" even though "the turnout was disappointing."[882]

Stellato was beginning to slip. He began using Reutherite phrases about "the balance between productive and purchasing power." By November, Stellato was clearly struggling as he tried to talk out of both sides of his mouth. "We in Local 600 who were the first to feel layoffs due to automation, technological improvements and decentralization, and who were the first to raise the cry for a shorter work week with increased take home pay," Stellato declared in his most militant tone," will have to assume our responsibilities in the battle..." However, the "battle" in question was not the battle for 30-40, but "the battle against inflation."[883] Even as *Ford Facts* continued to promise the membership that "the 1957 Convention had already finalized the demand for a substantial wage increase combined with a shorter work week," Stellato was clearly spending down some of his hard-earned political capital.[884] The only question at this point was how much longer before he would be forced to declare bankruptcy.

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[881] *Ford Facts*, October 26, 1957.
[882] *Ford Facts*, November 16, 1957.
[883] *Ford Facts*, November 2, 1957.
[884] *Ford Facts*, November 16, 1957.

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In preparation for the upcoming, January 22 Special Convention, where bargaining plans would be finalized, Reuther spent the weekend of January 10-12, 1958 meeting with his Steering Committee, the top brass of the Reuther caucus.[885] On Monday, January 13, Reuther issued a press release.

> Every thinking American and Canadian concerned with the security of his country and the future of human freedom recognizes today that the problem symbolized by the Russian earth satellites has drastically changed what appeared to be the situation at the time of the 1957 UAW convention The launching of the sputniks has revealed and dramatized the true dimensions of the challenge of Communist tyranny and has emphasized the necessity for us to make the fullest possible use of our human and material resources to meet that challenge. As responsible citizens and in conformity with established UAW policy in relation to the timing of the introduction of the shorter work week, the leadership of the UAW recommends that the delegates to the Special Convention temporarily defer the implementation of the shorter work week in 1958 in the light of the realities of the world situation.[886]

Deus ex machina! Reuther had found his salvation in the "little moon" that the Soviets had launched into orbit on October 4, 1957. According to reports, Reuther also suggested that the nations slumping economy -- which would, in fact, turn out to be the first serious post-war recession to hit the economy -- was another factor making the shorter work week demand untimely. Reuther was back to his old money-leisure trade-off rap, as though the 30-40 demand had no relation to the question of unemployment. "We believe that... the real need is to get the unemployed back to work and to get those on short work weeks back on a full work week and that greater

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[885] Stieber (1962), p.48; *Detroit Free Press*, January 14, 1958.
[886] Quoted in *Labor Action*, January 27, 1958.

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leisure, for the time being, can wait."[887] In the question and answer session that followed the issuance of the press release, Reuther justified his abandonment of the shorter work week demand, informing reporters, "I am an American first and a union member second."[888]

Indeed, when it came to the question of withdrawing labor supply from the labor market, Reuther had always acted the part of "an American first." Reuther's primary response to the movement for the shorter work week had always been couched in the terms Cold War patriotism. In 1953, the shorter hours demand was subordinated in the name of production requirements for the fight against the Kremlin. In 1958, even in the midst of growing unemployment and recession, it was the same story: America's "national" manpower needs must trump any labor movement strategy for withdrawing labor supply.

But 1958 was not 1953. Having postponed action on the shorter work week at least since late 1947, Reuther effectively squandered the opportunity presented by the extraordinary tight labor markets of the early postwar era. Finally, in 1958, with recession at hand, Reuther suggested that the shorter work week, previously undesirable, was now impossible. It was too late for labor market strategies. The time had come for concession bargaining.

But, in fact, Reuther was not so foolish as to leave the press with nothing but "Reuther Retreats" for headlines. Instead, the press conference also saw the advent of an entirely new *profit-sharing* plan. Specifically, Reuther proposed a scheme for

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[887] *Labor Action*, January 27, 1958; *Detroit Free Press*, January 14, 1958.
[888] *Detroit Times*, January 19, 1958; *Labor Action*, January 27, 1958.

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dividing up any profits beyond 10% of invested capital whereby the company would keep the entire 10%, plus half of anything more. The other half of any so-called "excess profits" would be split: one-quarter going to employees and one-quarter going to consumers as year-end rebates.[889] Conveniently, the auto executives were all available for comment on Reuther's latest scheme. All opposed the plan.[890]

The *American Socialist* suggested that Reuther's profit-sharing plan "has to be viewed as a public-relations job... an attempt to retreat under cover of a *synthetically ferocious struggle*."[891] Indeed, Reuther played it just right. The headlines in Detroit on Tuesday, January 14 actually led with the Big Three attack on Reuther, making him appear to be an audacious David taunting the Goliaths of industry. The *Detroit Times*, for example, ran a huge, splashy headline, "Big 3 Tells UAW: No." The *Detroit Free Press* announced, "Auto Executives Assail UAW Profit-Split Plan." The *Detroit News* similarly put the emphasis on corporate hostility toward the radical Reuther, declaring, "Big 3 To Fight UAW Profit Plan."[892]

But Reuther's actual opposition was to his labor-left, not his corporate-right. Of course, the profit-sharing idea came in for serious criticism within the union. But, at least initially, opposition within the UAW centered on the fact that Reuther had scrapped the shorter work week. And even though the headlines were all about profit-sharing, the articles did take note of the 30-40 reversal. "In a startling about-face on

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[889] *Wall Street Journal*, January 14, 1958; *Labor Action*, January 27, 1958.
[890] *Detroit Times*, January 14, 1958; *Detroit News*, January 14, 1958; *Detroit Free Press*, January 14, 1958.
[891] Emphasis added. *American Socialist*, March 1958.
[892] *Detroit Times*, January 14, 1958; *Detroit News*, January 14, 1958; *Detroit Free Press*, January 14, 1958.

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the four-day week," the *Detroit Free Press* reported, "The UAW Monday pigeonholed its long-standing demand for a shorter work week in the auto industry."[893] In a small front page article on the day after the press conference, the *Free Press* predicted that Reuther would face "stout opposition" from Stellato, the "fiery leader" of Local 600.[894] "I don't think he'll get away with it," Stellato warned. "I don't know what he can be thinking about... I'm deeply disappointed and I'm sure there are thousands of other UAW members who are just as disappointed."[895]

In his own press release, issued on Tuesday, Stellato declared that he was "astounded," not so much by the reversal itself, but by the fact that the IEB recommendations "were released to the public press before being submitted to the Special UAW Convention." Stellato went on to recount the history of the 30-40 movement at Local 600 including a General Council meeting held January 12, 1958, at which the shorter work week demand was unanimously reaffirmed by the Council delegates. Distancing himself from Reuther, Stellato suggested, "The establishment of a shorter work week will not deter any defense effort for assuredly at the present time the unemployed are not in a position to help either themselves or the defense effort."[896]

On Wednesday, January 15, with all eyes anticipating his next move, Stellato began to mount a campaign to salvage the 30-40 movement. During the day, he called a series of meetings with Local 600's full-time staff representatives to take the pulse of the rank-and-file. He told the newspapers, "While no official action was taken, they

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[893] *Detroit Free Press*, January 14, 1958.
[894] *Detroit Free Press*, January 14, 1958.
[895] *Detroit Free Press*, January 14, 1958.
[896] "Stellato Press Release, January 14, 1958" in box 6, Ken Bannon Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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really raised h---. I received a telegram signed by 2,063 workers in the Dearborn assembly plant pledging me their support."[897] Then, on Wednesday night, Stellato and other Detroit-area supporters of the 30-40 demand met to discuss plans for the upcoming Special Convention.[898] Supporters of the incipient rebellion included Stellato; Thomas Cunningham, the new president of Chrysler Local 7; the ever-present *faux* dissident, Paul Silver; Pat Quinn, president of Dodge Local 3, and several leaders from Ford Local 200 in Windsor.[899] On Friday, the 20 or so union officials in what the *Free Press* called a "Rebel" group told reporters that they would meet again on Friday night for a second strategy session. In a surprising development, Silver went so far as to announce that he would "write a minority report" in advance of the UAW Special Convention.[900]

On Saturday, January 18, the new issue of *Ford Facts* was published. In a return to the days of editorial militancy, the front page included a banner headline in red ink, "Local 600's Position: On a Shorter Work Week with Increased Take-home Pay!"[901] An editorial called the IEB reversal a "violation of the faith and trust" of the

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[897] *Detroit Times*, January 16, 1958.
[898] *Detroit Free Press*, January 16, 1958; *Detroit Times*, January 16, 1958.
[899] The "dissident" status of this group is unclear. Thomas Cunningham was not even a delegate from Local 7 during the 1955 convention. But as of 1955, the Local 7 delegation -- which did include a young delegate (and future Congressman) named John Conyers -- was entirely loyal to the Reuther administration.

The Local 200 contingent was significant primarily because Charles McDonald, the Reutherite president of Local 200, was the co-chair of the Resolutions committee charged with bringing the bargaining issues before the delegates to the Special Convention. In 1955, Local 200 sent a divided delegation to the Convention. Of the 12 delegates, 8 had voted for Stellato (but none for Turner).

Paul Silver, President of Local 351, also served on the Resolutions committee. However, all members of the committee served at the pleasure of Reuther and the IEB.

See the roll call vote in *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 27-April 1, 1955, Cleveland, Ohio*, pp.378-379; 416-417.
[900] *Detroit Free Press*, January 17, 1958.
[901] *Ford Facts*, January 18, 1958.

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rank-and-file. "We cannot see the connection between the Sputnik and dropping the fight for a shorter work week... Let us repeat, so there is no room for misunderstanding, the economic conditions which have developed since the April ['57] Convention have made even more imperative the struggle for a shorter work week.... We intend to fight at the January 22 Special Convention to retain the shorter work week as the Number One demand for the 1958 contract negotiations."[902]

Even more impressive was a powerful column written by John Szluk, president of the stamping unit. In an open letter to Stellato, Szluk recalled, "I have been a Walter Reuther supporter all of my days in the UAW... I am still a Walter Reuther supporter... But I am going to stand with you in the fight for the '30-40' because... that is the mandate of the greatest percentage of the men and women who elected me.

> We in the shop are a great deal closer to the membership than those who serve from your level... Failure on your part, or on mine, to pursue the things they want most will certainly find them seeking new leadership on every level... Here in the Stamping Unit my membership is asking why the shift in plans to go after the 30 for 40!... Several [members] have asked me to request that you hold special shift meetings... so that they can get your assurance... that you will lead the local union's delegation into the special 'crash convention' in a solid block to continue the fight for '30 for 40'... it now promises to be a red-hot convention.[903]

Unit officers were sending a clear signal up the chain of command: our jobs are on the line. Of course, it was all done in the press and it was, no doubt, so much posturing.

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[902] *Ford Facts*, January 18, 1958.
[903] *Ford Facts*, January 18, 1958.

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But posturing is not "mere" posturing. Officers sought to publicly identify themselves with the membership in order to be spared the potent wrath of the rank-and-file.

On Wednesday, January 22, the delegates assembled for the shorter work week showdown. The new bargaining package, including the profit-sharing plan, was introduced as the centerpiece for debate. At the start of the discussion, Reuther seemed to forget that in 1954, he had shifted from a strategy of confrontation to one of co-optation. He now seemed confident that he could once again launch a direct attack on the 30-40 movement. Perhaps he thought he had already co-opted all his opponents. On the other hand, his aggressive posture may have been a genuinely angry response to the media speculation about a "rebel" group. In any event, Reuther opened the debate on Wednesday with a return to the stark language of his 1953 repudiation of the shorter hours movement. He contrasted the Resolutions committee proposal with "the other approach... to make the shorter work week... the top basic demand."[904] But Reuther warned against choosing the latter approach.

> At that point the whole recommendation here, the whole tactical approach... goes down the drain and therefore you can't be for this package and the shorter work week in the basic demand because that is contrary to the whole tactical approach being suggested... if you say the shorter work week is the top demand then, in effect, you are opposed to this approach and it seems to me the issue is sharply enough drawn. You are either for it or against it.[905]

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[904] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.59.
[905] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.59.

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Reuther offered the delegates very little in the way of explanation for dumping the shorter work week. He spared them the sputnik speeches and found it difficult to suggest his more likely excuse, that a recession was no time to fight unemployment. Instead, Reuther tried to imply that the key to understanding the new package was its importance in the inflation wars. Indeed, he announced that "the whole tactical approach [was] to meet the inflationary propaganda... the Union will take a position before the people of America in which we say we have got a minimum economic package. That you can do without any question of inflation. That will put us in the strongest position to fight our battle"[906]

There was an extraordinary irony in Reuther's new role as an inflation hawk. For ten years, Reuther had argued against the shorter work week because -- in the midst of the booming post-war economy, he suggested that 30-40 was a demand to share the misery, while the American economy would collapse if workers were not given more "purchasing power." Thus, for ten years the demand of the day had to be for more work and higher pay, not less work and less pay. As Reuther was well aware, this argument had always been based on a false representation of the 30-40 movement, which demanded less work as a strategy for keeping unemployment low and wages high. In 1958, with the advent of the worst recession to hit the American working class since the Depression of the 1930s, Reuther suddenly *correctly* characterized the shorter work week demand as an *expensive* and *audacious* proposition destined to increase "purchasing power." But in 1958, just as a the

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[906] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.59.

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economy was entering a deflationary recession, Reuther decided that it was time, not for a wage boost through an hours reduction, but for a little austerity and a "minimum economic package." He rightly concluded, however, that his own "share the misery" tactic (i.e., wage concessions), however, had *nothing* in common with the shorter work week demand and the two demands could not easily co-exist.

Still, Walter Reuther didn't need to work that hard to convince people that he was no shorter work week advocate. He had made that clear for years. Everyone knew that he had been forced to concede the point, not to agree with it. Paul Silver, however, had a more difficult task explaining himself to the delegates. After publicly committing himself to the "Rebel" group and to the introduction of a minority resolution, Silver ran into some trouble at the Special Convention when delegates learned that he had, once again, refused to introduce a minority resolution.[907] As soon as he began to speak, he was interrupted by shouts from the floor. When Reuther reprimanded the delegates, Silver suggested, "You don't have to worry about what happened, Walter. It always happens." Then, in a nod to his role in the meetings of the "Rebel" group, he acknowledged, "I met with some of the same people and I guess they didn't like some of the answers I gave them."[908]

Among "the answers" he now provided was that his public opposition had been based on false information. "The newspapers stressed the fact that the Board had

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[907] Silver was one of the most consistent forces in the history of factional fights within the UAW. His role in 1958 was almost identical to his role in 1953. Recall that Silver had rehearsed his lines as the "voice of the opposition" on the Resolutions committee, but when the lights went up and he appeared on stage, Silver refused to delivered his lines on cue. "I did not file a minority report because...I believe that a minority report would only serve to confuse the workers." *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Convention, UAW-CIO, March 22-27, 1953, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.158.

[908] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.60.

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shelved the shorter work week." "I made a few telephone calls.. and met with certain people... We went over this and I came to the conclusion that the Board's proposals didn't go far enough." If that had been true, Silver promised, "I would have issued a minority report."[909] But "after talking this over, discussing it, getting the ideas from the administration," Silver decided that the newspapers had it wrong. There was "no sense in making a minority report because... [the resolution] doesn't mean that now is not the time for the shorter work week."[910]

How so? Silver crafted a bizarre little safety valve to relieve the pressure of direct confrontation. The profit-sharing proposal, which was introduced in the Convention resolution as a so-called "Supplementary Demand," asked that 1/4 of all profits in "excess" of 10% be considered the "workers' share" to be used "for such purposes as the workers in each section of our Union themselves decide through the democratic processes of the UAW."[911] "If this resolution is adopted," Silver argued, "the shorter work week is on the collective bargaining table in the 1958 negotiations... [because] the implementation of the supplementary package would make the shorter work week possible... to the extent that you can convince the membership in your own local unions as to what they want to do with it."[912] In other words, workers could use "their share" of any profit-sharing jackpot to try to buy leisure time from the company.

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[909] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.74.
[910] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.75.
[911] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.52.
[912] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.61.

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Of course, workers didn't need a union simply in order to try to swap money for time.[913]

The important thing about this little safety valve was that, as the proceedings wore on, Reuther became increasingly dependent upon this co-optation device. Indeed, after the Wednesday night session, when Reuther was able to take the pulse of the delegates, he all but abandoned his confrontational approach. "I think the brother should understand," Reuther told the first delegate to speak against the resolution on Thursday morning.

> Evidently there is still some misunderstanding... the short work week is in the proposal that is being recommended by the committee excepting instead of it coming out of the basic demand, it's in the supplementary demand. It is on the bargaining table and will be bargained in 1958 if this is adopted, but instead of paying for it out of the basic demand, it would be paid for out of the supplementary demand... So that we ought to have it clearly understood that the shorter work week is in both approaches.[914]

Reuther's claim was ridiculous. Silver had conjured the time-money swap from thin air. The "Supplementary Economic Demands and Price Rebates for Consumers" section of the Resolution did not mention anything about a shorter work week. According to Reuther's logic, the assertion that the shorter work week was "on the bargaining table" could, in effect, have applied just as well to every prior *wage* negotiation in the twenty-year history of the UAW.

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[913] The *American Socialist* suggested that Silver's interpretation "further muddled an already confused situation." *American Socialist*, March 1958.

[914] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.67.

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Nevertheless, it is quite interesting that Reuther was forced into a rhetorical retreat after his opening salvo. Stellato gave a decent speech. So much so that when Reuther saw that he was not behaving, he tried to cut off the Local 600 president. But Stellato, after recalling the '55 and '57 convention resolutions, got in a final shot.

> Our membership expects the short work week to be one of our major demands. It shocked us to no end when out of the Sputnik-infested skies came the substitute to a shorter work week in the form of a profit sharing plan.... I say we ought to put this question to a referendum vote and let the membership decide if our objective shall be a short work week or a profit sharing plan.[915]

Other Local 600 delegates, including Jesus Chantres from the Tool and Die unit, were even more aggressive. "We did not join this Union," Chantres told his fellow delegates, "because... the UAW... was going to fight for... a small group that is working and the hell with the other employes... I urge you to vote down this resolution and let us go on fighting in unison for a shorter work week."[916] One older delegate, a Reuther supporter from Milwaukee Local 75 named Herman Steffes, demanded, "Let's get back and let's build this Union the way it is supposed to be... That is, what we formulated this organization for back in 1932: Wages, hours, and working conditions... Let's turn down this whole package."[917] John DeVito, an old-time dissident from Local 45, the militant Fisher Body local in Cleveland, questioned

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[915] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.70.
[916] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.73.
[917] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.90.

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the sincerity of Silver's safety valve. "They say we can have the shorter work week... then why are we debating it here and why did they change their minds... dealing a cold, chilly blast in January against it." Then DeVito predicted, "Now, the leadership of this Union cannot sidestep the short work week. It will keep haunting them until we put up that fight. That happens to be the dream of every American worker in this country."[918]

During the course of the discussion, approximately 40 delegates spoke out in opposition to the abandonment of the shorter work week demand.[919] Many delegates spoke out in support of the shorter work week and in opposition to the corporatist assumptions of the profit-sharing proposal. Robert Lopez from GM Local 664 in Tarrytown, New York, recalled Reuther's earlier bragging about the shorter work week and called Reuther's sputnik bluff.

> Now, I remember just from 60 days ago, when not one but two sputniks were orbiting around the earth, Brother Reuther electrified the AFL-CIO Convention by putting before them the major demands of the Auto Workers, and he included the shorter work week...This was in December... This was after sputnik... I think that, regardless of what occurs at this Convention, the shorter work week... will still be the major demand of the Auto Workers on the line... We are ready... to make a fight for the shorter work week.[920]

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[918] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.88.
[919] See *American Socialist*, March 1958.
[920] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, pp.91-92.

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Referring to the profit-sharing plan, Lopez suggested, "We don't want to become silent partners and get a little hand-out from [the corporations]."[921]

The profit-sharing plan, asserted Ernest Dillard of Local 15, "seems to carry the strong suggestion that if we are to share profits we must take responsibility for seeing that there be profits... It seems to encourage the attitude on the part of the company that we are one big family... Regarding the shorter work week, I would hope that we could go on record to keep that as a major demand."[922]

Lew Michener, the militant president of Local 406, the Ford Local in Long Beach, California, poked fun at the profit-sharing plan. He quoted a man named Rawson Warden, national chairman of the Council of Profit Sharing Industries, who promoted such plans to employers because they "make every employe a capitalist... they act to increase productivity without adding to the cost of the products." Michener told the delegates that he was "a little bit worried" that UAW policy now mirrored such corporate schemes.[923]

Michener's comments seemed to have touched a nerve in Reuther. First, he denied the association with incentive plans. After all, he had built his career by never letting workers forget that the CP had advocated incentive pay schemes during World War II. "There is as much difference as there is between day and night," Reuther asserted. But his defenses suddenly collapsed. "Going back to the old catch phrases, I

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[921] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.92.
[922] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.67.
[923] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.63.

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could dig up some speeches I used to make but I have learned a few things along the way. If you are going back to those old phrases... you will learn. I happen to believe that this is the most realistic way to go about this thing and I am willing to change some of my ideas because the world is changing." Reuther knew what was at issue in this debate, without anybody else having used the dreaded term: "I don't believe if we get it this way that we are going to have *a company union*. I just believe our Union is too good to degenerate into a company union."[924]

When a motion was made to close the debate, Reuther called for a show of hands in support of the resolution. Reuther ruled that "the vote in adopting the committee's report is carried by better than 90 per cent."[925] But delegates shouted out, calling for a roll call vote. Reuther did everything he could to prevent the roll call, scolding the shouters, "You fellows never seem to learn."[926]

What these delegates never seemed to learn, in fact, was that Reuther had the convention procedures sewn up tight. Of course, the entire direction of debate and voting had already been powerfully constrained by the fact that only the Resolutions Committee could introduce resolutions for debating and voting. Resolutions Committee members were appointed by the IEB, and since 1947, Reuther could count

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[924] Emphasis added. *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.64.

[925] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.95.

The *American Socialist* reported that Reuther probably over-estimated his margin of victory. "A number of observers were of the opinion that a 25 percent delegate opposition was a closer figure, and with the heavier representation for delegates in the Michigan area, this would account for roughly a third of the convention. In the corridors, many delegates expressed reluctance to repudiate the leadership on the eve of negotiations." *American Socialist*, March 1958.

[926] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.94.

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on the support almost every IEB member on every action. Thus, for example, Stellato's provocative proposal -- that the status of the shorter work week demand be put before the rank-and-file in a referendum -- was actually meaningless gesture since "proposals" from the floor had no official status as such.

Of course, Reuther's political machine was not air tight. Delegates still had the option of voting down the official administration Resolution. When delegates shouted for a roll call vote, Reuther read from something called "Rule 12" and announced, "It shall require at least 800 regular delegates (excluding special delegates) to move a roll call vote on any question."[927] Why was a roll call vote so important to the shorter work week proponents? And why did Reuther invoke a rule to prevent the roll call vote? Did the shorter hours advocates think that they had the votes to beat the Reuther machine? Had Reuther fudged when he ruled, on the basis of his quick look at raised hands, that the motion had passed by better than 90%?

The answer is that Reuther almost certainly did *not* fear -- nor did he have reason to fear -- that his Resolution would have been repudiated by the delegates in a roll call vote. But the *record* of a roll call vote -- even one documenting an enormous victory for the administration's Resolution -- could have been a politically destabilizing document back on the shop floor. Back home, when the voting record was published an analyzed, local officers who had demonstrated fidelity to Reuther at the expense of the shorter work week would have to account for their actions. One extremely loyal Reuther delegate, Harold VanAlsburg of Continental Motors Local 113 in Muskegon,

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[927] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.95.

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seemed willing to sacrifice his reputation back home. "I heard a couple of delegates say a little while ago they were worried as to what was going to happen to them when they went back into their local unions... I like a little slogan I heard Loretta Young make on a program the other night when she said, 'If you want a place in the sun you have got to expect some blisters.'"[928] It is not clear how many delegates would have shared VanAlsburg's heroic spirit of self-sacrifice.

On the other hand, if Reuther could prevent a roll call vote, then delegates would not have to fear that a blistering rank-and-file rebellion was the admission price for "a place" in the sunshine of the Reuther caucus. In order to sell-out the membership, the delegates required some sun-blocking protection or, better still, some shadows in which to hide. No record, no accountability.

While in Detroit, delegates could remain faithful to the Reuther caucus which had helped them ascend to or remain in office. Indeed, any defections would be recorded, not for a public record, but for caucus records. Reuther made certain that the entire voting process by show of hands was transparent to him. According to the *Militant*, he placed at least one paid International staff representative with each delegation at the meeting.[929]

Conversely, in the absence of a public record, each delegate could go home to the rank-and-file and claim to have fought a noble crusade for the shorter work week

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[928] The official transcription seems to have misquoted this candid delegate. In the record of the proceedings, the phrase is reported as "If you want a place in the sun you have got to expect some whispers." However, a reporter for the *Militant* confirmed the more likely term, "blister." See *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.79; *Militant*, February 3, 1958.

[929] *Militant*, February 3, 1958.

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only to have been undermined by the majority of *other* delegates. Under the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that when Reuther asked, "Are there 800 delegates who support the roll call vote?" he actually found "about 75 delegates with hands up" before declaring that "the motion for a roll call vote has lost."[930] No doubt, every delegate also went home proud to have been one of the 75 who supported the roll call vote.

Having secured victory by defeating the shorter work week, Reuther moved to cover his own tracks. "The fellows who want the 30 for 40 in the main package, they think you can make a jump and get to the top. I admire that spirit."

> I say we have made a decision. It wasn't my decision... You made the decision. You made it after full and democratic debate... I say that the important thing now is not the division that was expressed in debate. The important thing is the unity that we have when we sit at the bargaining table.[931]

Reuther could not end the meeting until he reminded the delegates of his glory days as an heroic militant. But he ended on a self-conscious, defensive note, pretending that all of his opponents were still on his right, not his left. It was as pathetic as it was predictable, but Reuther even dredged up the beating at the "battle of the overpass" and the shooting, just in case anyone had forgotten.

> I say that the problem here is that we shouldn't have any delegate go home with the theory... the leadership just threw

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[930] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.95.
[931] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.96.

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> the unemployed to the wolves. I am concerned about the unemployed. If I weren't... I wouldn't be taking the abuse from every reactionary in the world... I am prepared to take all of the abuse that they can heap upon me, including being vilified in the press and on the radio, and being beaten up and shot at.[932]

[932] *Proceedings of the Special Constitutional Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, January 22-24, 1958, Detroit, Michigan*, p.95.

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Chapter 19: Managing Discontent, 1958-1959

Ideologically, the factional responses in the aftermath of the 1958 were predictable. *Labor Action* was now more divided than ever. Herman Benson knew enough to criticize the dumping of the shorter work week. But he suggested that "the abandonment of the shorter work week... has no necessary connection with the balance of the program and must be considered by itself."[933] The remainder of Reuther's program -- particularly the profit-sharing system -- was filled with "explosive potentialities." Benson was thrilled. The profit-sharing plan, like the price-cutting plan, demonstrated that Reuther had a taste for the managerial perspective. "If the union wins its demand, it must have a voice in a wide range of questions in order to safeguard its interests. In general, it begins to reach out for the right to decide what profits are, how they are made, and how they shall be used."[934] While Reuther himself worried that his plan might have been tagged as the scheme of a company union, Benson saw a step toward socialism. The coincidence was not without significance. Socialism and company unionism both looked forward to a final unity and identity where the line between the worker and the manager would be abolished.

In a *Labor Action* article published in early February, B.J. Widick was far more critical of all aspects of Reuther's plan. He demanded that one central question must be answered: "Why did [Reuther] propose a reversal of the shorter work week

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[933] *Labor Action*, January 27, 1958.
[934] *Labor Action*, January 27, 1958.

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demand at a time when there are at least 150,000 auto workers unemployed?"[935] Widick proposed the two common alternatives. First, was the "Reuther line...that this is not a year for a major struggle in view of the recession, unemployment, and uncertainty." Widick found this to be plausible and suggested the issue was "debatable with honest differences of opinion permissible."[936] The second Reuther line was "to put it baldly, that America faces a war crisis in the coming year." This, Widick argued, was less plausible but demonstrated "that Reuther has simply succumbed to the same hysteria that gripped Washington since sputnik shattered the dream world of American capitalism."[937] Widick posed one final, ominous question: "If the reactionary implications of his latest plan far outweigh any progressive anti-profit aspects, does this signify that Reuther has reached a dead end?"[938] Had Reuther suddenly veered off onto a dead end street, or had B.J. Widick embarked down a new, more militant road?

Widick was not the only Reuther ally who found it impossible to continue to defend the administration. Herbert W. Hoover, the unfortunately named, Flint-based radio host assigned as administrator of Local 659's *Searchlight* newspaper, was apparently quite disturbed by the ejection of the 30-40 demand from the UAW bargaining agenda. Hoover was director of the union's "Shiftbreak" radio program in Flint. After January's Special Convention, he actually took to the airwaves, expressed his disapproval of Reuther's plan and publicly advocated a return to the 30 for 40 demand. Hoover was immediately suspended from his job. As usual, Emil Mazey

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[935] *Labor Action*, February 10, 1958.
[936] *Labor Action*, February 10, 1958.
[937] *Labor Action*, February 10, 1958.
[938] *Labor Action*, February 10, 1958.

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assured members that the suspension did not signify retribution but was enacted in response to Hoover's stubborn "refusal to consult a doctor and take sick leave."[939] Given Mazey's explanation of the suspension, Hoover must have been relieved that Mazey did not have the authority to commit troubled staffers to psychiatric institutions for evaluation and treatment.

But many others simply followed Reuther's lead. The editorial staff of the *Wage Earner* was in a particularly awkward position. Since Reuther's concession to the shorter work week in 1954, *Wage Earner* pages had gone through a profound editorial transformation from hostility toward 30-40 to enthusiastic support of the demand. The influence of the shorter hours advocates within ACTU was so great that in December 1957, even the leading ACTist opponent of the shorter work week, William Ryan, had yielded, publishing a pro-30-40 article entitled, "Shorter Hours Fight Necessitated by Dire Failure to Provide Jobs."[940] But his capitulation came just a moment too soon. One month later, in January, Reuther had switched back to his early opposition to the shorter work week. Remarkably, the *Wage Earner* did not miss a beat. Like a cadre off disciplined Stalinists on the day after the Nazi-Soviet pact, the ACTists simply marched on -- in the opposite direction -- pretending that nothing had changed. The *Wage Earner* followed Reuther in opposing the shorter work week.

Indeed, William Ryan supported Reuther when the UAW president "relegated the reduction of the work-week to a secondary position [to profit-sharing].... Whether

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[939] *American Socialist*, March 1958.
[940] *Wage Earner*, December 1957.

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he realized it or not, in so doing he was keeping his record intact of always going out after that pioneering but yet sound idea."[941] In no time, the *Wage Earner* was back to running anti-30-40 articles with titles like, "Short Weeks Short-Change Workers and the Economy."[942] Moreover, like Benson's *Labor Action*, the *Wage Earner* hailed Reuther's "audacious" profit-sharing proposal.[943] Again, the coincidence was not without significance. The ACTist vision of industrial councils grew from the same seed as the socialist the hope of production processes removed from the marketplace and transferred to a communitarian sphere -- a free association of producers -- ruled by shared human values.

By this time the CP had, for all intents and purposes, imploded. The old CP apparatus would not disappear, but neither would it stray far from the social-democratic position it had settled into by 1955. In March of 1958, Saul Wellman -- the CP's point man in auto -- quit the party. His long-time comrade, Nat Ganley, noted that at the time of his resignation, Wellman "said he considered himself a Marxist-Leninist."[944] Indeed, in the years that followed, Wellman would remain a careful observer of the earliest Maoist formations -- including the Progressive Labor Party -- crafted by CP militants who rejected the right-wing social-democratic revisionism of the party, breaking away beginning in 1956.[945] Not surprisingly, the revolutionary Progressive Labor Party activists -- who would eventually make history

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[941] *Wage Earner*, February 1958.
[942] *Wage Earner*, March 1958.
[943] *Wage Earner*, February 1958.
[944] "Wellman Resignation," in box 31, Nat Ganley Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[945] See Fields (1988).

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by "colonizing" a group called Students for a Democratic Society -- went in search of a more militant program for activity within the labor movement. Before long, they found themselves, like revolutionary heliotropes, lurching toward a demand they called "30-40."[946]

After the UAW Special Convention, the Cochranite *American Socialist* ran a headline asking, "The Reuther Plan -- Advance or Retreat?"[947] Apparently, it was not intended as a rhetorical question -- they honestly couldn't decide how to judge the plan. The article reported on all of the discontent among the Convention delegates and suggested that "the profit-sharing proposition was going over with the workers in the plants like a lead balloon."[948] But the author, identified only as "an Auto Worker," also sympathized with the Reuther administration's difficulties, suggesting that the union was in a difficult bargaining position, leaving Reuther little choice but to withdraw the more audacious elements of the UAW bargaining program. With the "sag in the economy, the collective bargaining position of the union is clearly not a favorable one... This will not be an easy year for the union."[949] Such a perspective shared some of the flavor of the earlier Cochranite line suggesting the shorter hours movement was essentially tragic -- unnecessary when most practical but unrealistic when most necessary. The author was similarly conflicted in his coverage of the profit-sharing plan. While the profit-sharing proposal had particular limitations, what

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[946] For the explosion within the CP, see the interesting coverage published in the *American Socialist*, March 1957. For the emergence of various Maoists groups in and around the UAW, see the Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[947] *American Socialist*, March 1958.
[948] *American Socialist*, March 1958.
[949] *American Socialist*, March 1958.

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could "be said *for*" the idea, like the earlier price-cutting scheme, was that it "dramatized the fantastic profits of the major auto corporations."[950]

To its credit, the Socialist Workers Party did not waste its energy with expressions of dismay at Reuther's stark betrayal of the rank-and-file. The *Militant* coverage of the Special Convention was devoted almost entirely to consideration of the opposition's performance and an analysis of its potential. But there was also a sense of resignation. The opposition had "mustered only between 10% and 20%" of the delegates before going down to defeat in the Resolution vote and the vote on the roll call question. According to the *Militant*, Reuther's desertion of the 30-40 demand had undoubtedly expanded the ever-growing gap between Reuther and the rank-and-file. "The question of how soon the strained ties will break depends upon the emergence of a courageous, determined, and well organized opposition."[951] If the *Militant* formula for success were correct, there never would been a shorter work week movement of any kind. The movement had been led, not by courageous, determined, ideologues, but by market-savvy political opportunists. For those interesting in pinpointing the locus of any potential opposition, it was necessary to study the situation from the perspective of the opportunists, not the ideologues.

At Local 600, the fallout from the Special Convention was dramatic. On Saturday, January 25, 1958, the latest issue of *Ford Facts* was published. Having gone to the printer before the conclusion of the big confab, it included no coverage of the meeting itself, but was filled with shorter work week discussions. In particular, the

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[950] Emphasis added. *American Socialist*, March 1958.
[951] *Militant*, February 3, 1958.

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pages of the newspaper were filled with telegrams of support, reporting on petitions signed by thousands of workers in support of the shorter work week and in opposition to Reuther's plan to drop 30-40 from the bargaining agenda. Telegrams were printed demonstrating support from many units of the Rouge, including the Open Hearth, Stamping, Assembly, Glass, Frame, Sheet Metal, etc.

Unit leaders also addressed the shorter work week issue in their *Ford Facts* columns. Bill Cottett of the Transportation Unit predicted that the leadership "will not be so foolish as to throw the 30-hour week... out the window, because the membership expects quite a bit in our next contract."[952] In the same issue of *Ford Facts*, Arthur de la Fuente was even more explicit about the stakes going into the Convention fight. He reminded readers that the shorter work week "has been Carl Stellato's dream for over eight years."

> Well, you know the rest! Sputnik has changed things... now we do not need a shorter work week... So for the record, we want again to publicly state that our position has not changed one IOTA since 1957... I'm an ambitious man. I like my present job very much... Moving from Local 600 to Solidarity House would be nice; but if I have to do what other fair-weather local politicians have done in the past -- and some of them are doing now -- to get there, you'll never catch this 'Mexican' doing the same thing.[953]

Rumors of a Stellato sell-out were running through the Rouge, even before the Convention had run its course.

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[952] *Ford Facts*, January 25, 1958.
[953] *Ford Facts*, January 25, 1958.

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The red-hot tone of the January 25 *Ford Facts* had completely iced over, however, by the time the first post-Convention issue was published on *February* 1, 1958. There had been some kind of abrupt reversal of course in the immediate aftermath of the meeting. For the first time since at least 1951, Stellato made almost no effort pander to the militancy of the rank-and-file. "The Special UAW Convention... is now history," Stellato wrote. "It is regrettable that the... Convention saw fit to drop the shorter work week... Nevertheless, in spite of this, much good came out of the Convention."[954] By the March 15 issue, James Watts, the *Ford Facts* editor, was defending the procedures by which the Special Convention dropped the shorter work week. He correctly noted that the prior Convention resolutions in '55 and '57 had left open the possibility of abandoning the 30-40 demand in light of an economic downturn or an escalation in international, Cold War tensions.[955]

The only remaining question was what made Stellato think that he could sell-out the membership without losing his job? The answer arrived in the same March 15 issue. The unadorned fact of the matter was that Stellato did *not* think he would be able to stay on as president of Local 600. In keeping with this analysis, Stellato announced that he was running for Congress.[956] He was, once again, looking for a new, less demanding job.

Of course, even this maneuver was not without risks. The Democratic nomination to be the Congressman from Michigan's 16th District was not an open race. Stellato had to win in a primary race against the incumbent Congressman, a

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[954] *Ford Facts*, January 25, 1958.
[955] *Ford Facts*, March 15, 1958.
[956] *Ford Facts*, March 15, 1958; *Wage Earner*, April 1958.

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Democrat named John Lesinski Jr., whose voting record was hailed by the UAW as being "95% 'right'."[957] Stellato succeeded, with the help of CP-aligned friends Bill Grant and Walter Dorosh, in winning the endorsement of the "Local 600 Officers and Political Action Committee" and the General Council of Local 600.[958]

Stellato's self-confidence in his choice of exit strategies was bolstered, however, by one other significant source of support: Solidarity House. In advance of a new round of contract negotiations, Reuther once again made an implicit pact with Stellato, at the expense of the rank-and-file. While Reuther did not make a practice of personally endorsing primary candidates, the endorsement arrived through his emissaries, including Ken Bannon, the ACTist director of the Ford Department, and -- of all people -- Joe McCusker, the UAW Regional Director and former Local 600 president.[959] The July 1958 "issue" of Stellato's campaign newsletter, the *Challenger*, featured photographs of Stellato with the Reutherites. Not surprisingly, however, the newsletter -- which discussed Stellato's campaign program and his record as leader of Local 600 -- made no mention of his historic fight for the 30-40 demand, nor did it include a call for legislative action for a shorter work week.[960]

Incredibly, neither *Labor Action* nor the *Wage Earner* mentioned any *quid pro quo* in their coverage of the coincidence of Stellato's accommodating stance on the 1958 bargaining demands, and the endorsement from Reuther's caucus. Herman

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[957] *Wall Street Journal*, July 17, 1958; *Wage Earner*, April 1958; July 1958; *Labor Action*, August 11, 1958.
[958] *Labor Action*, August 11, 1958.
[959] *Ford Facts*, March 29, 1958; *Labor Action*, August 11, 1958.
[960] "*Challenger*, July 1958" in box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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Benson mentioned nothing about Stellato's potential crisis with the rank-and-file or his new Reutherite pose at Local 600. He now imagined Stellato as a champion of the rank-and-file, suggesting that it was on the "background of spreading unemployment and ferment among Michigan unionists that Stellato announced his candidacy."[961] The *Wage Earner*, which had denounced Stellato for years, was downright friendly toward Stellato, referring to him as "Carl" and all but endorsing the candidacy.[962] Even the Socialist Workers Party was more concerned with having Stellato beat his "banker opponent, John Lesinski" than with understanding the basis for Stellato's campaign.[963] The *Wall Street Journal*, however, made a more careful study of the angles at work in the Solidarity House endorsement. "The UAW's head man, embroiled in a labor situation without precedent in the auto industry, has enough problems on his hands now without having to deal with... Stellato once he reaches an acceptable compromise with the companies."[964] Stellato had been bought-off in exchange for assistance with his great escape. It was a reasonably fair exchange.

Except that it didn't work. Even with the help of the International officers -- or maybe, as a result of these alliances -- Stellato was unable to muster enough support from the Local 600 membership and the community to win the August 5 primary election. He was defeated by Lesinski, 27,842 to 21,050.[965] Much to his dismay, Stellato was, once again, stranded as president of Local 600. Moreover, he would have to suffer through the humiliating and painful process of selling another

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[961] *Labor Action*, August 11, 1958.
[962] *Wage Earner*, April 1958.
[963] *Militant*, August 18, 1958.
[964] *Wall Street Journal*, July 17, 1958.
[965] *Militant*, August 18, 1958.

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Reutherite contract to the rank-and-file. Nobody asked the rank-and-file to ratify the transcript from the 1958 Special Convention, but the workers would have an opportunity to ratify the contract.

In the first week of May, Reuther tried his price-cutting scheme one more time. In an act of desperation (which *Labor Action* hailed as a "Bold Move"), Reuther proposed that contracts be extended for three months *without any pay increases* on the condition that the auto companies cut their car prices. The auto companies rejected the price-cut offer, but used the opportunity to offer the extension of contracts for two years without pay increases.[966] A few days later, on May 10, 1958, with negotiations stalled and contracts set to expire at the end of the month, Reuther threw up his hands and offered to submit the new auto contracts to binding arbitration. The auto companies appear to have taken this gesture, not in the spirit of mutual cooperation intended by Reuther, but as a straightforward sign of union weakness. They immediately and unceremoniously rejected the offer.[967] Now, as the end of May approached, the rank-and-file at Local 600 faced the prospect of working without a contract for the first time since the recognition strike of 1941. On Tuesday, May 20, special meetings were held to discuss the contract expiration issue. UAW leaders from locals at the Big Three agreed that the rank-and-file would work without a contract.[968]

With *Ford Facts* now in the hands of the Reuther-Stellato coalition, it lost most of its former usefulness as a place where workers could discover critical perspectives on UAW negotiations with Ford. However, Stellato used the pages of

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[966] *Labor Action*, May 5, 1958.
[967] *Wall Street Journal*, May 12, 1958; *Militant*, May 19, 1958.
[968] *Labor Action*, June 2, 1958.

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the newspaper to defend himself from unidentified attacks. This was the case, for example, after the May 20th meeting at Ford. "Last Tuesday, a top level meeting was held between the Union and the Company to discuss orderly working procedures if the present contract should expire without a new agreement." On a sharply defensive note, Stellato asserted, "This was not a 'secret' meeting. This meeting was held with the knowledge and concurrence of the entire Negotiating Committee, including myself." Perhaps the accusation that the meeting had been "secret" came from unit leaders upset with having been excluded. In any event, Stellato made his loyalties completely clear when he further asserted, "The Ford negotiations are being conducted by a well-ordered and tightly-knit team under Reuther's leadership. This is as it should be."[969]

In June, the contracts expired without a new contract. Hitherto, Reuther had led the union through the post-war boom. But the contracts expired in the midst of widespread unemployment and labor market leverage had fallen to the auto companies. With the recession of '57 and '58, Reuther was seriously tested for the first time. He came up empty-handed.[970] At the low-point of the recession, more than 13,000 auto workers in Detroit had already exhausted their unemployment

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[969] *Ford Facts*, May 24, 1958.

[970] Lichtenstein is correct when he asserts, "For the next half-decade Reuther would hold but the weakest cards. The 1957-58 recession proved a dress rehearsal for the disasters that would befall American unionism at the end of the Vietnam War boom." The only problem is that, by neglecting the historic struggle over the 30-40 demand, Lichtenstein does not indicate the degree to which Reuther's "hand" -- and ours -- is dealt by the house dealer, according to house rules, within the house of labor itself. To suppose, as Lichtenstein does, that labor is necessarily a dependent variable, inevitably at the mercy of "the economy" -- that is, at the mercy of capital -- is to abandon the very idea of an autonomous labor movement and move swiftly toward capitulation to the demands of capital. See Lichtenstein (1995), p.349.

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compensation *and* their UAW supplementary unemployment benefits.[971] Reuther's great UAW engine of progress, designed to prevent employers from using cyclical unemployment to curb labor militancy, had broken down on its first lap around the track. "Now that the boom is over," noted the *Militant*, "Reuther is in full retreat."[972]

Those workers who had not yet developed the habit of making concessions defied the labor market odds and fought anyway once the contract had expired. But they found themselves up against the company *and* the International. Thus, for example, when workers at a Chrysler missile plant near Detroit walked out in late June, the International quickly called a meeting with the officers of Local 1245 and threatened that if they did not get the membership back to work by the next morning at 7 a.m., the International would place an administrator over the local.[973]

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[971] See Boyle (1995), p.135.

[972] *Militant*, May 26, 1958.

[973] *Labor Action*, June 16, 1958; *Militant*, July 7, 1958.

Lichtenstein suggests two explanations for the UAW's "restrictive policy." First, "it wanted to avoid dissipation of union strength to make credible a strike threat when master contracts were renegotiated in the fall of 1958." Lichtenstein seems to be suggesting that, at the time of the UAW strike-breaking episode, there was some planned decision for the renegotiation of contracts in the Fall. But Lichtenstein himself makes clear that the contracts had already *expired* without a strike or a strike threat, credible or incredible. Allowing the contracts to expire was not part of some long-term plan for a fall contract blitz, but was a consequence of "the union's inability to sign another" at the time of the expiration. It was not until July, after the Chrysler incident and long after the contract expiration, that Reuther decided he would have to await 1959 model auto production before getting another shot at a contract. Moreover, why would a wildcat strike "dissipate union strength"? One might think that a few wildcats would not only encourage rank-and-file militancy, but would give Reuther some increased leverage at the bargaining table. Apparently, Reuther thought otherwise. If Lichtenstein found Reuther's thinking flawed, he kept this analysis to himself.

The second, more likely reason Lichtenstein provides for the strike-breaking activity was that "the UAW was not unaware of the pressures under which those auto companies in competition with the highly efficient GM now did business." Lichtenstein's double negative need not leave the reader unaware of the point. Reuther's actions were a consequence of his careful consideration of *the plight of the corporation*. That is what corporatists do. And it is how Reuther came into direct conflict with the workers, whose wildcat strikes were a consequence of a careful consideration of *their own* well-being. That is what syndicalists do. See also, Lichtenstein (1985), p.373.

For Reuther's July 1958 decision to tie strike deadlines to 1959 model production schedules, see *Wall Street Journal*, July 17, 1958.

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When Reuther recognized that GM was not prepared to save Reuther's reputation and saw that the secondary union leaders at Chrysler had been forced into fighting mode, Reuther turned to Ford, which now seemed, incredibly, to be his path of least resistance. At least he knew he could count on Stellato for assistance. On September 10, he set a strike deadline for September 17, 1958.[974] One week later, on September 17, Ford and the UAW signed a three year contract.[975]

The *American Socialist* and the *Militant* reported that, on a straightforward economic basis, the settlement represented the smallest gains in the history of UAW contract negotiations with the Big Three auto companies.[976] Indeed, by one measure there were no gains. On average, the contract would cost the companies about five cents more per hour than the prior contract cost the companies. The skilled trades workers were given a special eight-cent increase per hour. But there were also some serious concessions. The annual improvement factor raise, for example, was extended from June to July in the first year, to August in the second year, and to September in the third year. The savings to the company, approximately $70 per worker for the life of the contract, was "the equivalent of all the money gains in pensions, insurance, the eight cents to skilled workers, and other minor improvements."[977] In a retreat on the shop-floor battlefield, the ratio of full-time union representatives was contractually reduced from one for every 130 workers to one for every 250.[978] In a dramatic sign

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[974] See *Wall Street Journal*, September 5, 1958; September 11, 1958.
[975] *Wall Street Journal*, September 18, 1958; *Militant*, September 29, 1954.
[976] *Militant*, September 29, 1958; *American Socialist*, December 1958. The December 1958 issue of the *American Socialist* was the final edition of the Cochranite journal.
[977] *American Socialist*, December 1958.
[978] *Militant*, September 29, 1958.

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that the pension system had everything to do with disciplining active workers and almost nothing to do with defending the livelihood of already-retired employees, the union forfeited "its future right to bargain over increased pensions for retired workers."[979] Finally, it goes without sayhing that there was no profit-sharing money which workers could use to "buy" a shorter work week.

After the settlement was reached, the Tool and Die, Maintenance, and Miscellaneous Units at Local 600 -- the backbone of the skilled trades -- walked out and stayed off the job for at least four days. The *Militant* noted that the issues in these walkouts were about "local issues" and did not necessarily imply a rebellion against the overall settlement terms.[980] But there was no other interpretation for the fact that, when the rank-and-file were asked to ratify the contract, those same settlement terms resulted in the largest "no" vote in the history of UAW.[981]

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[979] Stieber (1962), p.51.
[980] *Militant*, September 29, 1958.
[981] *American Socialist*, December 1958.

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Chapter 20: The Return of the Repressed, 1959-1966

If, as some might have argued, the 30-40 demand had been nothing more than the isolated initiative of a union *leader*, Carl Stellato, then the story of 30-40 should end here. Stellato's career as a dissident leader was finished and he no longer championed the shorter work week demand. He had become an ally of the Reuther administration, which remained committed to its decade-long effort to keep the 30-40 demand off the bargaining table. If the history of the shorter work week demand were merely "institutional" history (i.e., the history of spontaneous decisions freely made by those who somehow "hold" institutional power) then the history of the shorter work week demand would not be *social movement* history and it would have ended in late 1958. But it did not end.

Indeed, rank-and-file support for renewal of the 30-40 fight at Local 600 became evident almost immediately. But from now on, that fight would progress without Stellato. Indeed, he would become its most immediate obstacle. What is more, the new movement, which had to separate itself from the strong, long-term *identification* with Stellato's administration, also had to do so without many of Local 600's remaining left-wing ideologues.

These traditional "brain trusters" had won union office as members of Stellato electoral slates in the '50s were reluctant to give up full-time union work and return to the shop floor. As the 1959 Local 600 elections -- scheduled for May 6 & 7 -- approached, many of these old-time leftists faced a strategic decision. Were Stellato's enormous election victories of the '50s a reflection on *Stellato* or his *30-40* program?

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The shallow nature of left-wing confidence in the power 30-40 program became evident when many opted to stick with Stellato, shorter hours be damned. Left-wingers who aligned themselves with Stellato in 1959 included most of the old CP-aligned activists, including John Orr, the incumbent vice-president; Bill Johnson, the recording secretary; Bill Grant, the financial secretary; Walter Dorosh in Tool & Die; Johnny Quillico in the Assembly Unit; and, incredibly, Paul Boatin in the Engine Unit.[982] Among the independent or SWP-aligned leftists who hoped to be swept along on Stellato's coat-tails were Robert "Buddy" Battle in the Foundry; Jesus Chantres in Tool & Die; and the SWP's own Art Fox, who ran for minor office in Tool and Die on the "Stellato-Orr-Johnson-Grant" ticket. The slate also included most of Stellato's own gang of "centrist" switch-hitters, including Johnny Szluk from the Stamping Unit.[983]

But all of these incumbent-slate officers, who rested almost exclusively on incumbency, running a campaign without no identifiable substantive program,

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[982] In February 1959, Boatin -- still fighting for 30-40 -- made headlines by circulating a petition around the Engine Unit with an "eight-point 'Jobs for All' program," including a call for "immediate negotiations with the Big Three for a shorter work week with no cut in pay." When Boatin sent the petition to Reuther and released it to the press, however, Stellato told the *Detroit Free Press* that the proposal did not represent Local 600's policy. "Our contract with Ford is closed until 1961." The same news article also reported that Stellato said, "a shorter work week had not been discussed by either the International Executive Board or top officers of Local 600" and added that he was "committed to support the International's program." See *Detroit Free Press*, February 13, 1959.

However, after February 1959, Boatin and Stellato reached an understanding. In his campaign leaflets, Boatin aligned himself with Reuther, Bannon, and Stellato. By May, he was listed on the Stellato ticket, advocating that Ford build a "small car" in the Detroit area, and calling for legislative action, but not collective bargaining action, on the shorter work week. See "Local 600 Leaflets, 1959-60" in box 10, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[983] "Local 600 Leaflets, 1959-60" in box 10, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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immediately faced the challenge of a substantive, dissident movement.[984] The first sign of regeneration came on February 5, 1959, in the form of 8,500 copies of an "Open Letter" distributed by a group calling itself the "Committee for Good Unionism." The leaflet, which referred to Stellato as "The Undertaker" of Local 600, noted that Stellato was "eager to skip... He tried to escape to Washington via the 16th District." Then, in reference to the support given to Stellato by his incumbent allies, the leaflet described how "the CHAIRMEN said, 'yes, Carl.'... but the voters said, 'no, Carl." Even this minor factional blow caught the eye, not only of Stellato, but of Ken Bannon, Reuther's top staffer in the Ford Department. Bannon sent an associate to try to find "the source" of the flier.[985]

Soon enough, the dissident group came forward with a second "Open Letter" which articulated a positive program and identified leaders of the Committee for Good Unionism. In a return to the speed-up fight, the Committee demanded, "Our union must fight for humane work standards."[986] There was no mention of the shorter work week, and, like the first "Open Letter," it contained more factional venom than substantive program. But the weak program was drafted by a weak slate. The group put forward Pat Rice, perhaps the most inept factional opportunist within the Rouge, to run against Stellato.[987] Rice's problem had always been that he constantly exposed himself as an opportunist, apparently unaware that even cynical opportunists needed to

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[984] For the "missing" program of the Stellato slate, see "Local 600 Leaflets, 1959-60" in box 10, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[985] "Local 600 Leaflets, 1959-60" in box 10, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[986] "Local 600 Leaflets, 1959-60" in box 10, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[987] "Local 600 Leaflets, 1959-60" in box 10, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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campaign publicly with a substantive program. Back in the 1953 Local 600 race, for example, when Rice had first broken with Stellato to run for the presidency, he had made almost no effort to propose a substantive program. In that three-way race, Stellato had won almost 19,000 votes, compared with almost 8,000 for the Reutherite candidate, while Rice's showing was pathetic, with only 2,393 workers supporting his campaign. Incredibly, Rice still seemed completely oblivious, in the 1959 election, to the importance of the 30-40 movement. There is no evidence that he ever mentioned the shorter work week.

But in a stunning sign of rank-and-file rebellion, the 1959 election made Rice the beneficiary of a major anti-Stellato vote. Like Joe Hogan's surprise showing in 1951, Rice's 7,934 votes were not enough to win against Stellato's 13,964 votes, but the results turned many heads.[988] That a candidate like Rice -- with no real program -- could poll almost 8,000 votes, winning the support of more than one-third of the voting membership of Local 600, meant that there was a far greater *opportunity* for dissident challengers than previously thought. The competing elites at Local 600 had underestimated the militancy of the rank-and-file. Indeed, in its first "Open Letter" the Committee for Good Unionism had foolishly explained that Stellato had been "eager to split" not because he feared the wrath of the rank-and-file in the wake of his 30-40 desertion, but because he saw "the Local's fighting spirit... going down fast."[989] Stellato knew why he needed to split. So did the rank-and-file. But it took the local

[988] "Local 600 Leaflets, 1959-60" in box 10, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[989] "Local 600 Leaflets, 1959-60" in box 10, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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elites a little longer to learn. Indeed, Stellato correctly surmised that he could take little comfort in his victory. After the 1959 union election, he once again tried to find safer ground in Washington, running for Congress again in 1960, this time with even more direct assistance from Solidarity House, including the endorsement of Emil Mazey. Once again, however, Stellato lost in the primary.[990]

At the UAW Convention in October of 1959, the shorter work week demand was carefully pushed aside. A shorter work week resolution was submitted by the Reuther administration, much of the wording having been lifted directly from the 1957 bargaining resolution. However, one key adjustment was made. The shorter work week was no longer introduced as "*the* next major goal" of collective bargaining, but as "*a* major collective bargaining goal" to be requested "at the earliest practicable opportunity."[991]

In response to this retreat, a group of delegates met together at the Convention to discuss the formation of new dissident movement. Their chief grievance: Reuther's efforts to sidetrack the shorter work week.[992] After forming a steering committee and holding a few preliminary meetings in Detroit from October through January, the group -- calling itself the National Committee for Democratic Action (NCFDA) in the

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[990] For Stellato's second Congressional run and Mazey's endorsement, see *Ford Facts*, April 30, 1960; June 18, 1960; August 13, 1960.

[991] Emphases added. See *Proceedings of the Seventeenth Convention, UAW-AFL-CIO, October 9-16, 1959, Atlantic City, NJ*, p.571.

Stieber, who witnessed first-hand the entire shorter work week reversal of 1958, noted, "UAW leaders, having once had to reverse their field on this issue were being careful not to be caught again in the same predicament." See Stieber (1962), p.51.

[992] *Detroit Times*, February 22, 1960; *Business Week*, March 12, 1960; See "UAW -- Committee for Democratic Action in UAW" in the Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

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UAW -- held a founding conference on February 21, 1960.[993] At the meeting, the 60 founding members, representing 19 UAW Locals, met at the headquarters of Flint Local 599, and agreed that the central feature of its economic program was the 30-40 demand.[994]

Recognizing that the rank-and-file contract ratification process had become one place where the militancy of the rank-and-file had been allowed manifest itself, the group urged a change in the UAW constitution that would allow the same kind of direct rank-and-file vote used in contract ratification to be used in union elections of International officers, and regional directors.[995]

The timing of the founding convention of the dissident goup accidentally coincided with a press report in Detroit suggesting that Reuther had declared his intention to once again make profit-sharing, rather than the shorter work week, the main goal of the 1961 negotiations. The NCFDA meeting used the occasion to criticize the Reuther announcement. Jack Crellin, the labor reporter at the *Detroit Times* covered the conference and his article appeared on the front page with the headline, "Rebel Against Reuther on Share-Profits Plan." "UAW President Reuther

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[993] *Militant*, November 20, 1960; "UAW -- Committee for Democratic Action in UAW" in the Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[994] *Militant*, November 20, 1960; "UAW -- Committee for Democratic Action in UAW" in the Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[995] *Militant*, November 20, 1960.

As expected, the SWP was excited at the prospect of a new dissident formation. However, the SWP was apparently more taken with the NCFDA than vice versa. Despite being pleased to find an openness to debate within the new group, the SWP was nevertheless disappointed that the new organization had sidestepped the question of forming a labor party. Rather than call for a new political party, the NCFDA would say only that labor should not endorse any candidate for office in the federal government unless they pledge to work immediately for federal legislation for a 30-hour work week. Unlike the socialist vision wherein labor would craft a political "form" of its own, the NCFDA had apparently returned to the *substantive* political philosophy of syndicalism: reward friends and punish enemies. For the NCFDA political line and the SWP criticism, see *Militant*, November 20, 1960.

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had a revolt on his hands today for apparently putting profit-sharing above the shorter work week," Crellin reported.[996]

With the new group and the shorter work week in the spotlight, Stellato felt compelled to respond to the new formation. Many still wondered if he would lead the new movement. Putting such speculation to rest, he announced that he would have nothing to do with the band of shorter work week advocates. In its public statements, the NCFDA had asserted the obvious, that Reuther did not favor the fight for the shorter work week. Stellato immediately jumped to Reuther's defense in the pages of *Ford Facts*. He cited all of Reuther's 1957 pronouncements about the shorter work week and more recent Reuther predictions that the shorter work week fight would be made at some point in the future.[997]

On April 3, 1960, the group convened a second conference for the Detroit area locals and drew representatives from 22 locals. Shortly thereafter, the group issued its first "Bulletin," in which it specified that the chief aim of the organization was to "reopen all contracts for the establishment of a 30 hour week with 40 hours pay."[998] By Labor Day, 1960, the NCFDA had printed, copies, and distributed 300,000 pieces of literature.[999]

Initially, there was only one prominent representative from Local 600 within the NCFDA. Mike Zarro, who had run for the presidency of the Glass Plant in 1959.

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[996] *Detroit Times*, February 22, 1960. See also, Stieber (1962), pp.149-153.
[997] *Ford Facts*, March 5, 1960. *Business Week* also quoted Reuther's prediction that "by *1975* we will have a four-day week as a general proposition, and in the auto industry and most other industries will get it far in advance of that." Emphasis added. *Business Week*, April 4, 1959.
[998] "UAW -- Committee for Democratic Action in UAW" in the Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[999] *Militant*, November 20, 1960.

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At that time, he ran on Stellato's slate, but was defeated. In search of a new opportunity for advancement, he became part of the National Executive Committee of the NCFDA. But in October 1960, a new opposition movement at Local 600, calling itself the "Ford 600 Rank and File Caucus," publicly affiliated itself with the NCFDA. In its first leaflet, the Local 600 movement reprinted Stellato's 1951 program.

> That's forgotten now -- Today Brother Stellato and the Local 600 leadership and much of the unit leadership have forgotten about the above program. They have become part and parcel of Reuther's PETRIFIED PROGRAM, which is cutting the guts out of the auto workers and our Union... In 1941 there were 85,000 members in Local 600; in 1950, down to 65,000; today, less than 28,000... The 1951 Program is Still Good... even though Stellato has jumped on the tailgate of Reuther's bandwagon. Local 600's 1951 program is basically incorporated in the 1960 program of the National Committee for Democratic Action in the UAW... We call upon the [NCFDA]... to unite with us to carry it out.[1000]

In January 1961 a statewide convention of the NCFDA met in Detroit. The meeting resolved to call on locals to pass resolutions demanding that 30-40 be placed at the top of UAW bargaining demands. The group also pledged to work toward the election of union officers and local committeemen willing to campaign in support of the 30-40 contract demand. By this time, SWP activists like Art Fox had jumped ship

[1000] The reference to Reuther's "petrified program" was appropriated by the Rank and File Caucus from Stellato's own 1951 speeches. In an interesting slip, the leaflet also made reference to the NCFDA as a movement within the "UAW-CIO," rather than the UAW-AFL-CIO. See "Local 600, Leaflets, 1959-60" in box 10, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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from Stellato's camp and joined the movement. At the January NCFDA meeting, Fox became the chair of the group's committee on unemployment.[1001]

Early in the year, it became obvious that 1961 -- an election year at Local 600 and a new contract year -- would see the shorter work week once again at the heart of UAW struggles. As usual, however, Stellato and other incumbents were spared the trouble of trying to win an election *after* settlement terms were announced. Still, *Business Week* acknowledged, "Reuther managed to dump this as a central demand in 1958, [but] he can't ignore the almost universal support for it this year among the rank-and-filers.[1002]

Of course, it had never been so simple. Without some kind of *fissure* within the UAW leadership, it was difficult for the rank-and-file to force the issue. Within Local 600, the leadership was split wide open. On February 3, 1961, Jack Conway -- Reuther's aide who had been assigned as the administrator of Local 600 back in 1952 -- sent a memo to Walter Reuther, delivering the bad news. "The attached leaflet was circulated in the Rouge plant. It is the opening gun in a campaign to dump Stellato. We will have to watch this development very closely."[1003] Indeed, not only did Solidarity House "watch" the campaign very closely, but when they saw that Stellato was in trouble, the Reutherites actually provided administrative support for his campaign.[1004]

[1001] *Militant*, February 6, 1961.
[1002] *Business Week*, February 11, 1961.
[1003] "Conway Memo, February 3, 1961" in box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[1004] See Stieber (1962), p.178n35.

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The political fallout in the aftermath of Stellato's retreat from the shorter work week spread into several different areas of Local 600 politics. Stellato's willingness to champion the 30-40 movement had allowed him to provide for, and reconcile the demands of, many different groups at the Rouge. He had led an impressive coalition. Indeed, Stellato *needed* the shorter work week in order to hold onto his job and hold his winning coalition together. At Local 600, the large population of African American men and women, and the smaller group of white women who remained at work in the Rouge after World War II, did not *allow* Stellato to fall back on the habitual exclusivist strategies embraced by so many other labor leaders. The labor movement had always dealt with unemployment by accepting layoffs of the least senior employees. But the African American workers, for example, who would likely experience a disproportionate share of those layoffs, simply refused to be scuttled. With the shorter work week demand, however, Stellato was able to respond in with an affirmative strategy that struggled to accommodate the African American men and women, white women, and young white workers who were unwilling to be thrown out onto the street. Rather than taking sides among different groups of workers fighting over a limited number of jobs, Stellato used the shorter work week demand to propose that *all* workers sell *less* labor.

Stellato could never have survived all those years if he had simply tried to push out the African American workers, for example, in preference for white workers with greater seniority. The African American workers would have rebelled, and Stellato knew it. Nothing in Stellato's past had predisposed him to be the darling of the

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Detroit Urban League, the NAACP, or a close political ally of black community leaders like Reverend Charles Hill. And yet he was all of these things during the height of the 30-40 movement. Throughout the 1950s, Stellato never ran for office without a major African American leader on his ticket and at his side. Why? Was Stellato a great, moral crusader committed to helping the "victimized" African American workers? Not a chance. But he new how to trace the flows of power.[1005]

When he switched sides and abandoned the shorter work week demand, Stellato threw away his only effective method for responding to the demands of competing groups at the Rouge. As the rank-and-file watched the 30-40 demand go down the drain in 1958, Stellato's grand coalition immediately disintegrated. Stellato now offered divisive seniority rules, white supremacy, and patriarchy as the strategic response to layoffs at Local 600. In turn, the African American women, white women, African American men, and white production workers with little seniority at the Rouge all began to reveal the power that Stellato had, for so long, implicitly traced.

The first rebellion came in April 1959. A group of jobless women with considerable seniority at Local 600, led by Edna Austin, demanded that they be hired back at the Rouge. During the recession of '57 and '58, the number of women working at the Rouge had fallen from 943 to only 583. While the employment level had dropped over all, the women maintained that they had suffered a disproportionate

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[1005] Of course, Stellato's brain trust on race included many of the great African American Communists at the Rouge. But those would suggest that progressive history of African American struggles which developed at the Rouge were the result of Communist Party policy would be making a mistake. The CP -- like Stellato -- *needed* to maintain the support of the African American workers. The political "line" was the consequence -- and not the cause -- of the militancy of African American workers in Local 600.

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share of the layoffs. Asserting that men with less seniority were being given preferential treatment, the women demanded that they be allowed to bump workers with less than 10 years' seniority. Austin led a group of approximately 300 women who stormed the Local 600 headquarters and assailed Carl Stellato for ignoring their situation.[1006] Stellato responded by saying that women want him to bump men out of jobs. Austin denied any malice toward the men and suggested that most of the women were as sorry to see a man lose his job as a woman. "We don't want to fight with anybody" she told a reporter. But neither would the women retreat one inch. "We just want our old jobs back."[1007]

New cleavages developed along racial lines as well. Two Rouge Foundry leaders, Reuther-aligned Horace Sheffield, and Stellato-aligned Buddy Battle, formed an African American political alliance called the Trade Union Leadership Council (TULC). Within the International, the TULC was a breakaway faction from *within* the Reuther caucus.[1008] At Local 600, however, where the TULC had to win support among the militant African American rank-and-file, the TULC moved much farther to the left and became the core of the new dissident movement.[1009]

Racial tensions escalated, dramatically, after the 1959 election. In 1959, Bill Johnson ran for recording secretary, aligning himself -- like so many others -- with

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[1006] *Detroit News*, April 17, 1959.
[1007] *Detroit News*, April 17, 1959.
[1008] B.J. Widick, and other ex-Trotskyists from the Shachtmanite tradition who had been moving steadily to the left of Reuther on many issues, allied themselves whenever possible with TULC causes in the Detroit area. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Lichtenstein's biography of Reuther, which presents UAW history from a perspective remarkably similar to the "Shachtmanite" line, is also most critical of Reuther's "race" line in its treatment of the period after the formation of the TULC. See Lichtenstein (1995).
[1009] See "UAW Local 600, 1960-" in the Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

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Stellato's slate. But during that same election, James O'Rourke, a white worker, also ran for recording secretary, with kind words for Stellato but attacking Bill Johnson, the incumbent recording secretary. In the primary, Bill Johnson won 9,417 votes to 5,859 for O'Rourke. But Jim Tate had also run for the position on the "left-wing" Pat Rice slate, polling 3,457 votes, as did one more candidate who polled 2,014 votes. With all the other contenders, Johnson had not won 51% of the votes cast and was, therefore, forced into a run-off with O'Rourke. In a vote that combined racism with the anti-incumbent spirit of the general election, O'Rourke beat Johnson in the run-off. O'Rourke was then welcomed into office as a member of the Stellato team.[1010]

Thus, for the first time since anyone could remember, all four of the top offices at Local 600 were occupied by white men. The TULC was extremely concerned about this development and Stellato, recognizing the difficulty, had all the more reason to try to flee to Washington in 1960. When this plan failed, however, he returned to the problem of the all-white administration and its consequences. On December 17, 1960, Stellato announced to the readers of *Ford Facts* that the four officers had agreed "that there should be Negro representation at the highest level of this Local... and have unanimously reached the conclusion that one of the four will not seek re-election in May of 1961."[1011]

Initially, a rumor spread that Stellato himself would step aside to make room on the slate for an African American officer.[1012] On March 23, however, Stellato

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[1010] See "Local 600, Leaflets, 1959-60" in box 9, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[1011] *Ford Facts*, December 17, 1960.
[1012] *Detroit Free Press*, March 24, 1961.

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announced that he would run for re-election at the Rouge, on an all-white slate of officers.[1013] Even more alarming, Bill Grant was replaced with *another white candidate*, Ross Reilly, for the financial secretary post![1014] The TULC was outraged. Did Stellato really plan to introduce another all-white slate of candidates? At the *Rouge*?

Dave Moore, one of the African American leaders barred from office in 1953, was reinstated in 1961.[1015] When he learned of Stellato's announcement, he called for the TULC and the remainder of the "Progressive Caucus" to join in a struggle against Stellato, linking the struggle against racism and the struggle for the shorter work week. "Since 1959," Moore wrote in a leaflet, "a serious misunderstanding developed between the Negro and white leaders of our local... an all-white slate was put forth... We ask you, the Rank and File to join us and help prevent any of our union leaders from traveling this road of division which is so dangerous to our union... Inseparable from the above is our need to thoroughly talk over our needs for a shorter work week."[1016]

The day after Stellato made his announcement, Buddy Battle -- joined by unit leaders from the African American-led Iron Foundry and Open Hearth Units along with leaders from the Frame and Miscellaneous Units -- publicly repudiated Stellato and declared that, while a rival candidate had not yet been chosen, "there definitely

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[1013] *Detroit Free Press*, March 24, 1961.
[1014] "If It's Time for a Change, You Ought to Know..." Leaflet, in box 9, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[1015] Stieber (1962), p.148.
[1016] See "UAW Local 600, 1960-" in the Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

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will be someone running against Stellato."[1017] Stellato had destroyed his coalition and betrayed his winning platform. In the absence of a progressive program, Stellato conducted what one observer called "a white supremacy campaign."[1018]

In an election leaflet, Stellato presented his "explanation" for the emergence of significant racial hostilities within the Local.

> [T]he TULC bosses [told me] that if I didn't accept Buddy Battle for vice-president on our slate of candidates for Local office and a Negro to knock off O'Rourke as Recording Secretary -- both to be selected by TULC -- they would then see to it that I would get no Negro worker support... Naturally, I couldn't permit anyone to threaten the Office of President of Local 600... we told the personally ambitious Negro leadership of TULC, which was bent on rule or ruin, to go to hell.[1019]

As it turned out, the rival selected to run against Stellato was Harry Philo, a relatively unknown white lawyer -- and former CP activist from Ford's Green Island plant near Troy, NY -- who had been laid off from the Rouge since 1958.[1020] Following Moore's suggestion, the opposition created a joint slate representing the TULC and the "Progressive Caucus" in the formation of a "Job Security Slate." Stellato red-baited Philo mercilessly -- especially once it was announced that Boatin would run as the vice-president on the ticket.

[1017] *Detroit Free Press*, March 25, 1961.

[1018] The charge was made in a letter from James Theriet of Local 600 to Walter P. Reuther, dated July 18, 1961. See "Theriet letter" in box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[1019] None of the historical records reviewed presented a TULC account of any alleged meeting with Stellato. For Stellato's version, see "If It's Time for a Change, You Ought to Know..." Leaflet, in box 9, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[1020] *Detroit News*, April 16, 1961. For the characterization of Philo as having run without name recognition, see *Detroit Free Press*, February 17, 1965.

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But, in fact, Stellato's campaign remained primarily focused on race and the TULC. When Stellato printed a leaflet with photographs of his entire slate on one side of the page and photos of the opposition on the other, he put his picture at the top of his own slate, but put a large picture of Horace Sheffield -- rather than Harry Philo -- in the comparable place on the other side of the page. The caption running from Stellato to Sheffield said, "You may continue This - or - Change to This." It made no difference, apparently, that Sheffield, the leader of the TULC, wasn't even a candidate on the Philo Slate.

Indeed, the major African American on the Philo slate -- whose picture appeared directly below Sheffield's -- was Al Wilson, for recording secretary.[1021] Wilson had distinguished himself as a leader in the aftermath of Stellato's reversal. As a leader from the Assembly Unit, Wilson was an early member of the "Committee for Good Unionism." Bumped to the Stamping Unit prior to the 1959 election, he challenged John Szluk, the "Reuther ally" who had warned Stellato of the need to remain faithful to 30-40 only to take his chances with Stellato in '59. In an impressive showing, Wilson won more votes in his new unit than the combined support received by two other traditional left-wing leaders, winning 944 votes to Szluk's 1132. He lost to Szluk, the incumbent, in the run-off. But his race was one of those 1959 contests that demonstrated the opportunities available for entrepreneurial dissidents.[1022]

[1021] For the Stellato layout, see "If It's Time for a Change, You Ought to Know..." Leaflet, in box 9, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. For the Philo slate, see "Time for a Change" Leaflet, in box 9, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[1022] See "Local 600, Leaflets, 1959-60" in box 10, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. For Stellato's characterization of Wilson, see "If It's Time for a Change, You Ought to Know..." Leaflet, in box 9, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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The Philo ticket campaigned on a "Job Security" platform in which the first and most prominent demand was for a "30 hour week for 40 hours pay." In one frequently repeated campaign theme, the Philo slate recalled, "In '50, '55 and '58 they said, 'This is not the time.'... We say 1961 must be the time."[1023] Picking up Stellato's old slogan, "Within the unity of workers lies the salvation of American labor," the Job Security slate amended it to read, "Within the unity of **all** workers, **regardless of race, creed or religion**, lies the salvation of American labor."[1024] In contrast, Stellato campaigned against the "TULC gang of strike-happy office seekers hell bent on taking control of the membership of Local 600."[1025] Indeed, when the "Job Security Slate" pledged "a clean campaign without red-baiting, race-baiting or mud-slinging," Stellato responded, as if shocked and disappointed, "No Red-Baiting or Race-Baiting? Whenever I hear this sort of campaign plea I begin to look into the records and backgrounds."[1026] He charged that the TULC had, until recently, "banned whites from membership" and -- although Sheffield had been instrumental in persuading black workers at Ford to *join* the 1941 recognition strike -- Stellato now tried to suggest that the TULC was helping Ford break the union. "1941 Against Union -- 1961 Break the Union."[1027]

[1023] "Job Security Slate" Election Leaflet, in box 9, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[1024] Emphasis in original. See "Job Security Slate" Election Leaflet, in box 9, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[1025] "If It's Time for a Change, You Ought to Know..." Leaflet, in box 9, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[1026] "Job Security Slate" Election Leaflet, in box 9, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives; "If It's Time for a Change, You Ought to Know..." Leaflet, in box 9, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[1027] "If It's Time for a Change, You Ought to Know..." Leaflet, in box 9, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. For Sheffield's brilliant role in 1941, see Meier & Rudwick (1979).

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When the election results were tallied in June 1961, Stellato had won re-election.[1028] But the election breakdown revealed a powerful degree of rank-and-file support for the Job Security slate's 30-40 program and a significant movement in opposition to Stellato's race-baiting. Stellato had, in fact, won an *extremely* narrow set of victories, even with the full support of the International administration. In the presidential race, Stellato beat Harry Philo, 12,466 to 10,528. But Philo beat Stellato in eight of the fifteen Units. Indeed, Stellato's base of support may have had as much to do with John Orr's leadership of the skilled trades revolt as much as anything else. The 1961 election demonstrated the degree to which the 30-40 demand had become a movement of production workers. Stellato and Orr carried the traditional skilled trades units, including Transportation, Tool & Die, Maintenance, and the Engine plant. But Philo beat Stellato in classic production units including Assembly, Stamping, Frame, Open Hearth, the Special Foundry, and the Iron Foundry.[1029]

Back In February 1961, a document signed by "The Ford Rouge Specter" had reported a critical development. According to the "Specter," Stellato had arranged to "merge" the "Detroit Parts Depot and the National Parts Depot" into the Rouge bargaining unit. The leaflet asked, "What's behind all this so-called merger talk?" The author(s) of the document seemed not to have a firm idea. But they alleged that

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[1028] *Detroit Free Press*, June 10, 1961. Election Results, in box 9, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[1029] Election Results, in box 9, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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Stellato had won control of the Detroit Parts Depot by guaranteeing the chairman "a job with the International or the Local Union."[1030]

The election results made clear the importance, for Stellato, of the mysterious "merger" of Local 600 with what became known as the combined "National & Detroit Parts Depot Unit." Led by Stellato loyalists Mike D'Agostino and Lou Rinaldi, the Parts Depot delivered Stellato his margin of victory. In one of his most lob-sided victories, the Depot went to Stellato, 647 to 101. Had there been no merger -- and no votes were cast from the Depot -- Stellato would not have won the requisite 51% of the votes cast and would have been forced into a run-off with Philo. But with the Depot votes, Stellato's margin climbed to 51.69%, enough to declare victory.[1031]

Finally, Stellato's presidential victory -- and Orr's victory over Boatin for vice president -- were the *strongest* elements of Stellato's slate. The unit elections were a triumph for the 30-40 advocates. The Jobs Security slate won outright victories with Buddy Battle in the Special Foundry, James Bishop in the Miscellaneous Unit, Bob Hall in the Open Hearth, and Charlie Balogh in the Assembly plant.[1032] In unit run-off elections, the Philo-slate beat the Stellato-slate with Frank Stepanchenko in the Stamping Plant, Joe Morgan in the Frame plant, and William Bantom in the Foundry.[1033] The 30-40 slate had won the support of every major unit of production

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[1030] "Conway Memo Attachment, February 3, 1961" in box 250, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[1031] Election Results, in box 9, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[1032] Election Results, in box 9, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[1033] See "UAW Local 600, 1960-" in the Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

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workers in the Rouge. The skilled tradesmen gave support to the Stellato-Orr administration.

In the open race for Grant's financial secretary seat, Stellato's candidate, Ross Reilly, faced a run-off against the Philo candidate, Charles Brown. In the recording secretary race, where Bill Johnson presumably split the African American vote by running as an independent, Al Wilson nevertheless forced the incumbent, James O'Rourke into a run-off. When both Reilly and O'Rourke won office, O'Rourke wrote a grateful letter to Ken Bannon and the Reuther administration in appreciation for all the assistance in getting them win the run-off.[1034] Once again, the Rouge would be ruled by an all-white group of top officers.

One troubling development became apparent to the Philo slate during the 1961 election. When the "merger" with the Depot occurred, the Philo slate realized that it did not have a membership list of the workers from this unit. Stellato denied Philo access to the list and Philo sued Stellato in Federal Court under what Stellato referred to as "the anti-Labor Landrum-Griffin Act." During the proceedings, Stellato suggested that the judge find Philo ineligible to run because he had made speeches in favor of Fidel Castro. The judge, criticized Philo for his speeches, but refused to disqualify him from the campaign and ruled that Stellato had to give equal space to the Philo slate in two pre-election issues of *Ford Facts* and turn over complete lists to the Philo state.[1035]

[1034] "Local 600, Leaflets, 1961" in box 9, UAW Ford Department Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[1035] *Detroit News*, May 17, 1961; May 25, 1961; *Detroit Free Press*, May 25, 1961.

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During the proceedings, however, it became clear that on April 14, Stellato had also *mailed* campaign literature to unemployed and retired workers who were eligible to vote, but were not longer actively working at the Rouge. The judge found that Philo could use the mailing lists as well, but would have to pay the costs on its own.[1036] The extraordinary element of this was not the ruling about access to the list -- a victory for Philo, no doubt -- but the substance of the list itself. Over the years, as the Philo campaign had noted, the Ford 600 Rank and File Caucus had noted in October 1960, employment at the Rouge had declined dramatically: from 85,000 workers in 1941 to 28,000 in 1961. Ford's decentralization program and its automation investments had taken an extraordinary toll on the employment scene at the Rouge. One little-noticed consequence of all of this was the degree to which it had also transformed the *demographic* outlines of the Local 600 membership. In accordance with the UAW constitution, unemployed workers and retirees were eligible to vote in local union elections. With no new hiring at the Rouge, this dramatically altered the proportion of active workers to unemployed and retired workers. In 1961, the Philo slate learned, there were 46,000 eligible voters: 28,000 actively employed, 14,000 retired members, and 4,000 unemployed members.[1037]

The size of the retiree vote posed a significant challenge to the anti-incumbent opposition because there were unique elements of the retiree's situation which differentiated it from the life of the active worker in several ways. First, in terms of communication channels, the retirees were cut off from the everyday chatter about

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[1036] *Detroit News*, May 25, 1961.
[1037] *Detroit News*, May 25, 1961.

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union politics that could occur *laterally* throughout the Rouge. For retirees, the primary channels of communication were highly structured and vertical: *Ford Facts* articles and mailings from Stellato or Philo. Without a daily dose of discourse, name recognition was of increasing importance, and especially damaging to Philo in the case of retirees who left the Rouge during the years when Stellato had presented himself as a militant fighter.

But the more serious difficulty was not a consequence of the different system of communication, but the different imperatives of retired life. The simple fact was that while production workers were busy fighting for less work, retirees had already won their freedom from labor! Of course, this did not turn them *against* the idea of a thirty hour work week, but -- understandably -- it became a far less compelling issue for retirees. This was especially true since retirees had issues of their own, relating to the administration of pensions, all of which became quite urgent after the 1958 contract, in which the UAW forfeited its right to bargain for retirees. The retired workers were being sold-out and had their own fights on their hands, especially a long battle to win cost-of-living adjustments as a part of the pension system.

In fact, the impact of the retired workers' vote would prove to be the *decisive* factor in the '63 and '65 election fights at Local 600. The 1963 election was an almost identical replay, in several respects, to the 1961 election. Stellato ran a Reutherite campaign featuring a profit-sharing plan and a red-baiting attack on his opponent. Stellato's opponent in 1963 was another unknown "Harry" with hints of a CP-past, but Harry Philo had now been replaced at the top of the ticket by Harry

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Becker. The Becker slate ran a campaign in support of the shorter work week and in opposition to profit-sharing.[1038] Same election, different year.

Except that the opposition made an even stronger showing. Harry Becker polled 186 *more* votes than Stellato in the primary election.[1039] In the run-off, however, Stellato came back to win by a slim margin, with 12,860 votes to Becker's 12,225.[1040] Becker's "United Rank & File Group of Local 600" published a post-election leaflet announcing, "Retirees Decide Election."[1041] Indeed, Stellato won an extraordinary *90%* of the retiree vote. But on the basis of *in-plant* election results, Becker won 11,651 votes to Stellato's 7,692.[1042] Becker had won the support of the in-plant workers by a wide margin. Moreover, Al Wilson forced Stellato's new recording secretary, Bob Davenport, into a run-off election. He beat Davenport, 13,235 to 9,630 and was declared the victor. With majority support in ten of the 15 units, Al Wilson became the first opposition figure to be elected to a top office since Stellato's '58 reversal and he also became the first African American to hold local-wide office since 1959.[1043] The opposition also won the presidencies in nine of the 15 units.

[1038] Election Leaflets in the Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[1039] *Detroit Free Press*, February 17, 1965.
[1040] *Detroit Free Press*, February 17, 1965; Election Run-off Results, in the Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[1041] "Justice for the Worker" Leaflet, in the Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[1042] "Justice for the Worker" Leaflet, in the Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[1043] Election Run-off Results, in the Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

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On February 15, 1965, after a bruising contract battle at Local 600 in 1964, Stellato announced that he would not run for re-election in 1965, but would take a job with the International to finish out his career in the UAW.[1044] Almost immediately Gene Prato and Walter Dorosh organized a "retain Stellato as President" meeting to try to convince Stellato to run again, or at the very least, to identify themselves closely with his presidency. When Stellato affirmed his decision to step aside, the right-wing caucus had to choose a new presidential candidate. Interestingly, the leadership seemed aware that, after all these years, a traditional right-winger like Prato could not win the Local 600 presidency. In a nod to the persistent militant spirit of the Rouge rank-and-file, the Stellato caucus chose Walter Dorosh, a former CP activist, to run in Stellato's place. The prospects of successful opposition victories at the local-wide level looked increasingly dim in light of the retiree situation. Dorosh's slate included such notable former-leftists and dissidents as Joe Hogan (who gave Stellato his 1951 election scare) along with former dissident unit leaders Jim Bishop and Robert Hall.[1045]

The Rank and File Caucus -- which had campaigned for a "no" vote against the 1964 contract -- ran a slate against Dorosh. The presidential candidate was James Rooney, formerly a leader of the skilled trades Maintenance Unit. While Rooney had been part of the right-wing Reutherite caucus in 1955, he jumped to the left for the opportunity to run for president. He personally advocated rejection of the 1964

[1044] *Detroit Free Press*, March 5, 1965. See also a "Kravens-Tate-Zuzak-Fodera" Leaflet, in "UAW Local 600, 1960-" file, Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division

[1045] *Detroit Free Press*, March 6, 1965. Dorosh Leaflet, Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division. For biographical information on Dorosh, see Stepan-Norris & Zeitlin (1996).

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contract -- arguing, among other things that "nothing was done on the shorter work week" -- and reminded workers the "the Shorter Work Week has never yet been made a serious demand at the bargaining table between the UAW & Management... My administration will couple the 1967 fight for the Shorter Work Week [with] pension demands that will give our retiring members an even greater measure of dignity.[1046]

Rooney lost in the primary to Dorosh.[1047] "For the third consecutive local election," the Rooney slate declared, "the in-plant dues paying membership" voted in support of the opposition, "but these votes were canceled out by the retiree votes." Some time after the election, one final, leaflet appeared. Unsigned and written on a typewriter, rather than a professional printer, the writer seemed punch-drunk as he drafted "a look at elections Local 600 style, now and into the future..."[1048] "It seems that the astute politicians in the local administration have found the formula that will enable them to dominate the elected jobs." The formula, according to the leaflet, included several steps. "Remember the international can do no wrong (keep repeating this to yourself it will he help you remember)." Also, use staff members to seek out and bring retired members to vote and when dropping them off at the polls, "don't forget to continually mention the name of the Internationally supported candidate." "Buy off opposition supports with local staff jobs whenever possible." And, finally, if you must choose a successor to the top candidate, "retain the Stellato image for the all

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[1046] Rooney Leaflet, Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[1047] "Thank You" Leaflet, Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[1048] "A Look at Elections" Leaflet, Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

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important block of retiree votes."[1049] Weren't some of these men "who now praise the international union... open critics" in years past?

> Ah, but this was before the retired brother became a significant political power in local 600.... We must give credit where credit is due... Now the question rises why should we have elections every two years? Are they not just a farce? It seems that it is just an unnecessary expense... We might as well forget about local autonomy, abolish elections, and grant the International the right to appoint unit and local officers. It is apparent that the results would be the same.[1050]

The author of this leaflet had, indeed, given a look at the future of Local 600 elections. In early 1967, as the campaign season would have ordinarily commenced at Local 600, Jim Rooney issued a leaflet. Given that 1967 was a new contract year, Rooney asked, "I wonder if our Union can afford this year the kind of spirited elections Local 600 is noted for?

> If we engage in a 'knock-down' and 'give them hell' kind of election this year, could we bind our wounds and heal the differences in time to stand the test [of a strike] if it comes to pass and should a struggle be necessary?... The 1967 contract negotiations transcend all other considerations.[1051]

Or, better still, the negotiations would transcend *almost* all other considerations. "Recently it has come to pass," Rooney confided, "that opportunity presents itself to

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[1049] "A Look at Elections" Leaflet, Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[1050] "A Look at Elections" Leaflet, Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[1051] "Rooney Peace Offering" Leaflet, in file 10, box 251, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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participate in the leadership affairs of the administration of Local 600. Brother Reilly... will be appointed to a new important assignment by the International Union and has resigned the office of financial secretary...."[1052] Rooney ran for financial secretary on the Dorosh slate.

In May of 1967, for the first time in the history of Local 600, there were uncontested elections for local-wide office at the Rouge. Walter Dorosh ran for president with no challenger of any significance. Jim O'Rourke was the only name on the ballot for the vice-presidency. Buddy Battle ran, unchallenged, as the administration candidate for a new, hand-crafted position, the "second vice-president," developed to coopt battle. And James Rooney ran without an opponent for financial secretary.

The only real contest resulted from an administration decision to challenge Al Wilson. Apparently Wilson, the incumbent recording secretary who had kept his office since winning as an opposition candidate in 1963, was unwilling to play nice with others. His campaign leaflet, a thinly veiled attack on Jim Rooney, Battle, and others, suggested, "workers in the rouge plant want someone elected to office in this election who won't sell out and will not be bought out."[1053] In response, Dorosh supported an "insurgent" candidate, an African American named Percy Jackson. As

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[1052] "Rooney Peace Offering" Leaflet, in file 10, box 251, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[1053] Emphasis in original. See "Progressive Group" Leaflet, in "UAW Local 600, 1960-" file, Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

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the last defiant candidate in a long line of factional contests, Al Wilson defeated Percy Jackson, 12,837 to 8,490.[1054]

But two years later, on June 12, 1969, Ken Bannon wrote a memo. "Dear Walter," he wrote, "Dorosh slate was successful in the runoffs for recording secretary."[1055] Al Wilson was defeated by William Brown, Jr., recording secretary.

[1054] Election Results (1967), Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division. For Wilson's 1965 victory, see Election Results (1965), box 16, UAW Ford Department, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[1055] "Bannon Memo, June 12, 1969," in box 251, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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Epilogue: Exit, Stage Left

Al Wilson's defeat in his re-election bid as Local 600 recording secretary in 1969 marked the symbolic end of an era, but not the end of the movement for a shorter work week. By the late 1960s, the heyday of militant struggle by the older generation of post-war militants had passed. Of couse, the old forms of dissent did not disappear. Art Fox and other Trotskyists organized a new "Committee for Militant Unionism," then helped form the United National Caucus with Jack Weinberg from Local 212 and Pete Kelly from Local 160. They ran for office and spoke out against the war in Vietnam, winning support, all the while, for their commitment to a shorter work week.[1056] In response to the aging of their constituency, these radicals did their best to meld the interests of the young and the old. By the late 1950's the 30-40 demand became the 30-40-60 demand, to include the movement among older workers for lowering the retirement age to 60. Again the movement experienced "remarkably rapid growth."[1057]

In the late 1960s, Art Fox's caucus began working in partnership with the President of the UAW Retired Workers Council at Local 600. The two worked to build a movement favoring greater rights for retirees in contractual affairs, including a

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[1056] For information on Art Fox's Committee for Militant Unionism, see "1967 Convention Proposals" in box 16, UAW Ford Department, , Wayne State University Labor Archives; and "Press Release, March 14, 1967" in box 251, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives. For the United National Caucus, see "United National Caucus" file in Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

[1057] See Ronald Edsforth (1995) "Why Automation Didn't Shorten the Work Week: The Politics of Work Time in the Automobile Industry" in *Autowork* edited by Robert Asher and Ronald Edsforth. Albany: SUNY Press. See also the untitled, unattributed history of the 30-40-60 movement in folder 1, box 9, Leo Fenster Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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voice for retirees on the IEB and the National Negotiating Committee, while both advocated that retirees *not* vote in local elections.[1058] By 1971, Fox and his associates were explicitly linking the demand for a shorter work week among active workers and for pension cost of living adjustments among retirees.[1059] And in May 1976, the Coalition for a Good Contract, essentially a front-group for the United National Caucus, led a demonstration on the second morning of the Special Bargaining Convention of that year. The delegates carried a large banner with two demands for the '76 round: "Shorten the Work Week" and "C.O.L.A. on Pensions." Their shorter work week resolution was ruled out of order.[1060]

But, a new era, and a new generation of militant *young* workers had already arrived on the scene. Indeed, one of the extraordinary things about Al Wilson's electoral defeat in 1969 was how effortlessly Wilson passed the baton of militancy to a new generation. Almost immediately at Local 600, the Dorosh administration might have regretted locking the "legitimate" exit options for dissidents like Al Wilson. On the same memo that Ken Bannon had written to tell Walter that the Dorosh slate had captured the recording secretary position, someone had scribbled, "Frame Plant -- Grady Glenn -- RUM advocate... 570 to 532."[1061] Soon Dorosh would have to contend with the popularity of the "Revolutionary Union Movement" (RUM), a new, highly volatile, black-led workers' movement. With considerable dramatic flare, the

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[1058] "No Retiree Vote" Leaflet, in Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[1059] "Open Letter to Retired Brothers" Leaflet, in Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[1060] "*Contract Countdown*," in "UAW Coalition for a Good Contract" file, Art Fox Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.
[1061] "Bannon Memo, June 12, 1969," in box 251, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

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group led wildcat strikes, taunting Reuther with slogans like, "Put Walter in a halter" and "Behead the Redhead."[1062]

And what were some of the primary demands of the RUM advocates? They sought to slow the ferocious pace and conditions of work -- especially in the hot and hurried units where black workers predominated -- and to reduce the hours of labor.[1063] Of course, they didn't ask nicely. When they accused the UAW of selling-out black workers, Dorosh called their accusations a "vicious pack of lies peddled by black racists doing the dirty work of Big Business and anti-Union elements."[1064]

But, in fact, it was the Reuther administration that, increasingly, did the "dirty work of Big Business" by putting down a veritable brushfire of wildcat strikes that spread throughout the UAW in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The new wildcat movement had begun as early as February and March 1967 when Frank Petty, a dissident UAW leader at a key parts plant in Mansfield, Ohio, led workers in a series of wildcat strikes that caused massive shut-downs at plants around the country. The issue in the strike? Opposition to management's latest union-busting activity: farming out (now "out-sourcing") work to non-union subcontractors. Reuther condemned the strikes and the IEB ordered that the local be seized by a union administrator.[1065]

The most famous wildcat, an uprising at GM's Lordstown, Ohio, assembly plant in the Spring of 1972, was significant in part because unlike the Rouge rebellions

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[1062] See Lichtenstein (1995), pp.433-35.
[1063] See Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin (1975) *Detroit I Do Mind Dying*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
[1064] "Dorosh Letter, November 12, 1969," in box 251, Walter P. Reuther Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives.
[1065] See *New York Times*, March 14, 1967.

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of the '40s and '50s, the Lordstown disruptions occurred precisely where they weren't supposed to happen: at a decentralized "greenfield" location, where there had been no prior auto production and no entrenched tradition of labor militancy.[1066]

In the Summer of 1973, wildcat demonstrations at the Mack Avenue plant in Detroit were led by members of the Workers Action Movement (WAM), the "in-plant" arm of the "Maoist" Progressive Labor Party. The major WAM demand: "30 hours Work for 40 Hours Pay."[1067] But it was all too much for the older militants at Mack Local 212. Jack Weinberg and the dissident president of the Local, Hank Ghant, condemned the wildcats as the work of kids "who just try to make trouble and take credit for the real efforts of UAW militants."[1068]

And so it went for years. The ability to connect the old generation to the new generation is critical to the revision of post-war stereotypes. It is comonplace to assume that American workers demonstrated a radical will during the Depression era. And authors like Martin Glaberman have made it impossible to ignore the fabulous audacity of workers during World War II. Finally, the rank-and-file upheavals of the '60s and '70s were made famous by writers like Stanley Aronowitz in his famous ethnography, "Lordstown: Disruption on the Assembly Line," published as the first

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[1066] See Stanley Aronowitz (1973) *False Promises: The Shaping of American Working-Class Consciousness*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

[1067] Of course, like every other revolutionary socialist movement, the Progressive Labor Party picked up the demand because it was popular with workers, not because they understood the significance of what they had discovered. Indeed, the Progressive Labor Party seemed concerned to point out to the readers of their newspaper that the 30-40 demand, while plastered across the pages of all their literature, was no magic wand. Rather, it was merely a reformist gesture intended to serve as nothing more than a catalyst for explosive, revolutionary socialist upheaval. See, *Detroit Times*, August 16, 1973; *Challenge* [Newspaper of the Progressive Labor Party], September 6, 1973.

[1068] "Detroit Auto Uprising 1973" in "Labor: Auto #2" file, Saul Wellman Collection (Unprocessed), Michigan State University Library, Special Collections Division.

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chapter in his 1973 book, *False Promises*, and by William Serrin in his 1970 book, *The Company and the Union*. One of the exhilarating consequences of the post-war movement for a shorter work week is that it illuminates the seamlessness of post-war rank-and-file militancy by spanning the gap hitherto separating the workers of Glaberman's *Wartime Strikes* and those of Aronowitz's *False Promises*.

The '60s and '70s were no mere replay of the '40s and '50s, but there were similarities. During both periods, worker militancy exploded during periods of *prosperity*, rather than poverty. Indeed, Paul Boatin, who began working for the Ford Motor Company in August 1925 at the age of 16, and worked all through the Depression, referred to himself and his generation as "militants of the '40s" -- not the '30s.[1069] The explosive energy of the '60s and '70s wildcats were not the fruit of the recession of '57 and '58 but, like the energy of the '40s and '50s, they exploited the economic "boom" of the military "boom." The war in Vietnam gave the rank-and-file a new chance to use its leverage to develop its independence.[1070]

There was very important difference between the '40s and '50s and the militancy of the '60s and '70s. One of the most remarkable elements of the popularity of the 30-40 movement was that the entire movement unfolded without a hint of cultural radicalism or libertarian decadence. Some of the emphasis on 30-40 as a strategy to combat unemployment included a defensive protest: 30-40 is not *merely* a

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[1069] Authors Correspondence with Paul Boatin, November 4, 1996.

[1070] Nevertheless, even when the AFL-CIO bureaucracy expressed interest in the shorter work week, as it did in 1962, Reuther did what he could to scuttle any initiative. After all, 1962 was no time for shorter hours. Reuther asserted that "there is enough work to do in America to keep us busy." Indeed, with the arrival of a new wartime boom, the demand was no longer unrealistic, as in '57 and '58; now it was -- once again -- unnecessary. See Lichtenstein (1995), p.365.

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"leisure" movement. Of course, this defensiveness was, in part, a necessary response to Reuther's persistent assertion that the shorter work week implied wage concessions and "shared misery." But Reuther was undoubtedly also taunting the delegates, *daring* them to say that they would rather be shopping, drinking, driving, dancing, or "making whoopee" (isn't that how they talked about sex back then?). Nobody ever took the bait, at least not in public.

But as William Serrin and Stanley Aronowitz confirmed, the new generation was different. By 1970, the "militants of the 40s" were almost all retired and the auto industry hired in a new generation, more audacious than the last.

As Serrin suggested, "if the companies were having trouble with the workers, so was the UAW."[1071] More than 40 percent of the union membership was under thirty. "There is a new breed of worker in the plant," Reuther warned, "less willing to accept discipline of the work place."[1072] They refused overtime, they quit, and they stayed home just for the hell of it.

> Absenteeism in the plants on weekdays had risen from 2.5 per cent during the fifties and most of the sixties to more than 5 per cent in 1970... On Fridays and Mondays the general absenteeism rate often soared to 15 per cent or more; General Motors and Ford have been forced to close plants because not enough employees had reported for work.[1073]

And then there were the drugs. In his ethnography, Aronowitz stunned the nation with his descriptions of the "so-called Hippie" -- not a graduate student at

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[1071] William Serrin (1970) *The Company and the Union: The 'Civilized Relationship of the General Motors Corporation and the United Automobile Workers.* New York: Vintage Books, p.13.
[1072] Serrin (1970), p.13.

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Berkeley but a *blue collar* hipster, "young workers using marijuana or psycho-genic drugs" who described "'acid' and 'weed' as integral to their cultural style."[1074] They wanted the money, no question. And the benefits, too. But with all that, they wanted more. "The youth are saying that these benefits are not enough," Aronowitz asserted. General Motors complained that the "inducements to hard work have weakened," and like Serrin, Aronowitz found that GM considered absenteeism to be its "most distressing discipline problem." What else did anybody expect from a generation which Aronowitz characterized as "tremendously involved with rock music?"[1075] The younger generation could say what the militants of the '40s could not: that they loved life too much to spend it at work.

[1073] Serrin (1970), p.14.
[1074] Aronowitz (1973), p.26.
[1075] Aronowitz (1973), p.30.

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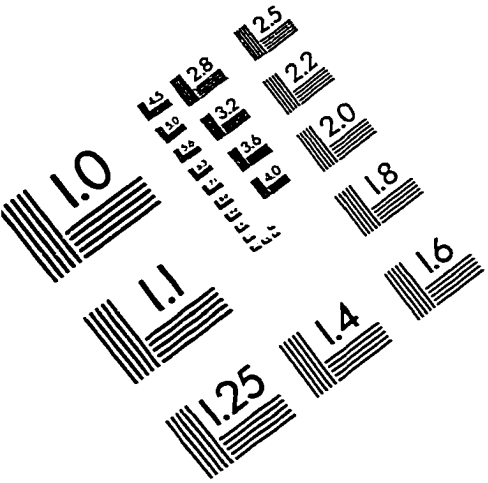
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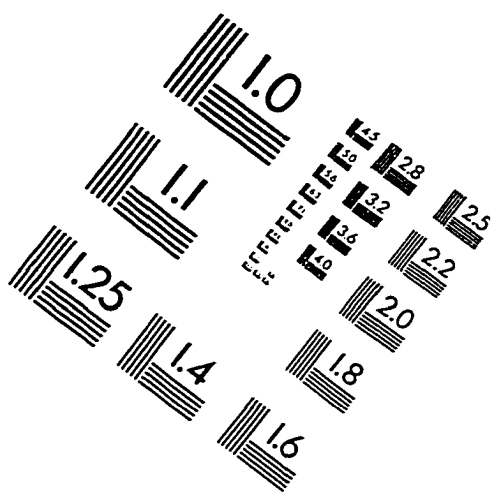
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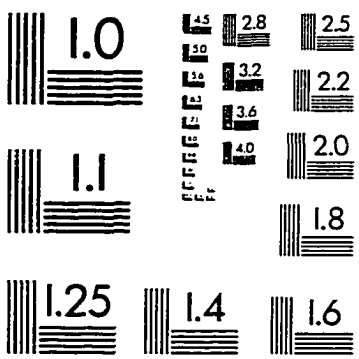
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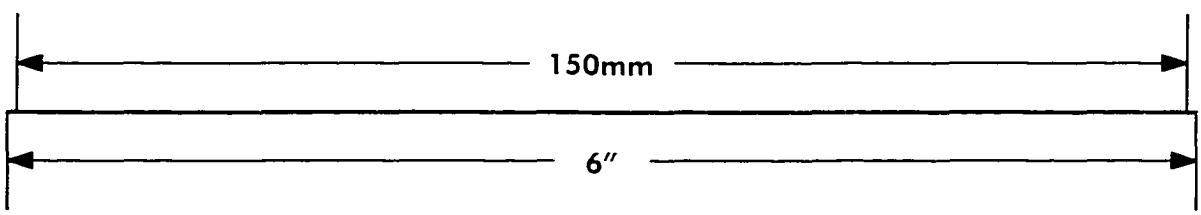
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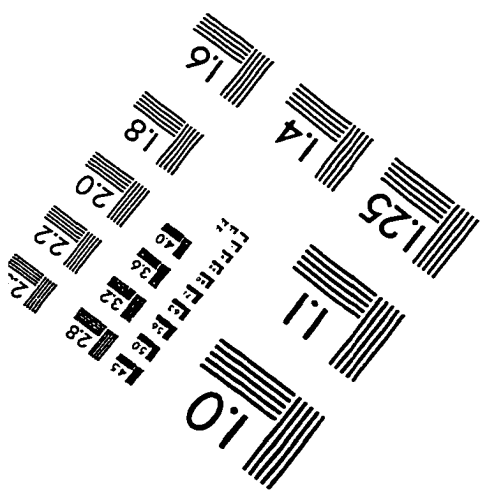
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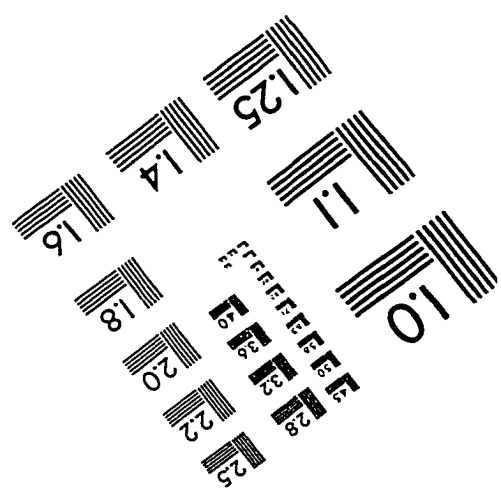






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