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## Interview: Mark Sweazy

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# 'LaRouche's Solution Will Work for Us'

*Mark Sweazy is president of UAW Local 969, in Columbus, Ohio. Marcia Merry Baker interviewed him on March 21.*

**EIR:** Mark, you are president of UAW Local 969 at the Delphi plant in Columbus, Ohio. You've been there for 29 years, and often you chair the sub-council for the UAW workers at 21 Delphi plants. And you've been a civic leader in Ohio for decades.

So, what took you in November 2005 to Washington? You took some 150 UAW workers from your local, and from that area, to lobby Congress to take action to intervene for auto retooling. What do you see coming out of that? What did you do at that time?

**Sweazy:** I think it was a result of pushing the resolutions to aid the auto industry. What took place prior to that, was sending resolutions to different city councils, state governments, and pushing those through those local governments, to address Congress, to get them to respond to the need of the auto industry, and the current condition of the auto industry.

The people from our plant were more than willing to go to Washington, because they knew about the several trips that I've made to Washington, and they were ready to express their opinion. They wanted Congress to know how serious the situation is, and the impact of this current condition with the auto industry. This is something we've never experienced to this degree, in our history. So, these folks are all—or primarily—close to retirement, and they have a great concern to do just that. They've worked almost their entire life, to get to the position where they are today, and to take that away from them, to strip that away as was indicated by Steve Miller, then the new CEO of Delphi, not only angered them, but it stripped them of what they'd worked for their entire life. So, they were more than willing to get on a bus, go to Washington, parade through the halls of Congress, and ask those Congressional leaders to take notice, to understand what the problem is—and, there's an absolute solution. There's a solution to the problem.

**EIR:** At several hearings, in Cincinnati and Columbus, you kept stressing the importance of conversion of the auto industry, that "there's space in every plant." What did you mean?

**Sweazy:** Because of the downsizing of General Motors, and Delphi Corporation, and the outsourcing of our work overseas, our plants are not at capacity. So, there is available floor

space in almost every plant, and there's floor space available to expand our operations. Not necessarily do we have to build a part for an automobile: We have tooling capacities, we have the resources available, research-development, we have the ability to make any component part for anything necessary. So, whether it be a railcar, whether it be a—who knows? A lock for a high-security system—we could do so many things! We have the capability to do these things. So, not necessarily do we have to build automobile parts.

So, to put our plants back into production, to retain the tool capacity that we have today, will require some action above the level of the auto industry, and that is our response to Congress. And we're waiting for *them* to respond to us, and say that we understand the problem, we see the problem, and we understand that these types of infrastructure projects could aid the recovery of not only the auto industry, but also our society, and our economy. . . .

**EIR:** In Ohio, one of your fellow locals, a UAW local, made a whole music DVD, saying "We Don't Make It Here Any More." What's that about?

**Sweazy:** That was done in Dayton, Ohio, and these guys did a tremendous job. It's a seven-minute video, and it just goes through the steps to say that the traditional work that we've always done in our factories is being done elsewhere. And it's just a video clip to show, and express, "Hey, we've done it here before, why can't we do it here, again? Why do we have to close all of our plants, vacate the plants, tear them down, be a detriment to our community, when we could put these plants back into production, increase the workforce, and cure the real problem?"

**EIR:** Well, then that takes us to the fight, right? Here we are, we're speaking in March 2006, and it was last Fall that Delphi Corporation declared bankruptcy, and that was only a short time after they put in Steve Miller, right?

**Sweazy:** Steve Miller comes in. He decides that, obviously through the board of directors, that the bankruptcy proceedings are necessary. But they only targetted the workforce in Delphi. Not salaried workforce, not the operations, but only—and not worldwide operations—but just American operations. And they identified plants being in the automotive holding group. Those are plants that they intended to close, sell, or consolidate.

Those plants are still identified, and with the restructuring, reorganization of Delphi, those plants will more than likely be closed, eliminating about half of the workforce.

The other plants are still up in the air. We don't know what the restructuring reorganization will be. So, the other plants could be sold—or, we have no idea. They have not ever told us, yet, as to which plants they intend to keep.

Steve Miller became a bad guy overnight. And he lived up to that, as well, by slandering the American workforce, and basically defeating their egos, by telling them they were



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis

*“We do not necessarily have to build automobile parts,” said Sweazy. “By retooling, we have the ability to make any component part for anything necessary.” Here Sweazy (left) talks to Lyndon LaRouche after a LaRouche webcast.*

not worth what they were being paid. He wanted to reduce their wages over 60%. He wanted to cut their pensions and their benefits. So, overnight, we became not part of American society, but almost an outcast of American society—the same people who built General Motors for the last 60-70 years. . . .

But, by March 31, they must reach a terminal agreement between the corporation and the international union, or we face filing by the corporation, the 111-13, 111-14 motions in the bankruptcy hearing. And those will open the contract of the retired and also the active worker. If that takes place, then there will be a strike. You’ll more than likely see a strike.

Will this be delayed, or amended, or ask for more time at this particular point in time? Nobody knows. We’re ten days away to see. I know that the negotiating process is close to an agreement, but I know that there’s some inroads, too; there’s some resolving that needs to be done, before they actually make public what it is that they’ve decided for.

**EIR:** And one way to look at it is, you’ve often used some ratios when you testify or speak to people, about how many jobs are contingent on all of this, and how much revenue-base for running communities.

**Sweazy:** Yes, you know, something that most people don’t even take a look at, is the reciprocating, or the ill-effect of unemployment: Regardless of what area you’re in, when there’s high unemployment levels, you have social ills. And we’ve seen that in major cities throughout the United States. But, in the auto industry, for every 100 automobiles built, there’s 27 related jobs. So, the impact, after you’ve built 15 million cars in the world last year, the impact of this can be devastating, not only to the United States, but throughout the world. And if this domino effect would take place, you’re looking at an economic crisis, which could cause disaster for the nation and our communities.

So, we’ve seen so many times in the past, that communities, the social level, by which I mean the poverty levels, your population decreases because people want to move to where jobs are. All the social ills associated with disease, everything becomes a prominent factor, and then you see the total deterioration of a community such as Detroit, which had 2 million people in its heyday; less than 900,000 people live there today. There’s as many boarded-up homes as there are occupied. And it’s a disaster financially for that community.

**EIR:** Just the opposite then, of that, was Walter Reuther and that tradition in the UAW, of making key shifts for progress, for furthering the good. And so, that’s what you’re talking about now: that we have to have this shift now, in this tradition.

**Sweazy:** Walter Reuther’s ideals were similar, if not very close to the same, as Lyndon LaRouche’s proposal to satisfy the problem. To find a solution to this problem, is to put people back to work. And how would you do that? Through infrastructure projects, through projects unrelated to the auto industry. So, if there’s the possibility that we could do that, why not fix the problem? Why procrastinate and say, “It can’t be done”? We’ve proven in history, through Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s plan, that it can be done. If that’s the possibility, at least give it a try.

There’s so many projects, that we could go half a day, and list projects in this country, from water projects to utility projects and beyond. Those projects themselves will only aid in developing our country, make it a better place to live for the good and welfare of our communities, and the people will all prosper.

We can convert our auto plants to do anything. We’ve done it in the past. We did it after World War II. Walter Reuther’s idea, Lyndon LaRouche’s solution for using the FDR program, certainly would work for us.