

UAW Workers Speak Out For Retooling Industry

Here are excerpts from interviews conducted by a LaRouche Youth Movement camera crew early in February, with labor leaders in Ohio and Michigan.

Interview: Oscar Bunch

For National Rail Grid, 'We Do Have the Skills'

Oscar Bunch is a UAW Leader in Toledo, Ohio, who has been with the union for 54 years, and a union president for 28.

EIR: Most people don't really have a very good sense at all of what a productive economy is, so I wanted you to describe a little bit, what exactly is entailed in a retooling process. How

does this process take place, when you take an entire plant and convert it over to some new product?

Bunch: Well, today, we've got more technology than we've ever had on new machinery. We've got computerized machinery, we've got ACM machines that are easy and adaptable. And we certainly have the ability to build them. We can change from one product to another better today than we've ever been able to do. We've got all the skilled workforce, and we've got the dedicated people. The American worker is the best productive person in the world, there's no question of that, and they proved that time and time again.

What it would take is an all-out effort from our leaders to say, "We've got to do this," and get the people on board to do it. Because once you get the people motivated, you can get it done. Because they're the people that's got to do the work.

Of course, in World War II, we had a crisis, people realized that we were attacked, and that we had to change. We really haven't motivated the people to do this change, but it can be done, if we had the right leadership.

EIR: How many workers do you estimate were once involved in the auto industry in just this area?

Bunch: We've had an awful lot of workers that have been displaced, laid off, and still haven't got jobs. The only job they can get is a \$7- or \$8-an-hour job. We've had plant closing after plant closing, and no industrial jobs for these people to get. This community here used to be—the granddad worked in the plant, and the dad worked there, and then the son worked there—and it's not that way any more. You can't find a job here.

EIR: I would imagine a lot of those people are highly skilled tradesmen, who would be pretty integral to being able to take the automobile industry, take a plant that right now is either building cars, or about to be closed down and the jobs outsourced. Do you think that a lot of these people could be just ready to bring back into a factory, and be ready to create, say, a new process for producing high-speed trains, or components for nuclear power plants, or something like that?

Bunch: There's no question of that. As you know, this country has more rail system right-of-ways than any country in the world. They just let it go to pot. Because, for one thing, the railroads sold off all of their scrap, to get the revenues to operate what they had left. We've got that whole rail system, the right-of-way for it, and it's just sitting idle. But we do have the skills.

A good example of what's happened here, after the Asians came here: The UAW had 500,000 numbers, just in General Motors alone, a half a million people working at General



Motors. Now, with this last 40,000 cut, they're going down to about 60,000 left. So, all of these people are out there someplace, ready to go. It just takes someone to mobilize them. . . .

That's a shame that the government has allowed this to happen, because we've got the resources here. We've got the skills, you can train them in something. But most of these people are in their late 40s and early 50s, and they don't have any desire to be trained in the type of technology that's coming now.

And I tell you, that the money's got to come from someplace. We can't service each other and polish each other's shoes. Some way we've got to have wealth, and the only way to have wealth, is to have an industrial base. We've lost that, and we need to get that back. We need to motivate the people to get that back. All the skills are still out there; we just need to utilize them.

Interview: Marty Green

There'll Be 40% Capacity To Machine Something Else

Marty Green is a skilled-trades representative of UAW Local 730 in Grand Rapids, Michigan.



Green: General Motors, Ford, Chrysler seem to be in a downsizing mode of the tooling industry, and naturally that brings a great concern, seeing as how it's an industry that has been thriving for many, many years. And it really bothers me, seeing as how all the manufacturing seems to be heading overseas, and we've lost a lot of different industries throughout America. And it's quite concerning that it's getting to this point. We've lost textiles and steel industries, and now, to totally lose our manufacturing base, frankly scares the hell out of me. And I'd like to see whatever avenues we've got to make a difference, I'd like to pursue them.

The tool-and-die industry at one time, has been a matter of national security, involved in building just about anything to do with metal, and when you take it a step farther, anything to do with plastic. We've got plastic injection molding and stuff like that, and everything is heading overseas.

EIR: Your plant is tool and die, or is tool and die part of what

your plant does?

Green: Our plant is a major production source for metal-stamping parts to do with General Motors. We have parts on just about every vehicle that General Motors makes. . . . There's 2,250 hourly folks, approximately; 300 salary folks along with engineers. . . . We do floor plans, doors, roofs, body side outers, and many, many internal parts. We've got quite a capability of producing dies there. It is General Motors' number one die-build source. We build, at our plant, approximately 40% of the General Motors North American dies that they build.

EIR: And now this plant is part of the restructuring that General Motors has announced?

Green: Market share's been shrinking. They want to align manpower capacity: At the end of November, they had mentioned about 12 plants closing in North America. Therefore, it affects our die-build numbers, our parts producing numbers at our plant. We have an Oklahoma plant that's closing, effective Feb. 20, 2006. We stopped shipping parts to them, back Feb. 6. That's about 15% of our volume in our plant, so it's a very significant thing. There's going to be parts that we're not producing, layoffs because of it, and these other 11 plants haven't even shut down yet. So, it's going to be a trickle-down, through everybody. They align manpower with parts moving out, so everybody'll be hit. . . .

When you mention infrastructure, there's a lot of things that could be done, and as a country, I hope we're heading that way, because there is a potential. And I see the plans right now, to reduce the die-making industry—just in General Motors; and I know Ford and Chrysler are all looking at the same thing—of reducing that industry by about 40% of [its workforce]. So, there is going to be an awful lot of knowledge, and a lot of people potentially sitting out there, that could be doing something constructive like that.

Just in the small town I live in, there's areas that bridges have been closed, because of things looking to fall down. I mean, we've been running this country on such a slim budget and not reinvesting in infrastructure, it is scary. Somebody needs to take charge, and I believe who we have in there right now, is *not* doing the job! And somewhere there's got to be starting putting the horse before the cart, and let's have a future in America. Because, right now, it's living day to day.

And, I think as far as infrastructure goes, the die-making base, or the plastic injection molding base, they're going to be critical in that, and they're going to have to—or, we're going to be producing stuff that we need in this country over in China, or over in India, and having it shipped over here. And I'm not looking for isolationism. I know it's a computer age right now, where we can hit a button and send information back and forth to places. But, there's got to be a line somewhere, that once we pass, we're giving up stuff that we can't return.

And, I'm hoping it's not in the next five years: I've got three young kids. I want to see that they're still here in America, and that we're still on somewhat of a manufacturing base here in America.

Interview: Joe Joseph

'There's No Reason for These Plants To Close'

Joe Joseph, president of UAW Local 1970 in Dearborn, Michigan, represents Body Cad Design workers.



Joseph: I've worked for Ford Motor Co. for 40 years. And I've seen it go from designing on boards that are like 16 feet long on Mylar material, to three different updates in the computers that we use to design. There's been a lot of advancement and changes in the way we do our business. . . .

My feeling is that there's no reason for these plants to close, which was caused by this free trade. The American automobile industry has been left behind, and overshadowed by the foreign vehicles that are coming in. I think that something should be done about it. We have the facilities, we have the plants to manufacture parts. We have the design capability to design such items as mass transit, a high-speed rail system, which we'd be capable of designing, and also manufacturing in those plants which are becoming idle and may be sold—which would create jobs, for us, for suppliers. Just a numerous amount of jobs associated with the industry. . . .

EIR: Where do you think the future is, in the automobile industry? Do you see any possibility for diversification of the industry?

Joseph: Yes, I do. I see an open door there, to be able to diversity. We've got a lot of foreign car manufacturers coming into this country—actually it's increasing day by day. And, we all can't survive, I mean, there's just so many vehicles that you can sell. But, I think we need to switch, by the help of the government—the Democrats most certainly need to do something to help us out to diversify, by doing things such as that mass-transit railway system, and other things, that can be funded by the government, to help create more jobs and get the economy back on its feet. And without that, I think we're going to be lost!