

THE CHOICE IS OURS

“Let the workers organize. Let the toilers assemble. Let their crystallized voice proclaim their injustices and demand their privileges. Let all thoughtful citizens sustain them, for the future of Labor is the future of America.” — John L. Lewis.

Fellow UAW members, we are at a point in history where we must make a choice—a choice to be dismissed and forgotten or to be a part of history. Over the last four years we have faced a full fledged assault on the working class. We have repeatedly been asked to give concessions under pressure from corporate, government, and public opinion. All this has been done under the guise of recession.

Today, we stand witness to the unsettling pattern of our own International Union forcing locals to make unheard of concessions. UAW Local 23 is being asked to take a 50% wage cut among other anti union demands. The contract proposed to our members will set up a UAW shop with nonunion wages, benefits, and working conditions. In the larger scheme of things this will help GM leverage other UAW plants to accept wage and benefit cuts under the threat of shipping work to UAW Local 23.

The Indianapolis Metal Fab has a 2.1 million sq. ft. facility. With J.D. Norman at the helm, the Indy Metal Fab will under cut union work. The proposed contract will give management unprecedented authority to oppress the working class. The UAW is going into negotiations next year with the Big 3. It is important that we let our International leaders know that we are not accepting anymore wage and benefit concessions. In fact, it is time for us to get back what we lost.

I'm writing this letter to inform the membership that it is time for us to let the International know that we the members are the highest authority. They seem to have forgotten that. Mo Davison, the Region 3 Director, has said on record that he is in favor of union members taking a 50% wage cut and that there would be thousands of people lined up outside of the Indy Metal Fab plant for those jobs. I expect a member of management to make those kind of remarks but not someone who we pay to protect our wages and benefits. The International voted themselves a pay increase at the Constitutional Convention. Then Mo Davison turns around and tells us that he and the rest of the International officers endorse a 50% pay cut for members of UAW Local 23.

We, as UAW members, are descendants and benefactors of the labor movement. UAW members struggled on picket lines and sit-ins to win the wages, benefits, and working conditions that we enjoy today. My grandfather walked the picket line under the simple concept of doing what's best, not for himself alone, but for everyone. What we do today is what we do for the future. All I ask is for support, a show of solidarity.

The Indianapolis GM Stamping Rank & File Committee is organizing a Solidarity Rally Saturday, September 25, at 3 p.m. at Region 3 Headquarters, 5850 Fortune Circle West, Indianapolis.

It is important that we all be there, not only for ourselves, but also for our fellow UAW members as we head into negotiations in 2011.

I will be at the rally because I owe it to my grandfather and my grandchildren. We need to make the choice to make history or be made by history, to be warriors or to be victims. I choose to make history. I hope you will stand with me.

Rondo Jabbar Turner