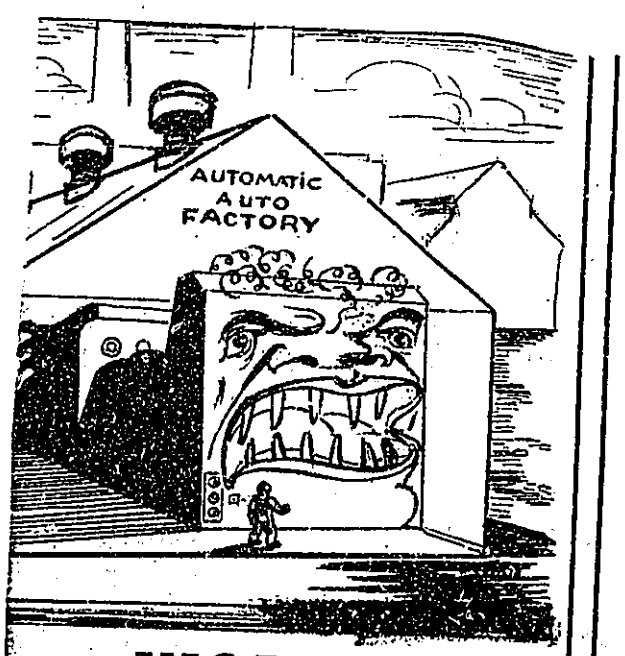

WORKERS BATTLE AUTOMATION

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Working as a production worker, and as the editor of a workers' paper, News & Letters, I have been in the battle against Automation since it started ten years ago.

Automation was introduced to the mass production industries, first in the coal mines, then in the auto, steel, electrical, and rubber industries. It is in white collar offices as well.

The intellectual—be he scientist, engineer or writer—may think Automation means the elimination of heavy labor. The production worker sees it as the elimination of the laborer.

Not being in a factory, the intellectual may think that the worker in Automation is being turned into a technician. The production worker, however, knows this simple truth: when he is not thrown into unemployment, he is subjected to the inhuman speed of the machine.

NO DOUBT AUTOMATION is a "scientific achievement," but this "scientific achievement" has no life outside of production. In the mine, mill or factory, Automation has not reduced the drudgery of labor. The very opposite is the truth. The factory clock is now geared to the pace of the monster machine. It makes no difference whether it is the company foreman or the union steward who makes the worker get out the production set by time-study.

The auto worker, the steel worker, the miner—all workers who battle against Automation know its life-and-death meaning—its speedup, its inhuman way of work, its death by overwork, its unemployment, its permanently depressed areas, its ghost towns.

No matter which industry I take to show the real relations under Automation, the story is the same: The production workers struggle against Automation, both in and out of the shop. Their trade union leaders line up with the company for what they call "progress."

TAKE THE 1949-50 miners' strike. Part of the time it was an authorized strike led by John L.

Lewis. However, he enthusiastically endorsed the use of "the automatic coal miner" as "progress." He ordered the men back to work, but they refused to return to work until their demands for changing the conditions of labor were met.

Or, take the year 1954, when an executive at Ford first coined the word, Automation, to describe what the workers were wildcatting against. Walter Reuther refused to support the men. He told them that they "must not fight progress."

Neither Reuther nor Lewis bothered to ask the workers how they saw Automation from the production line.

THESE BATTLES against Automation reached a certain climax in the 1959 steel strike which David McDonald was supposed to have won. In fact, however, the conditions of work to which the men returned were no different than the ones against which they struck. None of the local grievances had been taken up. The demand for a shorter workweek never reached the bargaining table. Two deaths occurred the very first month after the men returned to work at the Great Lakes Steel Co. in Ecorse, Michigan. Thereupon a wildcat erupted against the new union contract.

It is time to expose the lie behind the fancy talk of "every worker an engineer." To the production worker, this type of talk is as phony as the talk about "prosperity." Profits may rise, but not the money in workers' pockets, and even less the groceries they can buy with it. Production statistics may rise, but the army of the unemployed does not decrease.

If Automation is here to stay, so is the permanent army of unemployed. Whatever Automation means to management, labor bureaucrat, or engineer, to the production worker it means a return to sweatshop conditions, increased speedup and gearing the man to the machine, instead of the machine to the man. The union contract assures management increased productivity by robbing the workers of control over the conditions of labor.

The past ten years have revealed an unending series of crises throughout the world. The basis of it is in production. **Here it is High Noon.**

IF THE STRUGGLE for freedom does not begin there, it will not be a total freedom. The machines might dig coal, assemble autos, roll steel, but the crises that they bring in their wake can

be resolved only by human beings. The millions of miners, auto and steel workers who have lost their means of livelihood, as well as those who are still working the monster machines, will find their stories here. In whatever industry the workmen work they will find that the experience of others add up to a new way of meeting the chaos in production.

It is time the workers' voices were heard.

I. IN THE AUTO SHOPS

I have been an auto worker since 1926. I have lived through the terrible Depression of 1929-1939. I have seen the C.I.O. leap into life, and I know what a great promise it held for us who built it. I have also seen the unions we built taken over by the bureaucrats, especially since 1950, and turned against us. I am suffering in my bones and heart from the torments brought by Automation, and I know this can't go on—somehow, some way, we must change it.

This isn't only my story, it is the story of hundreds of workers I know, and the millions I don't know personally but whom I know because their experiences with Automation, their lives and needs and thoughts, are like ours.

• Time Study On Your Back

Automation was introduced in Chrysler in 1956. Ford had introduced it in 1954, and I can remember the workers striking there, but Chrysler brought it in only after Ford and GM had already automated production.

They have the time-study man sitting there and he's figuring every angle. We used to see the time-study man once a year. Now you see him forty times a day. He's standing there all the time. I've actually caught these guys standing behind a worker with his stop watch in his hand and his hand behind his back, clocking the guy. I always walk over and let the worker know he's standing there. Most of the time they say, "We see him standing there. We just don't care. We can't work any harder or faster." I know they can't.

They have production set so high that they know you can't do it. But they can keep you working every second of the day and that's what they're interested in. Keeping you on the job sixty minutes every hour. If you stop for just a moment to talk to someone the foreman walks up and asks you, "What's the matter? the job broke down?"

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BEFORE AUTOMATION, if you had a set quota and if you got that many jobs within the hour nothing was said. If you got your quota you had a few minutes every hour to rest. The way it is now the time-study times the job to as many given pieces you could possibly do in an hour, to the last second.

Let me make it a little more concrete. We were timed on this job at one hundred and twenty jobs an hour, "on a flowing line". For the first time in my life I couldn't seem to figure out what that superintendent was talking about. I soon got what he meant. He kept saying he wanted one hundred and twenty jobs to the minute of the hour so that the line keeps moving with no stops. He said, "We would have to stop the machine if you didn't work this way." That's where the speed-up of these machines that feed production lines comes in. To work this way is almost humanly impossible. If it was some light job, one that you could do easily—perhaps; but even so, to do it in that manner!—but a heavy job to boot, it's murder! You're just standing there, grinding your life away.

What it actually means is that you have to have a movement in your body and a coordination with that machine just like the movement of a watch.

They want those machines to be in charge of the course of the man's destiny every moment he is in that shop.

• A Fraction of a Man

When you're on a job, you like to feel good about it. You like to feel, "This is the job I work on," and be proud about what you're doing. The way we're forced to work you can't feel good about anything you do.

When the foreman first told me I was so many tenths and so many thousandths of a man I thought he was a nut. I argued with him. I told him a man is a whole human being. You can't split a man into fractions. But that's just what they're doing to us.

On one job, the foreman said that time study showed we had to get nine and one-tenth jobs an hour. He said it took so many man hours, and so many one-tenth man hours to get production. That's why the men had to be divided into tenths. They split us up into fractions. We're not even whole men anymore.

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A man's body has to be trained to work like the machine. The machine tells the body how to work. We work two hours, then have a rest period. Every man has to be able to go to the washroom at the end of those two hours. You're supposed to train yourself, I guess. We have two washrooms. Approximately three hundred and fifty men all are supposed to use the washrooms in twelve minutes.

The other day they put me on the worst line in the shop. I asked the foreman why I had to work here and he said that it had come to the point that they had to rotate the guys from the stationary jobs onto the line. They started that because you can't take too much of that line. One Monday morning at least one-third of the guys called in sick. They said they were still too tired from the previous Friday's work on that line, to come in.

They start the line with a buzzer sounding, then as every job is supposed to be finished they sound it again, and, brother, you got to jump back or you are likely to get seriously injured.

They set that machine so fast, I turned around and saw a water fountain a few feet behind me. I wanted a swallow of that water so bad, I thought maybe I could beat the machine. I worked fast in between the buzzers so that I could run back and get just a swallow, but everytime I laid my welding torch down the buzzer went off. That swallow of water was so close but it was like being on a desert. I never did get it.

One worker told me it seems like the only thing his body is geared for is to come into this shop and work on these machines. He said each night he promised himself he would not come back but each morning he gets up, more tired than when he went to bed. He comes into work and it seems like his muscles would only begin to loosen up after he has been on the job for a half hour.

• We Don't Use the Machine; The Machine Uses Us

Automation is the machine, we know that, but it is also making the man a machine too. The machine can't function without the man. Someone has to be able to feed it, stop it, etc. If they don't, the machine will break down. We get quite a bit of repairs. I'd say twenty-five per cent repairs, and another ten per cent that you might as well say is

scrap. One worker I know feels they'll always need the man. He says, "Those machines have to be watched constantly because if nobody watches, everything goes wrong." If the machine breaks down the men suffer the consequences because they send them home and then when the machine is fixed one way or another they have to make up the production.

You take the machine I work, it has to be watched. There's no way of knowing how many men this machine replaces. The men who watch the machine actually don't have too hard a day's work. There's the electrician, the repair man and the machinist, and the machine has an electronic brain.

The work that the machine puts out pushes the people ahead of it. Just these three men have good jobs; they're skilled. They take their time. Nobody comes around there to holler at them. They get paid for what they know.

IT'S THE POOR MEN who are in front—as long as that machine is pushing out like that, those men are slaving and sweating. There are approximately sixteen jigs with three men on a jig, each group is to get thirty-seven jobs an hour. They have no time to play.

What alienates a production worker is that he is driven to do work that is separated from his thinking. This along with the terrific pace we have to work, makes a worker doubly tired at the end of a day.

Some years ago, when workers had something to say about how fast they would work and the amount of help they felt they needed if the company wanted more production, the relations among production workers were humanly close.

They could help each other with their work. They worked in a way which would make it easy for every one in a group. Today Automation does not allow anyone to help another worker. Some of the machines are so large you can't even see another worker except the ones right beside you. We are degraded to a cog in the machine. We don't use the machine. It uses us.

● The Loneliness of It

The loneliness that is brought about by these monster machines is terrific. Every worker feels it. When you work one of these machines you have no one to talk to. Before, there used to be eight or ten guys doing the same job.

One worker went so far as to say he liked to work the "merry-go-round". "Even though it's the worst job, you're working next to someone. It makes it different. You forget the strain and pressure you're under when you're talking. Sometimes I forget the time and the day goes by."

The worst punishment they give prisoners in jail is solitary confinement. But at work every day Automation forces you into solitary confinement.

I can understand why the English workers struck for "loneliness pay" when they first met up with Automation.

When you work by yourself on these machines you're fighting in your own mind and every minute you look up to see what time it is. One of these days something will explode because you can fight in your own mind just so long and you know if you're doing it so is every other guy there.

• To Break Our Spirits

What kills management even more than getting production out, is to see men talking together, having a few minutes to relax with each other. They want us to work every second of the day without a pause or a break of any kind. They want to break our spirit as well as our body.

IF WE COULD WORK the machines slower the way we want to, things would be different. At this speed, everybody's jamming everything down the next man's throat. A worker told the foreman ,the other day, that the machine hadn't put out one good job yet on the shift so far. The foreman says, "Run 'em."

The man said, "Why? The inspecters will stop them." Sure enough, the inspectors stopped them. The man said, "Didn't I tell you?" The foreman turned around and said, "It's easier to work up there and fix up the complete frame instead of piling up the sections here."

What kind of a fool do they think the worker is? Don't we know it's easier to fix up in the section than to tear up a complete frame? As a result, a man works himself to death ten and twelve hours a day.

Also, the machines break down very often. They may not stay down too long, but sometimes they're down for as long as two hours. One day, for example, the machine was down for an hour and forty-five minutes, but they still got over one thousand jobs, which is more than the assemblers

could do the old way. They've got fewer assemblers and they get more production because the men have to jump all day long.

I hate to think of my friends and family on the road doing sixty-five miles an hour in a car like that. I worry, is it one of the cars I worked on. I see things go by that are bad, but I can't stop to do anything about them. They make them too fast. I'm told they won't even operate the Plymouth plant unless they can get off a minimum of ninety-nine cars every hour.

A worker said, "We build something like a car a minute. The same thing we throw out in a minute —that's all we have time to do, throw it out—takes us three years of hard labor to pay for."

• For Less than Ten Cents

Today there isn't a worker who knows how the day will begin and how it will end. Just the other day a worker from another department said, "You don't know anything here, if you're going to work or not. They asked me to come to work today. Five minutes ago they told me to come back next Tuesday."

The old Department 91 is a typical example of men replaced by machines in the auto shops. One shift for the 1955 model required 950 men; in 1956 it was 900; the 1957 model took 740; and the 1958 model required 450 men to produce more than 950 men put out in 1955.

GUYS WONDER HOW will next year start and how will it end. How are we going to survive, not just ourselves but everybody. What do you do when you're off with bills to pay, rent, utilities, food, etc.? One of the workers was saying ever since Chrysler introduced Automation, each year was worse than the year before.

"1956 wasn't a bad year, but 1957 was. 1958 was worse than 1957 and I made less yet in 1959 than in 1958. Three years in a row Automation reduced my work week. Last year I made four thousand dollars to support myself, my wife and our three kids. Here in the States you know that isn't anything for five people to live on."

IN THE BEGINNING of the year they yelled about "the soaring sixties," now they tell us we're heading for another depression. What they meant in January was that the number of unemployed would soar to the sky.

To the company, man is not as good as the machine. They worry when the machine breaks

down. They don't worry when the man breaks down. They tell you it takes less than ten cents to write one up. They can fire and hire a man for less than ten cents.

• "We Don't Have Concentration Camps, Yet"

They schedule overtime whenever they want, but they won't call any men back to work or schedule extra shifts. They don't even give us any choice or notice about overtime anymore. They come around a few minutes before quitting time and say "Two hours." And that's it.

I was arguing with the committeeman about having to work ten hours a day. The law says we don't have to work more than eight hours, but now they make us work ten. I said, "How can they force this on us?"

He said, "The company schedules production, and the contract says you've got to work it."

I asked him, "What will stop them from working us twelve hours, and fourteen hours, or as long as they want, whenever they want?"

HE JUST WALKED AWAY. He couldn't answer. One man who protested against this got five days off. It got everybody scared, and nobody dares to say a word.

As one of the men put it: "Automation is just a loophole for concentration. We don't have concentration camps here yet, where the man is forced to work under a gun. They don't have a gun on us, but they force us to work by saying, 'If you don't do as we say, starve on the street.'

"The only difference between this kind of working and living, and being in a cell block, is that we have more room to move about in. But they're just waiting. When they take your car, and your house, and your little bit of money, it's the same as being in jail. You can't move around anyway.

"I KEEP ASKING MYSELF, will I ever be able to collect my social security when I'm sixty-five? Will I be able to live till sixty-five working in the factory? I doubt it. That Automation machine is killing me. Those men in Washington must be having a good time laughing to themselves knowing how many workers won't be around to collect."

• 2c More Wages; 19% Rise in Blue Cross Rates

Everytime we get a penny or two cents "cost of living" raise everything goes up. We got two cents starting July, so everything you need begins to go up. The hospital and medical insurance (Blue Cross) that most workers carry is trying to raise its prices by almost nineteen per cent.

A professor from one Michigan college wants to take away the couple of pennies that they do give us. He blames that for inflation. Doesn't he know that we get that only after inflation has set in and the prices go up and that miserly two pennies doesn't pay for one-eighth of the higher prices? They'll raise that health insurance so high where no worker will be able to afford it, unless of course the union fights to have the company pay for it all.

It seems pretty miserable that a worker can't get medical care unless he has money or insurance. The workers are right when they ask what kind of world is this?

A Southern white worker said, "What the hell kind of world is this we're living in: when a guy has to live like this there's something wrong. If you work a week then you have to take three days off the next week, suffering and in misery and paying doctor bills. Complaining to someone doesn't seem to help us." Everyone agreed with him.

• Death by Automation

When you hear about Automation being a man-killer that's not just a figure of speech. That's what the wildcat strike at Great Lakes Steel was about.

After the 116 day strike was supposedly won by the men, the steel companies put on a new drive to put automatic processing equipment on the mill floor. From the strain of overwork, a crane operator fell from his scaffold and was killed. When the men went to his funeral they learned of three other operators who had died in the same week from the strain of the crackdown and speedup. That's what made the men mad. That's why they walked out.

As in the steel mills, so in the auto shops, as the speed from Automation becames more intense, safety conditions are thrown to the wind by the company. I can remember when they first brought those machines into our department. I don't know

how many workers were hurt that first day: crushed hands. lost fingers.

There are signs all over the department to work safely. Inside of a couple of hours workers wrote under these signs: "These machines are not safe to do it with."

FEBRUARY 10TH OF this year an auto worker got off the bus at the plant gate and fell dead on the pavement. **He died of a heart attack.** Workers said that he had repeatedly complained to the foreman that it was impossible to keep up with the pace set by time study and the machine. His complaints didn't mean a thing to management. The union simply shrugged its shoulders.

On Wednesday, December 30th of last year there was a combined wildcat and lockout in one of Chrysler's assembly departments. It resulted from a worker being seriously injured on the frame job.

CHRYSLER'S MAD RUSH for production and more production, with workers bound to the inhuman pace of Automation, is very dangerous to the lives of the men on the frame job. Workers have been severely injured by the cross bars flying out from the frame before it can be welded. Minor injuries are a daily occurence.

On this last Wednesday in 1959, a bar flew out and struck a worker across his back and head knocking him unconscious.

After the unconcious man was rushed to the hospital on a stretcher, the foreman yelled for another worker to come and work the same job. The worker refused, saying, "You're crazy as hell! I wouldn't work there for double pay." This never happens when the machine is running at a normal pace.

To the production worker in auto, Automation means physical strain, mental strain, fatigue, heart attacks—death by Automation.

• Urine as Red as Blood

It isn't only those who die. I have never seen so many workers sent home sick by first aid as I see now. There is hardly a job in any plant that is not against the man's health in one way or the other. If he isn't sucking in too much dust in his lungs, he's getting too much smoke or too many chemicals or something. There's just too much of it that goes into his body and the older you get the lower your resistance gets. The sun hasn't

shined on this job yet. Wait till it gets ninety degrees or ninety-five degrees outside.

ONE YOUNG GUY, just about thirty, works on the heavy frame job, lifting the frames onto the machine. He came out of the wash room one day and told me he was feeling so bad and that when he urinated he felt a sharp pain and his urine ran red like blood. These are everyday occurrences in automated factories today.

I received a letter from a worker who asked how much exhaust can a man's body stand. The issue in which his question appeared, three or four copies of **News & Letters** were hung up in the washroom. The next day I received a few more letters, asking our medical columnist to answer. Here are both the questions and M.D.'s answer:

• How Much Exhaust Can A Man Stand?

I would like to know one thing from M.D.—just how much fresh air does a man require in his body every day? In an auto plant we don't get very much. We get dust and exhaust—just how much exhaust is a man's body supposed to withstand?

In a year's time what effect would this exhaust have on a man? And it is not exhaust alone, there's gas. You take arc welding—that rod is throwing off a gas and the machine is throwing off a gas. What does this do to the man?

This job is going to get worse yet. The sun hasn't been able to shine on us yet. This summer they'll be able to see who can stand it. It may be some of the younger men will but I know the men that are over 45 won't be able to.

Summer is going to be tough. It was hot in there when the temperature outside was 25 degrees, what is it going to be like when it gets to be 95 degrees outside? The building is going to be even hotter than that. It's going to be murder all right.

I would like to know what does all this do to a man, if he can stand it?

• The Doctor Answers

A Detroit auto worker asked what do gases, exhaust and high temperatures do to a man working under pressure. Physical fatigue and exhaustion from a driving belt line will decrease the reservoir of vital energy and, consequently make one more

susceptible to the stress of poisonous chemicals. So will the stress of nervous tension, anger, and frustration.

HIGH TEMPERATURES require greater stores of body energy for maintaining a state of balance, excessive sweating loses large amounts of fluid and salt. The increased heart rate and respiration in overheated atmospheres make for more rapid absorption of chemicals through the hundreds of square meters of absorbable surface present in the lungs in direct contact with the blood.

When welding is done at high temperatures in the adjacent area the effect of release of gases irritant to the lungs, as the oxides of nitrogen or metal fumes, will tend to make the victim even more responsive to the damage of poisonous chemicals. The nitrogen dioxide gas which is frequently liberated when metal is heated at this high temperature is not only irritating to the lungs but can have harmful effects possibly to the liver and blood.

Welders or those working near welders sometimes get what is called "a flash" from the welding arc. What is irritating to the eyes is ultraviolet light. It can and does burn the eye surface, giving an inflamation that is acute with red eyes congested, discharging and a feeling as though grit or foreign material were present in the eye.

HOW MUCH OF THIS can a man take?—I don't know. But one thing I am certain, that all of the gas from the combustion of petroleum is deadly to life. A small amount can sicken, and a lot can kill. Excessive speed of work, high levels of heat, and the action of other chemical irritants or poisonous substances in the work area will influence susceptibility.

With carbon monoxide inhaled into the lungs in large amounts, acute poisoning and rapid asphyxia and coma follow. However, I have often wondered, as I pass through garages filled with dense clouds of auto exhaust, about the slow, chronic, insidious damage taking place over months and years, as carbon monoxide, lead, arsenic and other products of oil and gasoline breakdown reach the lungs, the blood and blood-forming organs, and the sensitive spinal cord and brain centers.

I AM SURE that often symptoms as headaches, weakness, dizzy spells, nausea and indigestion, chest pains and other vague complaints are the result of such repeated exposure.

• Once More On Speed-Up

The machine could help a man a lot, but the speed-up makes it impossible. Take the frame job. Even the engineers who built the machine for the frame said it wasn't meant to operate more than one job every 12 seconds. Chrysler said that a job every nine seconds is the speed they were sold on when they bought this machine. At this speed one welder was working right behind the machine rewelding the defective spots.

The company was going to pieces. They said this was extra cost. They even had a time-study man timing the machine. He would turn the dial back up to nine seconds and the welds would begin breaking again. The head engineer in the plant said he has the knowledge to repair anything that break down on the machine but if the welds do not hold at nine seconds speed they had better call the man who sold them the machine. After going over the machine for a half hour the man from the machine company said it was working perfectly, so the time-study man turned it up to nine seconds and the welds began to break.

THE MACHINE COMPANY man turned it back to twelve seconds and said that is where it is supposed to be set at. There was another heated argument. How do they expect a human being to put out their "quality control" by speeding them up so when they can't make the machines work at that speed?

One would have to see this frame job to believe it or to understand what we are talking about. The company says the worker must stay on his job and not stop the machine. Now that may not sound bad to people that do not understand, but you have to keep up with every movement of that machine and the company sets its pace. The frame of a car is very thick steel and heavy.

These frames are put on a conveyor line one after another about a foot apart from the other. It all works by Automation. Workers practically touching each other are welding on both sides of it. The frame is bedded down beneath them and they have some twelve seconds to finish the job. A warning buzzer sounds—or, as the men say it: "The frog is hollering"—letting you know that is all the time you have. The frame leaps out of its bed above your head and beds itself a few feet beyond you.

AT THE SAME TIME the next frame is bedding in the place of the one you have just worked on. The company is speeding it up to seven seconds. Every time they try it something dangerous happens. The frame leaps out with such force that one time some unwelded pieces flew out. They have an emergency button to stop the line if a worker sees a danger. When someone uses this it is like shifting a car in reverse when it's traveling at a high rate of speed. Some of the frames stop, some go backward and some continue forward. Then there is a bang and a crash as if two freight cars have met head on. The superintendent comes running and wants to know who stopped it. He is not interested in what is happening to the workers. It is production that counts.

● "If This Is Progress"

If this type of Automation—machines that put millions out of work and destroy those that remain—if this is progress, said a friend of mine, Joe, that is the kind of progress he's against and anyone else would be if he had to be a slave to a machine.

Joe said that the people who still say that Automation is progress should come and see where he works on the frame job. Before the union, there was a saying that Ford's foundry workers were the hardest working people in any factory in the world. But it was not automated. With Automation you are geared to the machine. There is no let-up.

IT ISN'T PROGRESSIVE, but destructive to the worker who has to work it. It destroys the relations between husband and wife. Many workers cannot have regular sexual relations with their wives because they are so tired they go to sleep as soon as they get home from work. It also disrupts the parent and child relationship, indeed the whole family. Just recently I received the following letter from a steelworker's wife in Pittsburgh:

"There are so many people out of work here it is really shameful to see all the man-power going to waste. If we get out of work I guess we will have to leave here, because there is nothing for anyone.

"You know it is really sad to see boys and girls come out of school and there isn't anything for them to do but sit around and get into trouble or leave town."

● Chained To The Machine

The newest machine they have added to their collection now, chains the worker to the machine. They put it in during this year's model changeover. A maintenance man told us about it.

He said, "A man has to be handcuffed with heavy leather straps and the cable—I'm sure that cable is what used to hold up the old welding guns —it's a steel cable that runs from the leather cuff up his arms to under his armpits and comes over his shoulders from behind. They say the breaking point of this machine is 10 thousandths of a second.

"I stood there watching so long it's a wonder they didn't pay me off. You should see how this thing cuts, it cuts forward and backwards.

"It works by electric eyes. The worker puts the metal to be cut in the machine. As soon as the metal gets into the machine—no buttons need to be touched—the machine comes down and cuts. This machine works so fast, it isn't humanly possible for the worker to get his hands back out of the way before it cuts. They put these cuffs around the worker's wrists and at the point where the machine breaks and comes down, his hands are automatically jerked out of the way to keep him from getting them cut off."

He went on to tell us that there was such a commotion about this machine that they couldn't get anybody to start it off. So the supervisor put the cuffs on the foreman. It takes two workers to work the machine because the one who is handcuffed to it doesn't have room to turn around. He only drops the metal into the machine. After they ran two or three pieces the foreman begged them to turn him loose because he was forced to go to the rest room.

After hearing this one worker said, "This sounds worst than the chain gangs in the South." Nobody believes it when you tell them about it.

● Detroit Is Auto; Detroit Is Rubber; Detroit Is Unemployment

Detroit is auto. Detroit is also rubber. One rubber worker I know told me: "I was working in the process developing department in rubber. A tire is built on a tire building machine—and in our production a tire is built on a merry-go-round, it looks like a carousel which has ten tire building

machines on it. And these machines move around just like an assembly line, and each man does a particular operation as the tire building machine moves around. For each merry-go-round they had fifteen men working, that was ten on the merry-go-round itself and five supplying the material for it.

"THEY STARTED A PROJECT for putting in an automated unit to replace the merry-go-round. This is a unit which has four tire building machines on it, and revolves on a turret. All a man has to do is press a button on that machine and it will build a tire completely by itself. All the hand labor will be gone. I told the engineer who was working on this, 'You know that's going to put half the men in that department out of work.' He says, 'No.' So I said, 'Okay, figure it out.' He thought about it and said, 'You know, you're right.' This engineer saw only the building of the machine, he didn't see its relation to the human being.

"From my experience and in my estimation in that particular factory, before the sixties are over, that factory will be run with ten per cent of the manpower. In other words, where they now have six thousand men, it will be run with six hundred."

Detroit has been put on the depressed areas list. At the very same time the "Big Three" in auto — G.M., Ford, Chrysler — have revealed that their executives have been given enormous rewards in bonuses and dividends, to say nothing of high class payola of such as Newburg. There has been an absolute drop of thirteen per cent in auto employment. The 200,000 jobless in Michigan have joined the national army of unemployed to boost it to five million.

These are the official figures and every one knows that many more than that walk the streets in search of jobs they cannot find, and by now are not entitled to collect any unemployment insurance. By the time the elections are over and they have stopped using this fact as a football, the Detroit worker has nothing to look forward to but more unemployment.

When I went back to work at Chrysler after the 1956 model changeover, they had introduced Automation as their "forward look." I was shocked at how many workers were missing. There used to be over 12,000 workers in my plant. Today there are fewer than 2,000. A worker with twenty years seniority told me that this was the first time he felt sad at being called back to work. He predicted then that our plants would become ghost plants with skeleton crews. They have become that.

Ford used to employ 80,000 at the River Rouge plant in Dearborn, and another 40,000 at the Highland Park plant. Today there are fewer than 40,000 at River Rouge and only a couple of thousand at Highland Park. The major operation there is tractors. Due to the depression in the farm areas tractor production has dropped fifty per cent.

This year when we were laid off for model changeover we were wondering just how many new machines they would bring. They laid us off "indefinitely" and we knew that meant new machines and more unemployment. When I was called back I found that the whole fifth floor was covered with new machines. The steward said that at least one third of the workers will not be back. They say they will cut back to 1942 seniority.

AT ONE POINT IN 1959 no less than 17 per cent of the total labor force in Michigan was unemployed. 1960 is moving in the same direction of great unemployment and hardship. 1961 promises to plunge the country into a depression.

I have never seen so many men and youngsters, especially Negro men, pushing ice cream wagons and selling magazines, rags and junk as I do now. I know the reason they're doing it. They're out of work and don't have anything to live on. That's how it was when we sold apples on every street corner during the Depression.

WHEREVER AUTOMATION moves in workers are thrown out, and unemployment leaps. I can't help feeling as if we are headed towards slave labor here as they have in Russia and China. Where are they going to send the millions of unemployed we have here?

II. WHOSE JUDGMENT?

Talk with Office Worker and Engineer

When I heard about one of the office departments at Ford laying off one hundred and fifty girls and replacing them with some sort of brain, which only two girls work, one sitting at either end of the machine unable to talk to each other even, I felt it would be important to get a white collar worker's story into this story on Automation. Here is one from Los Angeles:

• Mental Machines?

I've been thinking about Automation. I work with computers and so if I said anything it would be on them. I'm not a production worker. I've read in the paper many workers' reactions to Automation and how they feel about working with the machine in the auto industry. I get certain feelings from working with a machine that is automated and I must say it's just about the same I think as in a factory.

The Automation that I deal with is not an automation of what man would perform manually It's an automation of what man would perform mentally. The machine is one that does not think exactly, but does a sort of mental process for you.

Automation does an action over and over again. That's what makes it Automation. The machine can handle an operation an unlimited number of times. My particular machine does some mathematics, and computation and makes up pay checks.

THERE IS A PACE to be kept and it's a tremendous pace on these computors, because the thing that is stressed—and I imagine stressed wherever you work with automated machines—is the enormous cost of the machine.

The man who is running the company is always stressing that this machine is costing quite a bit and we have got to get the work right away. If you make any mistakes at all they are going to write you up; three times and you are out. They have such a system where I work.

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● Mistake Time

Any minute, or whatever amount of time you waste by making a mistake, they log against you. There is no joking about it. I mean everybody knows that there is a log kept of how much mistake time you have. The mistakes can be so small. There is a row of switches that you have to lower or raise. If you lower or raise one by mistake you might waste three or four hours, and sometimes it can multiply because what follows after your mistake is also wrong. I mean five or six people have done things that have cost as much as ten hours time and this can mean five hundred dollars an hour worth of rent. I don't care what the cost is, of course, but the point of all this is that they keep pushing this at you.

YOU ALWAYS HEAR about this log in which they "log" this time. They call it eighty-one time: That means personnel error and they charge it to somebody. You always hear, "How much eighty-one time have you got?"

This is just half of it. The other half is that when the machine is going it's doing things at fantastic speeds, but between jobs when you take one job off and put the next job on—this is where they're losing money and where they really push you. So you're pushed physically at that time. It's not only a race to go faster, it's a mental strain too because you have to go fast and you know it.

● How Many Hundredths of an Hour?

You have a time clock that you keep so that they know exactly how many hundredths of an hour you spent between jobs. This is wasted time. The strain is developing all the time because you have to check everything. You know that when you start the thing off and you make a mistake, even if you catch it, you lose time re-starting the process.

I don't know what kind of physical strain develops working with Automation in other industries but there is an awful lot of this mental strain where I work. I feel that from working this type of machine that you have all the strain except the back breaking strain that you can get from Automation in the factory. It develops a tenseness in me. **When I get home it takes me two hours to be able to talk to people or do anything.** I can't get to sleep and I get home in the middle of the

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night. They've got the whole thing built up to the degree that you don't dare make mistakes, and yet you've got to go fast. I imagine that this is also the essence of what Automation is to the production worker. There's nothing I like about Automation.

* * *

THIS IS THE STORY of a college youth with a very high I.Q. who was chosen to work an automated machine in an office. He didn't know how many workers it replaced but there are statistics which show that office workers too suffer from what they call "technological unemployment."

• Taped Electronic Controls

I asked an engineer who knows some of the problems of workingmen to give me an explanation of what Automation consists of, as he sees it. This is what he said:

Automation as a system is not just an automatic machine. We have had automatic machines for years, automatic screw machines, machines which turn out any one of a number of various sizes and shapes of bolts, screws or small parts without anyone in constant attendance at the machine.

Automation is something quite different. It is in effect a whole series of automatic machines linked together to produce either a finished or semi-finished product which has gone through an assembly process as its various parts come together in the automation complex. In many cases the automation process is controlled by a recorded tape which contains the "program" telling the machines what to do next. Since many of these machines are capable of many different kinds of operations, the taped electronic controls are a necessary part of the machine function. Actually they take the place of the man who used to be the machine operator.

It is this feature of the automation process which makes it so objectionable to the men on the production line. Since there are still men who must work on these automated production lines, feeding it parts or raw materials or removing the finished parts, these men are forced to work at the rate predetermined by the machine, the machine becoming the master of the man.

The number of men assigned to any one process is usually determined on the basis of a smoothly functioning machine under ideal conditions. Any Detroit production line worker can tell you that this condition rarely exists. The machines have

their faults, break down, or some one part of it refuses to function properly. Some machines have been known to produce as much as 40% scrap. If a machine completes only fifteen out of the seventeen welds it is supposed to, or drills only a part of the required number of holes, or leaves a few nuts or bolts out of the assembly, then the product must undergo repair or be delivered to the consumer in an incomplete condition.

THE WORKERS CAN TELL YOU how many of these badly made products are "passed" by foremen who are more anxious to set production records than they are to assure the quality of the products. Thus, while a machine may be set to perform certain functions, it cannot think or use judgment without the use of men to control it.

* * *

● Their Scientists, Their Time-Study Men

I knew before the engineer told me that they design and build those machines that way in order to prevent the worker knowing anything about them. They don't want him to use his own judgment on anything.

Before Automation, when a major change was made and a new machine was introduced, they had to rely on the workers' knowledge and experience to get it working properly. We had to get the kinks out of it. For a few weeks we felt like human beings working out the problems together and getting things organized and moving smoothly. Then, the engineers, the time study, the foremen and superintendents kept out of our way and off our backs. They needed us to get the production flowing. Only after that did they use the old crack-down and speed-up.

Now, all they need is a man to watch it. They can't eliminate that, because if nobody watches, the machine breaks down and everything goes wrong. But just watching a machine doesn't mean knowing it. It doesn't take knowledge to operate a machine that way. Really to know a machine means that I would have to build it from the start and know all about how it functions. That way there would be no monotony and every job is a little different and you get to use your head and it takes everybody to work it out.

Automation hasn't been designed to get everybody's knowledge behind it. It's been designed to get rid of the men and to push those who are left. They

don't want us to use our heads while we're working, they just want to push us.

AS A STEELWORKER SAID, management can threaten its pushers that the job can run without them. But they don't want us running the job. They impose their own pattern and they have their scientists and their time study men and their control engineers and their pushers to make sure that the machines get built so that we have to work the way they want to us to.

He told me that as he sees it in the mill, really to run the job without the pattern the company imposes, really to run it for yourself, you would have to have the full confidence of your fellow-worker and he would have yours and you would work together without tension. You would get up in the morning and want to go to work. It's quite a problem to get up in the morning to go on a job when you know you'll have somebody nag you several hours of the day through no fault of your own. He'll just come along and find something wrong. That's the way they work it.

They have these guys come around just to keep looking for something to nag you about. The whole point is to break your spirit so they can drive you any way they want. This is true not only in auto. It is true in all industries. News & Letters gets many reports from workers in the basic industries. Let's turn first to steel, where the Automation battlefield has particularly disastrous effects on the Negro worker.

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III. IN THE STEEL MILLS

In the rolling mills, Automation is constantly being introduced. Where the line is automated, as it is in Great Lakes Steel plant in Ecorse, Michigan, 36 men out of about 100 are thrown out of jobs. The automated line rolls, shears, trims, stamps and stacks the finished product according to size. They were all separate operations before, requiring men to do the work.

• Not To Lighten Labor, But To Speed It Up

Mechanization and Automation are not introduced to lighten the labor of the men but to speed it up, and at the same time to throw men out of work.

Whereas before while working on a furnace repair, men would be wheeling bricks used to make the repairs, deposit them at the furnace from which point they would be hauled up to the bricklayers and stacked around the furnace being repaired, now all of that is gone.

There are lifts which carry a load of bricks and deposit them on the scaffolding where bricklayers are working. You get done with one pile and there is another one waiting for you. No matter how fast you lay the bricks, there are still more waiting for you. A break is a thing of the past.

THERE ARE MANY THINGS that have been done both to speed-up the making of the metal and the use of more fire resistant materials in making furnaces and repairs.

Oxygen has been introduced into the furnace bath of raw metal, which cuts down the time considerably for melting steel. Whereas before you were doing good to get a heat in one eight-hour shift, that is, tap a furnace to get the metal, now two heats are often tapped in an eight-hour shift.

Combined with this chemical speed-up in the time of producing steel has been the development of more heat-resistant materials on a furnace. For one thing, whereas in the past the bricks were ordinary black bricks, they are now steel encased to resist more heat and stand up much longer than the other ones.

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Another new thing is the basic roof designed for the furnaces. After each third course of brick, a metal plate has been added, which serves to lengthen considerably the use of the roof. With the new roof, you can get 450 or more heats out of it before it has to be replaced. This is more than twice as much as the old roofs could take.

All of this means that there are far fewer men needed for the jobs, and the repair department is cut more than a half.

MORE AND MORE, mechanization and Automation have been added, making the work ever harder to keep up with, while the company is adding even more work to the regular tasks.

Before, there were clean-up gangs of laborers who would clear away debris left on a job; now the men doing the jobs are forced to clean up after themselves.

The company says that when you have a clean place, you have a safer place to work. This is true. But it is one thing when you have a clean-up gang to make a place clean and safe and when you have to do your own work and clean up as well—with the company expecting the same amount of work out of you, as if you didn't have the additional clean-up work to do.

The result of this is that conditions are made much less safe because you have to work so much harder and faster to do everything they throw at you—the pace is just too much. It just becomes a matter of time before you become so fatigued that you can make just one little mistake, and then you've had it. Many men have had just this happen to them . . . they get so tired they are accident prone. These conditions are mostly felt in unskilled or semi-skilled labor.

With all the lay-offs that have taken place, it is significant that not any of supervision has been laid off. This means that you have any one of a number of bosses over you always breathing down your neck to make sure you don't have a minute to rest.

WHILE STEELWORKERS KNOW the company and union have worked hand-in-hand on many deals against the men, one of the most fantastic developments happened recently at the Homestead plant when the first helpers on furnaces, all union men, were made into time study men for the company. They now keep complete and detailed records of everything pertaining to their furnaces, including the length of time it takes to do a job, what delays arise and who is to blame for them.

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This record they turn over to management at the end of each heat. The union went along completely with this scheme of the company, which the men know is one of the dirtiest deals ever made to try to force ever more production from the men.

Ever since the merger of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. the consequences to the steelworkers is disastrous. Practically all the general maintenance workers are being laid off. The A.F.L. contractor set-up is such that when a job comes up, the A.F.L. bids on the job, indicating the length of time it will take to do the work. Once the job is done, the contractor and his men pull out and that's it.

To schedule production within any given week, the company, under the union contract, must guarantee the men a minimum of 32 hours. With this contractor set-up only a small part of the regular work force can be guaranteed this 32 hours. As a result, many workers are laid off.

Although there isn't a worker who is not for solidarity of labor, it is one thing for labor to be together in fighting for a better life, it is something else when one set of conditions are imposed on one group of workers and a different set on another group. Management has always tried every possible way to break up the men; now the union itself is in on this.

The Negro Worker

They are making plans now to put in a rolling mill that will work like an IBM machine; they'll drop in the raw metal in one end and it will come out the other as a finished product according to the specifications they dial into the machine. And not a human hand will have touched it. With something like this, you can't even start to estimate how many men this will throw out of work both directly and indirectly. The Negro worker is particularly hard hit.

IN MANY STEEL MILLS, the Negro is as viciously discriminated against as he is in the South. As a matter of fact, in some respects he is even more discriminated against. Because the Negroes make up a large portion of the labor force in the South, it is not too unusual to find them in skilled jobs. But in many Northern mills, it is indeed a rarity to find a Negro in a skilled job.

In the Homestead mill, for example, in the last two years, there has been only one Negro who has advanced to a skilled job. And even in this one instance, months went by before it was actually

established that he had the job as a permanent position.

And with the Automation that is coming in, it is not too hard to see that job discrimination will be practiced even more than it has in the past.

Companies have been known to hire a man off of the street rather than give a Negro a skilled job. And the injustice of this practice is revealed by the fact that when a job comes open and bids are made on it, the results of tests they give to determine whether or not a man is qualified remain the secret of the companies. They don't have to reveal the scores taken on the exams at all. With this kind of a set up, it can easily be seen whereby they can very arbitrarily pick and choose whomever they please.

The union officials have never done anything about this kind of screening process, so it can come as no surprise that Negroes do not see a great future to look forward to as long as this kind of situation exists.

As a Negro worker from Homestead said, "This business of putting one Negro in a skilled job is like the government picking out a particular Negro and putting him in some high governmental position and then saying, 'You see, we don't discriminate.' All this proves is that they discriminate like hell and are just trying to save face. There isn't a Negro or a white worker who doesn't know what they're trying to pull when they use this tactic.

A Negro auto worker standing by added, "I don't want to see just one of us upgraded. One fellow you might be paying off. I want to see all upgraded. I thought the union was for it. I used to work hard for the union. I was a steward. I remembered there was an ad in the paper for a millwright. I figured I could get this job. I went to the employment office. They told me there was a long list before me. These guys had no intention of getting this job because they had no knowledge of the job. But they used them to block the job when a Negro comes along. It's not that good of a job.

"The union did nothing. Another thing. All of us in labor don't think the same. You take a Negro worker on a job with whites, he can't think the same. We know we're here to stay: we have no further advancement to look forward to. The white guy can."

The steelworker continued with his story. "There are many old-timers who refuse to take the posi-

tion of second helper when it is open, and is one of the upgrading levels you go through according to contract. That is, it is followed if the next guy in line is white.

"**THE SECOND HELPER'S WORK** is so hard and man-killing that there is a saying among steelworkers that, 'If you want to have a good time, all you have to do is go out with a second helper's wife'."

• Armies of Unemployed

The tremendous rise in labor productivity which characterizes all basic industries can best be illustrated in steel. By the first half of 1959 labor productivity in steel had risen so high that with only 1 per cent more industrial workers, fully 50 per cent more tons of steel could be turned out as, say, in 1947.

They don't raise production JUST by constantly retiming the job and raising the quotas. At the same time as they speed-up production they take two or three guys off the job, which means you have to do two or three men's work. You don't have to do it. They tell you that "You don't have to do it," but you have to get out of there if you don't.

The United Packinghouse Workers, in February and March, went through a rough strike against the big meat packing companies in Minnesota. What did they win? The Twelfth Annual Constitutional Convention of that union, held at the end of May, reported that thirty thousand jobs have been lost in the meat industry since 1956 when Automation was brought in.

The Steelworkers Union president, McDonald has been forced to admit that over 10,000 workers has been eliminated from the steel mills in only the last few months of 1959.

One of the men at Great Lakes Steel was saying that steel is beginning to look like the auto factories: a few months of good work and skeleton crews the rest of the year.

AT THIS MOMENT steel production nationally is down to only 42 per cent of capacity. Even if production were raised, it would not help the unemployed at all, and would help only very little those who work short weeks. The army of the unemployed in steel is growing so vast that the steel capital, Pittsburgh, is becoming a ghost town compared to eight years ago.

It's the same way with the needle workers, the rubber workers, the electrical workers. Even in the skilled trades that they said could never be automated like the printers and the stereotypers and the pressmen, they're beginning to fear the poisoned handwriting of Automation on the walls of their homes, on their lives.

BUT NOWHERE is it as bad as in the mines. In the ten years since Automation only one hundred and ten men are left at work at one mine where there used to be four hundred and twenty-five.

Things have got so bad in West Virginia—where only forty thousand miners are left out of one hundred and fourteen thousand—that they can't hide the facts anymore. Reporters are horrified to report, today, now, that mothers are being forced to turn to prostitution to try to feed their children. Children are showing the swollen bellies of malnutrition, are beginning to show the signs of rickets, are beginning to develop the symptoms of tuberculosis.

This isn't the depression of 1930. This isn't in an underdeveloped continent like Africa. This is U.S.A., 1960, when the big companies of mass industry are reporting new records in profits and production.

I have therefore asked the miner who edited the Coal Page to describe conditions there.

IV. IN THE MINES

The destructive effects of Automation have been felt nowhere for as long a time as in the coal mining industry. Beginning in 1949-50, with the introduction of the continuous miner, the history of mining and the miners has undergone profound changes.

Among the most obvious effects has been the reduction in the number of miners employed from some 450,000 miners in 1950 to some 175,000 today. While this staggering reduction is brutal testimony of one aspect of Automation, it cannot begin to illustrate the effects of working in the mines under conditions forced by the technical organization of production as planned by management with the continuous miner to squeeze out the last ounce of labor from the men still on the job.

• Before Automation

Mining, at best, has always been one of the most hazardous industries this country has known. No miner has ever gone down into the pits knowing that he will return home. He has seen too many who have not. He has helped dig out men crushed in roof falls carried out men smashed by machines, or picked up the mutilated fragments of bodies which were once men before being blasted by dust or gas explosions.

And it is because he has had this kind of education in the mines that there is nothing more important to him than the conditions under which he works. For nowhere are conditions of labor so much a matter of life and death as in the mines. To a miner, nothing is more important than the human being, or, more specifically, his well being.

CONDITIONS WERE BAD enough under the conventional method of mining, where the work was performed in a cycle. That is, there were several crews of men who had specific jobs. The timbermen would go into a room to make the top safe by shoring it up either with timbers or with steel pins to bind the overburdening layers of rock and slate. Then the cutting machine crew would go into the room and cut a nine-foot deep swath over the top and down one side of the entry. They were followed by the shot fireman who dynamited

the coal, who in turn was followed by the loading crew which cleaned up the loose coal and loaded it into mine cars or buggies. Then the cycle was repeated as the men went down the line of the entries on a section, which generally were seven in number.

Under these conditions, it was impossible for the boss to be at all places at once, and if a crew got caught up, there was a chance to rest a couple of minutes. If the boss would be looking for you to do some other job while you were "resting." It was not too difficult a task to make yourself scarce. And with this system, a section would require anywhere from thirteen to seventeen men, depending on the machine units that were used on the section.

The Continuous Miner Is a Man-Killer

With the continuous miner, however, all of this was changed. Into this machine was engineered the multiple functions of the cutting, pinning, loading machines, and the work of the shot fireman.

Circular bits which rotate on the "head" of the miner crush the coal which is gathered in by a conveyer, also in the "head," which relays the coal back to another conveyer, which in turn dumps the coal into a buggy for transportation to a dumping point. Here it is loaded onto thick rubber conveyors which transport the coal to waiting coal cars to be delivered on rails to the outside tipple for final processing.

These are the simple mechanics of the operation. But the effects on the men are anything but simple.

Between thirteen to seventeen men were employed on a section before. There are now five: the machine operator, the two pin men who operate pinning machines engineered on each side of the continuous miner and two buggy men.

With the convential method of mining, a miner had a chance to rest when he was caught up in the cycle and could avoid the beady eye of the boss.

With the continuous miner, there is no such respite. The boss can be at one spot—where the "miner" is operating—and can watch every man on the section, every minute of the day. And he does.

The only one who gets out of his sight is the buggy man who makes the trip to the dumping

point. But even he isn't out of "sight" in a manner of speaking.

THE BOSS HAS the trips timed, and if there is some delay in the time the buggy man gets back to the loading machine, the boss is off in a second to check to see what the hold-up is about.

This checking on the buggy man doesn't even give the men at the face a break because the boss has noted the position of the machine when he left, and if you haven't moved as much as you should have while he was breathing down your neck, he'll want to know why when he gets back!

Another thing that is different is that you are all cooped up in one place. In the conventional method, you moved around, could stretch your legs, so to speak. Not so with the continuous miner. You're stuck right there at that machine and you stay there.

There is nobody, absolutely nobody, who can understand the pressures put on the men who are working on these man-killers. For man-killers they are, and in more ways than one.

● From Rib to Rib and to the Top

When engineers, back in 1949, had developed the experimental models of the continuous miners, they said the machine had been constructed to work just as its name indicated—continuously. But they warned that steps would have to be taken to relieve men working on these machines, because the pace was too great for men to endure for long.

Since that time, steps, many steps have been taken to perfect the machine, but not one has been taken to relieve the men.

It was said before that with the continuous miner the coal was ground out of the face of the coal as the continuous miner advanced and conveyed back into buggies for dumping. This was tried for a while, but it was soon found that during the time that it takes a buggy to make its run to the dumping point and return back to the machine, even when two or three buggies were used to try to keep the "miner" going, there were still delays.

The step that was taken was to employ a conventional loading machine behind the continuous miner. This meant that the "miner" would not have to wait for the buggies but could keep on throwing the coal back. The only machine that would be affected in terms of the slight delay would be the loading machine, loading the coal

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into the buggies as they rushed back and forth from the dumping point.

What this generally means is that coal is piled up behind the "miner" from rib to rib and to the top. The men working on the "miner" are virtually entombed with the solid face of the coal in front of them and the high mound of coal behind them.

On the "miner" there are some six motors throwing out a great amount of heat, so much so that within a matter of minutes every miner working on the machine is wringing wet with sweat pouring out of every pore of the body.

• Dust, Deadly Dust

Coupled with this intense heat is the dust—coal dust from the grinding bits on the head of the "miner" as it rips and tears its way into the face of the solid coal, swirling the fine dust into the air which clogs eyes, ears, nostrils and settles in a thick film over every part of exposed body and falls in layers onto outer clothing.

BUT THIS IS NOT ALL, for there is yet another kind of dust, the dust produced by drilling into the top from each side of the machine to put in steel pins to bind the roof to keep it from falling and this dust is deadly. It is silicon dust from drilling into overburdening rock which produces silicosis of the lungs.

This then, is the environment, but there is still the pace of the work. They named the machine

well when they named it continuous. The operator of the machine is constantly maneuvering levers—to move the "head" in and out and up and down, then in and up and down again and again, at the same time moving the machine boom up and down and sideways and repeating this again. All day long.

Then there are the pinners, preparing their pins as the machine moves forward. Then, when it stops for a few moments to have the head move up and down, they hurriedly throw in their drills into the hydraulic rotating drill base, drill the holes into the top, retract the drill and insert the pins—then prepare for the next move.

In addition to this, the pin man on the operator's side must hang canvas to provide artificially fanned air from the outside to drive out deadly methane gas which is liberated from the coal to avoid an explosion.

With the coal piled up behind the men working on the "miner," there is no free circulation of air; gas which is liberated may accumulate instead of being driven off—and a single spark from any one of the motors or from the grinding bits hitting a piece of sulfur and throwing sparks turns the enclosed area in which the men on the "miner" are working into an explosive, searing, flesh-rendering and burning inferno of hell. There are many tombstones which attest to this fact.

IT IS A MATTER OF RECORD that in several instances where investigations conducted by mine inspectors could be made that it was established continuous miners advanced into the face of the coal at such a great rate that the ventilating systems could not possibly have driven out the explosive mixtures of gas which had accumulated.

• Wages and Unemployment

Every time a new contract has been negotiated between the U.M.W. and coal operators, a great cry goes up in the press about the high wages the coal miners receive. With their latest wage raise, negotiated two years ago, the miner makes about $24 a day.

THE REAL STORY on the "highly paid" miners however, must be seen in the light of what they make a year.

There are not many miners who work as much as 200 days out of the year, most of them work less. A three-day workweek is very common at many mines.

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Even if a miner is lucky and works 200 days a year, he makes the "fabulous" sum of $4,800 for the year—before deductions. For those averaging three days a week, the total earning for the year is $3,744 before deductions. With many miners having five or six children, it can easily be seen that it is practically impossible to pay just the absolutely necessary bills to keep existing, let alone provide a decent standard of living.

The fact of tremendous unemployment in the coal fields is an old story by now. It has been publicized everywhere.

But what is not as well publicized is that those who work on continuous miner sections are forced to work overtime, as much as two and three hours a day, while hundreds are completely without work.

As one example, in one highly automated mine which has nothing but continuous miners now, a good one-third of the men still working must work this overtime to service the machine to prepare it for the next crew coming in to work.

FIVE YEARS AGO, before the continuous miners were first introduced into this mine, there were 385 men working there. Now there are 112. And this reduction is about average for those mines with continuous miners. There have been hundreds of mines that have closed down completely, unable to compete with the mines using continuous miners. Because nothing weighs so heavily in mining regions as unemployment I have at the very beginning of this piece pointed to the devastating figures which I repeat here: in 1950, before the "miner," there were 450,000 coal miners. Now there are 175,000.

• Automation Wipes Out Seniority

Brought into play also is one of the great tragedies of the coal-mining industry. For although the United Mine Workers of America is one of the oldest unions in America, miners have never had a comprehensive seniority program. They do not have one to this date.

Indeed, the seniority according to classification which was finally negotiated in 1952 into the contract, came as a result of a bitter wildcat strike in northern West Virginia in 1951 when Consolidation Coal Company sought to lay off men with many years seniority and retain those with much less time. The strike was against the union as

much as it was against the coal company, for international union representatives sent down to get the men back to work used every trick in the books, including threats to expel the thirteen locals on strike from the union. The enraged miners almost threw them out of the hall and voted to extend the strike throughout the mining industry before John L. Lewis, then president of the U.M.W., negotiated a local seniority agreement with George Love, then head of Consol, based on classification. This agreement was incorporated into the national contract the next year, and is still the only seniority miners have.

But with the continuous miner, new classifications were created, and old ones wiped out. Seniority wasn't worth a damn, as the company soon proved. For seniority according to classification coupled with another contract provision, that the mine management has the right to direct the working force, gave management a free holiday.

Young men with as little as two or three months seniority in the mine were retained, while men with as much as 25 years in the mine were laid off. Absolutely no provision had been made by the union for this change-over to protect the men with seniority. And no provision has been made to this date!

• Those Who Don't Sing the Praises of Lewis

When Lewis stepped down as president of the U.M.W. this year he was praised by mine management and others not associated with the mining industry throughout the country for being a great labor statesman and for his support of mechanization of the mines.

THOSE WHO ARE NOT singing the praises of his policies are the thousands of ex-miners and their families in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Tennessee, Virginia, Kentucky, Alabama and other states where they are literally starving today.

With the high production of the highly mechanized mines, the smaller marginal mines have been forced to shut down. These smaller mines never did pay the union scale, but when it is seen that the last UMW contract was negotiated on the basis of 11 tons of coal per man per day, and in continuous miner mines production is from 60-70 tons per man per day, it is not hard to see how the

smaller mines could be undersold and forced out of business. This is part of the story of Harlan, Kentucky, as well as the other coal-producing states, which are full of ex-miners seeking desperately to find a way out of their destitute conditions for themselves and their families.

SO FAR AS THE UNION is concerned, when the company puts in a new practice the men object to, the company simply says, "File a grievance." So the men have filed grievances, but have had to do what the company said to do while the grievance is processed. The grievance seldom gets beyond the filing stage. The union is becoming a joke insofar as protecting the men against new policies the company puts in.

• The Men Fight Back

It is obvious that there must be some points of rebellion—and rebellions there are. While there are many "company" men the company has chosen to run these machines when the change-overs were made, there is nothing like having to work under such conditions to drive a man to seek relief.

There is an expression used by miners which is as old as mechanization in the mines. It is simply this: "A man has no business on a machine who can't break it down any time he wants to."

There is a world of wisdom behind this statement. And this wisdom is being demonstrated as it has never been before in the mines that employ continuous miners.

In the first place, there is no one who knows more about that machine and the things it can and can't do than the man who has operated it for some time. He can't be too obvious about breaking in down, because the boss is watching him.

BUT HE KNOWS from the sound of the motors that there is usually one weak spot that he can operate in that the boss couldn't possibly know because he isn't running it and couldn't detect anything done deliberately. That is the area in which he works.

At just the right time, he pushes a lever just a little bit too hard and a motor is burned up. This requires a big repair job, or maybe just a minor one. But it means that there is a break from the steady and man-killing grind.

• Informal Committees

In the long and bitter 1949-50 strike, because of the Taft-Hartley Act which had been thrown against the miners union, the International union and Lewis could not openly give sanction or direction to the strike.

This left it entirely in the hands of the men. As a result strong friendships resulted between miners over wide areas of the coal fields. Informal committees were established to direct strike action, which included the soliciting of aid throughout the labor movement, both in terms of money and food and clothing to maintain the strike. The strike was won.

When the continuous miner was increasingly introduced and miners were indiscriminately laid off because there had never been any seniority provisions at all in the contract, these informal committees again sprang up. It was the natural thing to do, since union officialdom was doing nothing about the conditions of the men being speeded-up at work or those being laid off.

Both in West Virgina and Pennsylvana, large areas of the mine fields, involving many thousands of miners, went out on strike for seniority provisions. These strikes were organized and carried out by these informal committees against both the union and companies.

These informal committees were particularly close among men working in different mines owned by the same company.

Examples of this close co-operation are the miners working for Consolidation Coal Company, and captive mine workers. The former is the largest commercial coal producing outfit in this country, while the captive mines are owned by steel companies who use their coal for producing steel, such as U.S. Steel and Jones and Laughlin.

In West Virginia, for example, in 1956 one Consol mine tried to initiate a policy of using only one man on a pin machine, which every miner knows is dangerous. The one mine went on strike, sent representatives to other Consol mines to inform miners of what was being tried there. The result was the activating of these informal committees again. This time every coal-producing mine and coal-hauling truck in northern West Virginia was halted, completely paralyzing coal production in that part of the state.

• The Revolt Is Continuous

Again in the face of the opposition of both the coal company and the International Union, the men remained solid, and forced Lewis and George Love, then president of Consol, to negotiate an agreement rescinding the policy which Consol had tried to initiate. These miners still are operating in this manner—it is the only weapon they have to protect themselves against both the company and the do-nothing policy of the union. But what is more important, the miners are seeing great possibilities in this type of informal organization which operates through mass meetings where the men speak their piece and act accordingly. There the rank-and-file control, and they know that it was only when they acted for themseves that the most has been accomplished.

These were big strikes, but the miners have resisted and fought on local issues continuously. In the 5 month period from January 1 to May 6, 1956, there were no less than 170 wildcats.

SINCE THE CONTINUOUS miner has been introduced, there have been, literally, thousands of wildcats over the conditions of labor. Since the continuous miner has been introduced, these miners have been asking, "What kind of work should man perform?" Since the continuous miner has been introduced, these miners have been answering their own question by doing their own thinking. Since the continuous miner has been introduced, they have drawn a line between themselves and Lewis, initiating their own activity, whether or not the union approves. That is why the wildcats spread. That is how the informal committees arose. They are answering their own questions by devising ways to unite thinking and doing.

V. WHICH WAY OUT?

I submitted this writing to Angela Terrano, a production worker in the electrical industry, who writes a column in News & Letters called "The Working Day." I asked her to comment on "Workers Battle Automation" and to draw any conclusions she wished to draw on the question of Automation. Here is what she replied:

• Why Do People Assume?

Why do people assume that Automation is the way people will want to work in a new society? Why do they assume that all that matters is that the workers will be in control? Will "being in control" of the machine lighten the work, or make it less boring?

TO ME THE ENGINEER who starts his thinking with 'Let's face it. Automation is here to stay,' blocks his thinking. Let the workers say what they think is good in Automation and which they want to keep. Once the factory, that "House of Terror," still dominates our lives, I cannot see that the question of who is in control changes things, really changes them from the ground up.

For example, what happens to the question of how people will work? Won't work be something completely different? If work will be something different—tied up with life itself—it cannot be the same as Automation that uses men as part of its operations. I don't care if the worker made the first screw and nut, and builds something from the ground up. I don't believe it becomes interesting or fascinating because the worker participated in it from the start.

Knowing the science that goes into that machine has to mean a lot more than just making operating it more bearable.

The machine replaces men. It does the same monotonous operation over and over. So how does it differ from the boring non-automated production line operation that many men did before Automation, and that a few, or one, does now under terrifying speed-up?

• The European, the Russian, the African

WORKERS BATTLE AUTOMATION is everyone's story. Workers in auto, steel, mine, rubber, and every industry throughout this nation will recognize themselves as I recognized myself.

It is a story that crosses all borders and extends over oceans and continents. Whether or not the European or Russian workers have yet faced Automation as the American has—or whether the African worker knows it only as a word—it seems to me they will all recognize that their fight for freedom must include a different kind of labor altogether if they are to escape the horrors we have already experienced. It poses the most basic question. All other problems are part and parcel of this one. **Automation, which is the highest technological development reached so far, has amputated a section of the working class, away from the whole.**

Between 1950 and 1955 the capitalists have reached the point of no return. With their introduction of Automation they have accelerated their own death. What Marx wrote a long time ago has never been more concrete. The barrier to capitalist production is capital itself. Capitalism produces its own gravediggers.

IN 1960 the working people, in their groping and seeking a way out, are so close to working out a new society, they have but to snuff out the light on the candle and the deathknell has sounded.

This pamphlet contains the misery that Automation has brought to the American working class. But it contains a lot more. Somewhere in it is the road the workers will take. As the workers read this pamphlet, they will feel and know twice as much as is in it, and yet see something they did not see before.

• They Are Organizing Their Thinking

It has been said that 'Revolution is evolution in the fulness of time.' It seems to me that evolution has now reached that point of change where men can thrust forward in a way that will leave the H-bomb, sputniks, and the like as part of the 'pre-history of man.' The youth of the world in the year 1960, with the Hungarian Revolution

and its Workers' Councils behind them, facing guns and demanding that their voices be heard are putting Marxist Humanism into practice.

A new man will emerge. A new society.

I feel like I can almost hold it in my hand or taste it—I believe it to be so close.

This pamphlet is part of this. I feel it in this more than in anything else. I think it will link up all that we have done—News & Letters, Marxism & Freedom, the pamphlet on the Afro-Asian revolutions—it will link up all we have done directly with the working-class in their thinking, their mind.

At the moment I think the form of organization of the workers is all in their thinking. They are organizing their thinking.

• The Worker's Mind vs. Labor Bureaucracy's Stranglehold

When the workers' actions exploded into the C.I.O., which no one expected, did they have, standing in their way, any equivalent to the labor bureaucracy of today? It seems to me that today, no matter what form of organization they try to build—the Unemployed Councils, the Negro American Labor Council, the Rank and File Caucus, etc.—the bureaucracy strangles it.

THERE IS ONE THING, however, they can't get hold of—it is the worker's mind. The workers are organizing their thinking. That is why I feel we are so close to them. The world has moved so fast this past year. I think they have reached the point where they can understand any philosophical concept and link it up directly with what they know.

* * *

Angela Terrano has here opened up all sorts of new roads out of the mess of capitalist production. But I do not agree in all respects with her. I disagree that control of production would hardly change labor so long as the factory remains. The factory would not be a "House of Terror" if the workers managed it.

• Workers' Control of Production

No doubt the new society will create other ways to produce. But the road to that new society can begin in no other way than by changing the conditions of labor, which means, in the first place, control of production.

Workers' control of production means workers themselves decide what they produce, how much they produce, the conditions under which they work. They decide all questions. Once the majority of workers decide what is best for all of them, then all work according to that decision. There are no "favorites," no company men. The labor fakers who are trying to say that control of production would mean that the lazy would get away with murder don't know the first thing about workers and the cooperative spirit between them, once they work, not for the capitalists, but for themselves. When we first organized the C.I.O. even the leaders spoke of the need of a change in society. Now they know nothing, not even how to control the inhuman speed of the line.

Control of the speed of the line is something that even a trade union leadership should be able to do. The early C.I.O. did it. We had some say on the job then. With World War II, when the C.I.O. leaders began to out-plan the capitalist planners, they changed completely.

• The Labor Leaders Get Brainwashed

It all began in 1947-49 when management raised a hue and cry about the "low labor productivity" of the older workers and the newly-returned war veterans. The Government called conferences on productivity. The trade union leaders attended those conferences as they had attended Government conferences during the war when they shackled us with the no-strike pledge.

IT SHOULD BE ADDED that the labor bureaucrats were not the only "patriots." The Communists outdid them in this type of patriotism, earning the hatred of the workers.

To me it seems that, just as out of the shotgun wedding of science and the Government against the **foreign** enemy, the A-bomb was born, so out of the union of science and industry against the working

people in this country, Automation was born. And just as the war transformed the labor leaders into labor bureaucrats, so Automation brainwashed them.

Along with the Government and the companies, the labor bureaucrats began identifying Automation with "progress," without once asking how Automation would be used. Big Business was very happy to see that both the Government and the union leaders had forgotten all about the "Full Employment Act" Congress enacted in 1946 when the workers made it clear that they had not fought a world war to return home to face another Depression. Automation moved from the drafting boards to application in the factories.

NO TORTURE CHAMBERS were needed to brainwash the labor bureaucrats. They are so busy putting blinders on to avoid seeing "local grievances" and concrete demands of workers that they become all too willing victims of abstractions about "progress" which help maintain the capitalist system.

Reuther talks about the need for re-training workers to meet "the challenge of Automation." I've been re-trained. I'm working on an Automation machine. What kind of re-training is that? I have never worked under such brutal conditions before. He certainly can't mean re-training to become the kind of technicians that do nothing but push buttons and get good pay doing it. There are very few of these jobs and less will be needed as we get fully automated.

We have just returned to work after a five week layoff. Practically every worker said he was bored at home and wanted to be back in the shop. Not just because they need the money and are behind in their bills but also because they wanted to be working.

AFTER SEVERAL DAYS BACK these same workers were saying, "I wish there was some way I could earn my living besides coming into this plant with this production, with the foreman yelling, with this factory discipline. It's miserable. You are not a human. You don't feel free to do anything, not even to think unless it is how to make more production."

It would be far better if Reuther, and other AFL-CIO leaders, and Hoffa too, got away from the high but empty summit type of talk and came in the plant—**to work.** Altogether too many years have gone by since they have had any taste of what any work is like, much less production work under Automation. If they really worked in the plant they couldn't possibly be brainwashed. Resistance comes naturally when you have to operate those monster

machines. But when you sit in your ivory tower at Solidarity House and walk out of it only to confer with management here or the Government in Washington, D.C., brainwashing comes naturally.

At election time—I mean union elections—Reuther comes out with big programs on what to do with the millions of workers thrown into unemployment by Automation, on "profit sharing," on the shorter workweek. But he drops these on the way to the bargaining table.

BY THE TIME he leaves the negotiation table and waves a contract at the workers, he has signed away the workers' rights to any say over conditions of labor. These just become "local grievances that can easily be settled locally." When the locals strike for these grievances, the International steps in once again—to order the workers back to work in accordance with the national contract. As local grievances pile up, each day, each week, each month, every year, they are filed away—"until contract time." At contract time, however, they become "local grievances." **The run-around the union leadership gives the men is no different from what they get from the company.**

• The Wildcat and Organization Building

As against the brainwashing the union bureaucracy got both at the war-time conferences with the Government, and at the post-war Automation conferences with Government and Industry, the workers came up with their wartime invention: **THE WILDCAT.** Just as there was no other way for workers to act during the war when the bureaucracy had us shackled to the no-strike pledge, so there is no other way for the workers to act as the bureaucracy keeps shackling us with union contracts that do the boss's production for him.

The wildcats have not yet created what the **SIT-DOWNS** did in the 1930's—a new organization like the early C.I.O. to meet the challenge of the times. But one thing is sure: they have unmistakably shown what workers are **against.** They are against the present union leadership.

IN 1955, a "first" happened in the history of the U.A.W.—the men wildcatted against the contract before it was brought up for approval. In 1956 John L. Lewis was complaining about the 170 wildcats that had taken place from January to May 1956 and warned the delegates at the UMW convention that if they dared to keep this up, they would find the


"I STAND ON OUR RECORD"
CLEAN SWEEP OF RANK & FILE
"ON THE WAY TO BEING FREE AT LAST"
UNEMPLOYMENT
SPEED-UP
FIRINGS
INTIMIDATION

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International "breathing down your necks."

IN 1957 the rank and file in Local 212 at Chrysler rebelled against the Reutherites there and, at least on a local scale, did succeed in throwing them out. I remember how the stories of the rank and file workers poured into **News & Letters.** I saw articles from our paper hung on the bulletin board in the plant with the notation: "This paper tells the truth." When this was torn down by management and the union officials, the workers then hung up the cartoon against Mazey (see above). As one worker wrote us then "It's the best cartoon I ever saw and it showed just exactly how things are in the plant and how we felt about beating the green slate." (**News & Letters,** April 2, 1957). Indeed many workers in the plant referred to **News & Letters** as their weapon in the class struggle. And so it was.

To me the many ways of doing things, from wildcatting to just talking and thinking things out, make up the essence of what is called theory and organization-building.

All sorts of organizations are beginning to emerge. Whether they have been organizd from the top, as the Negro American Labor Council was, or emerged from below but were taken over and squashed like the Unemployed Councils; whether it is white workers wildcatting, as at Great Lakes Steel in Ecorse, Michigan, or Negro student youth sitting down at segregated lunch counters in South U.S.A., we can see that ever greater numbers of people feel that the old organizations are doing nothing. Therefore they are creating new ones to do something.

In each case the something they do points also to a new philosophy, a way of looking at life, a way of living. Take the question of wildcats again. It was an action and an attitude. Automation is not an abstraction. It is a reality. Toward this fact of life, two opposed class attitudes stand out:

1) On the part of the management, the attitude is: the machine can almost run by itself, and the men are expendable.

2) On the part of the workers, the attitude is: this machine is a man-killer. Half of the men it throws out of work, and those it keeps at work it sweats so mercilessly that it would seem, that, far from running by electricity, it runs on the nervous system of the men themselves.

There is no room for any in-between in such cases. The Labor Bureaucracy just writes out its own death-warrant when it tries to stay between the company and the men, and comes up with a

union contract that is always doing the boss's production for him.

• Thirty Hours Work; Forty Hours Pay?

I am not a program writer. The old radicals were always writing programs, full of their slogans, not those raised by workers. One thing is sure, however, the workers do want a shorter workday. They have no illusions about any particular slogan. Many workers are for the "Thirty Hours Work; Forty Hours Pay." They feel that that would help some of the unemployed get back their jobs, as well as give them a little rest too.

There are other workers who think they will never get Forty Hours' Pay for Thirty Hours' Work, although that will still leave plenty of profits for capitalists under this system. They are ready to fight for any shortening of the workday or workweek.

The work year has already been shortened by Automation, but what do you do when you're off with bills to pay, food to buy, rent to pay, utilities, doctor bills? As one worker put it, "Every year since Automation I have worked fewer weeks in the year. So today I ask: How will next year start? How will it end? How are we going to survive, not just me, but everybody?"

• Six Months Work; Six Months Off?

A Negro worker said that if he could get annual pay, then he would prefer being off six months a year rather than working only thirty hours a week. Here is the way he put it:

"I haven't had a vacation since 1953 when my family and I took one. Well, that shouldn't be. Now if I could run the thing the way I would want to—don't get me wrong; I like to work; I wouldn't be satisfied if I could sit down and do nothing. I think I would go crazy if I came into a lot of money and didn't have to work.

"But I think a man should work six months a year, no more. If he works six months a year, there are a lot of things he could do, and you'd have some time to do it in, not just one or two days a week where you have to fit in everything you want to do outside work.

"He would take six months while the other crew works. He would be paid enough so he could live decently, take the family out to a movie, or have a nice dinner when they wanted to. They should have proper medical care.

"They would have time to think and do lots of things. The way it is now we're not living; we're just animals—existing!"

• Just Two Hours Less?

In whichever form it is put, the demand for working less and getting paid to live decently is so strong in all the workers that even the labor bureaucracy had to begin paying attention to it. Reuther promised that the 1958 negotiations would begin with a demand for a shorter workweek. But at the convention, Reuther, that master of substitution, completely turned his back on the shorter workweek and ram-rodded through a resolution calling for "profit-sharing," which none of the workers believed in. It isn't that Reuther believed in it, but it was one way not to do what workers wanted him to do and at the same time make a show of doing something.

DAVID McDONALD did list a demand, a rather petty one for some two-hour shortening of the workweek, but he, too, scuttled it.

The only reason there was no general wildcat against the 1959 contract David McDonald signed was because management had been out to break the steel union altogether and the men therefore lined up solidly behind their union. Even so we had a flurry of local wildcats.

• The Unemployed, the Retired Worker and the Shorter Workday

The one burning issue outside the plant that affects us as well is unemployment. Several times during the three postwar recessions, the unemployed workers began to organize. They asked the union leadership to meet in the union hall. At first they were refused. A worker is of no use to these labor bureaucrats if he does not pay dues. An unemployed worker cannot pay dues, so he is just not counted. He doesn't even get notices of union meetings, even though the contract affects him as well.

THE UNEMPLOYED therefore began to organize outside of union halls. They no sooner began to have mass attendance than the labor bureaucracy moved in to stifle their voice. They began to let them use the union halls, and even organized a national conference. Only instead of listening to what the unemployed, or, for that matter, the rank and file employed workers had to say, they began talking at them and getting all sorts of Senators to talk to them. No wonder the unemployment conference in Washington, D.C. on April 8, 1959 was a stillbirth.

But the fact was that the unemployed at the conference wore those 30/40 buttons as prominently as the workers. So for that matter did the retired workers. Now that election time has come around they are hearing as many promises as the unemployed did last year and will again this year. Promises are easy to make, but to do anything requires mass action.

I repeat: no matter what specific slogan is used, no matter whether you are in the plant, or out of it, the burning issues are: (1) Shortening of the Working Day with no reduction in pay, (2) Workers' Control of Production, and (3) Health and Retirement Benefits as well as Guaranteed Annual Wage.

• War, Civil Rights, and the Negro

Angela Terrano is right when she says that before the C.I.O. the workers had no such roadblocks in their way as they have now from their own leadership. I agree with her one hundred percent when she says that the workers are organizing their thinking. There are also all sorts of groups springing up—not like the old caucuses in the unions, fighting for positions—but discussion groups of all sorts. Negroes are in the forefront here, but there are also white and mixed groups.

WHEN WE RETURNED to work last week after yet another layoff, one white worker said: "Being laid off isn't my idea of leisure, but it gives you time to think. You've got to think right now, your very life depends on it." Another worker said: "Three years in a row Automation has reduced the number of weeks we worked. It sure gives you time to think. The other day I read where a scientist in California said that it didn't really matter who threw the first H-bomb. Once it's released, we would be only 'one-half hour away from total annihilation'."

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A Negro then began talking about the last war: "You don't think I would have gone to war if I had a choice. I didn't want to give my life. I almost dropped dead when they swore me in. I almost said, 'No.'

"I couldn't say I had a recognition in this country. I'm not classed as a first-class citizen. Other people come here and they get first-class citizenship. We're born here, my mother and her mother before her and she could list four generations before that. Still we're not first-class citizens.

"I didn't class myself as an American. I was just thinking myself as a man. They're integrated since then but we were strictly segregated. Even if you went to the front line you were separated. You might fight next to whites and sleep in the mud with them, but when you got back, you were segregated.

"I wouldn't want to live anywhere else. I know the way here. But I want conditions to be improved one hundred percent. It makes you think what the college kids are doing down South."

• The Youth, Employed and Unemployed – Rebels All

When a young worker overheard us talking about wanting to work only 6 months and have 6 months off, he said:

"I've never worked a full year. There have always been interruptions of strikes and lay-offs or both. I mention these things because I believe they are the common experience of young workers.

"In the last two years, I've averaged 6 months work each year. Now, like a lot of other guys, I've got no job and I've run out of checks and I wonder what's going to happen next.

"It appears that employers are always looking for young men with old men's experience. That's the way the want ads read. This is clearly a challenge to a lot of guys. One acquaintance averages roughly a day's pay a week from jobs he talked his way into and couldn't perform. This is a tough way to try and make a living."

• If He Whistles and Points

Once, when it was slow in my department, I was told to take over a hand-truck and help move stuff around. Most of the hand-truckers are young. The guy I talked to, in order to find out about the job and the foreman, was about 17.

He told me to keep as far away from the foreman as possible since the foreman has to tell you what he wants moved. If he does not see you he'll get someone else.

He told me to make sure the foreman tells me what to move. "None of that whistling and pointing at a skid," he said. "I told him yesterday that I was no dog. If he whistles and points, just don't pay him any mind."

We talked a little more and then the foreman pointed to him and beckoned. The kid started cursing under his breath and turned his back to the foreman, who smiled and called him by name. He moved off slowly, cursing all the way.

• The Army?

A high school youth was complaining that whenever there is any run-in with juvenile authorities youths are given a choice of being sent up to a home for "delinquents" or—to join the army. "What kind of a choice is that? They are asking us to give up our ideals. Some kids, especially seniors who have no jobs waiting for them, do choose the army. But I ask again: what kind of a choice is that?"

• The Beat Generation

The youth of this generation, whether employed, unemployed or too young to work are rebels. One young lady of 16 by the name of Caroline Goldsmith wrote News & Letters:

* * *

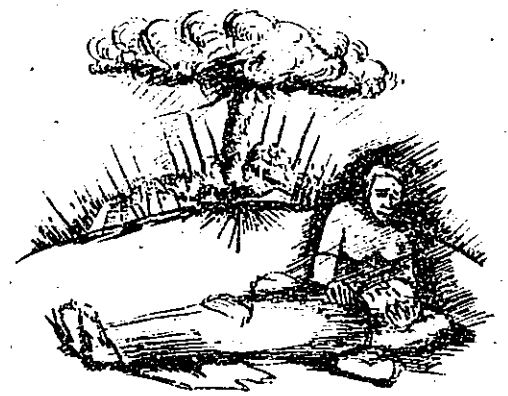
They call us the beat generation. They say that we, the youth of America, have no morals, no ethics, we are wild, and we are rebels without a cause. They publicize this in magazine articles, pictures, newspapers, television, etc.

Everyone has a different reason and solution for this, from cars and Elvis Presley, to a lack of religion and poor homes. They can't understand why we won't listen to them. They are supposed to be more experienced and wiser, and therefore are to have the right to tell us how to conduct our lives.

• Rebels With a Cause

It is true that most of us are rebels in one way or another, but we have a cause, although, we ourselves sometimes fail to put our finger on it. We are looking for a better way of life. Our morals and ethics? We have them, but they are not those

Lest We Forget



—Hiroshima, August 6, 1945

of our parents, they are our own. We choose our own because we look at the existing society and we do not like it, therefore, we can see no reason to follow the morals and ethics it is based on.

It might seem that we have nothing to rebel against. It might seem, at first glance, that we have a good way of life merely because we have material things such as TV sets, cars, and automated machinery, that our parents never had. This is not what we want! We want freedom—total freedom—freedom from H-bombs and missiles, freedom from war, freedom from being a little less than human because you are a teenager, freedom of thought and expression in our schools and at home, and freedom from labor that is more alien than any foreigner, for even teenagers are victims of that kind of labor.

Adults do have a lot to offer us in their years of experience, but we have something just as important to offer, and that is our youth itself. We have our fresh and uncluttered minds to offer, but they are not accepted.

MY VISION IS ONE OF a new free society in which among other things, I will not have to wait until I am 21 to be admitted into the human race.

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• The Time For Change Is Now

One young teacher from Massachusetts had written in to News & Letters in criticism of the articles against Automation. She asked: "In a social system organized by and for the human beings who live under it, would not Automation be the blessing that cuts each man's share of uncreative labor to a minimum, thus vastly increasing his leisure time, his opportunity for realizing himself to the fullest as a human being?"

The point, however, is: we are not talking about what Automation could do if we lived under a different system, but what Automation is right here and now.

The teacher admitted: "There is no question in my mind but what a society which condemns the majority of its people to a life of senseless work and empty leisure is a sick one and should be radically reorganized in the interests of, not only the majority, but all the human beings who comprise it. The 'privileged' are no less sick than the other members of such a society; the enslavers become mutilated, as human beings, by the mutilation they impose on the enslaved."

When there is a crisis in production—and with Automation, there is always a crisis in production—there is a crisis in the whole of society. Yes, it is true that not only the workers, but all are affected. However, far more mutilated than the privileged are the unprivileged. The plight of none is worse than the more than 5 million unemployed who, with their families, number some 13 million. They are the true forgotten men and women and children of these phony "soaring '60's."

The whole country's growth seems to have stopped still. Everyone, Kennedy and Nixon, Lodge and Johnson, Rockefeller and Reuther, Meany and the New Leader are talking about "the rate of growth" and the need to grow as rapidly as Russia. But I'm sure the Russian workers don't find life any easier than we find it here. Quite the contrary. **On both sides of the Iron Curtain it is time for a change, a total change.**

The workers organizing their own thinking is a good way to begin the solution of the crisis, and not only in the United States, but the world over. Only those who are totally blind to this great movement from below, to the actual practice of the workers' battle against Automation—Automation, not as it "ought" to be, but as it is, in fact—only those totally blind, I repeat, can believe there is an unbridgeable gulf between thinking and doing. Just as **News & Letters** could become a weapon in the workers' struggle against the labor bureaucracy, on a local scale, so the **News & Letters** Committee can become a polarizing force for the spontaneously built mass organizations that are sure to spring up out of this battle against Automation.

Thinking and doing are not really as far apart as appears to those who are out "to lead." The workers need no leaders to tell them what Automation is. They know what it is, and because they know what it is, they want to change it. The time to change is now.

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