

# RED GEAR and AXLE



Vol 1:1  
July, '77

The workers of Eldon Gear & Axle Plant have a glorious and militant history. Of course, workers history is not something you study in school, so we've decided to put together our memories and the memories of other workers to present this--a series of leaflets about Eldon's history.

Eldon has a vital role in Chrysler's manufacturing process, since it is almost the sole supply of gears and axles for the entire company. It was the key role of Eldon that gave the historic wildcat strike of 1969 even greater significance.

### What led to the strike?

During the 60's, the workforce at Eldon substantially changed with the hiring of a large number of black workers. Chrysler became even more repressive and in 1966 instituted new, blatantly chauvinist policies like segregated eating facilities for supervisory and production workers.

### Workers organize

At the same time, black workers were organizing to combat the oppression and unequal treatment they faced. All over the city, RUM groups (Revolutionary Union Movement) were formed, and the Eldon Avenue group (ELRUM) was among Detroit's finest.

### WILDCAT!

In 1969, a wildcat strike jumped off. The strike was led by the ELRUM group and the demands were: more black union representation, more black foremen and upgrading on jobs.

At first the company tried to break the strike. Chrysler called on its lackeys in the courts and an injunction was granted which prohibited General Baker from even approaching the plant gates. General Baker was one of the foremost leaders of RUM. They even cut a hole in the fence down from the Jordan gate so the workers wouldn't have to cross the picket line if they wanted to go in!

### Effects of the strike

The wildcat had a tremendous influence, especially since it was the first strike called in protest of discrimination. The fight forced the company and the union to respond by hiring more black foremen and allowing blacks into the union bureaucracy. The losses were severe, though. 92 workers were fired, and although all but two were eventually reinstated, they all lost at least six months wages.

The strike did have a valuable educational role, too. The workers at Eldon and all over the city learned a great deal about the company, the union, the courts, and about each other. They learned that it is only through the workers' unity that progressive change occurs, and not company promises.

### The Communist Labor Party is formed

Another effect was that the 1969 wildcat was one of a series of events which changed the revolutionary movement in Detroit and led to the formation of a revolutionary Party--the Communist Labor Party. Many of the RUM organizers are now members of the CLP, including General Baker. The Communist Labor Party is tied in every way to the struggles of the workers at Eldon and all over the city.

That is why we come to Eldon every other Tuesday to pass out leaflets and sell The People's Tribune. The People's Tribune is alive with stories of the struggles of working people in Detroit and all over the world. It explains the capitalist system we live under and educates us in the struggle for a better life for socialism.

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The pages of the Red Gear and Axle are open to all workers at Eldon Gear & Axle. We want your help in writing about your proud history or present struggles around health and safety conditions in your area, management harassment or any other ideas you want to put out.. You do not have to agree with us to write. We will print letters that express and honest opinion no matter how much they disagree with the position of the Red Gear & Axle. Write to Red Gear and Axle/ 16525 Hamilton, Highland Park, Michigan.

## Unity '69 - Unity '77

In 1969, working class unity was expressed by the Eldon strikers and their supporters. In 1977, unity of the working class takes on a national character as all eyes are focused on the Texas Farmworkers Union and their struggle to repeal Section 14-b of the Taft-Hartley Act. Section 14-b is the law which allows states to pass "Right-to-Work" laws which deny workers the benefits of union representation and forces them to work for low wages in terrible conditions.

As the number of "Right-to-Work" states has swelled to 20, literally thousands of Northern workers have lost their jobs as their shops "ran away" to the South and Southwest.

What about Eldon?

Eldon workers are in a particularly precarious position. A key shop with a history of militancy--Chrysler officials would love to have a plant somewhere with Southern workers grinding out gears and axles for minimum wage with plenty of involuntary overtime in case of a strike at Eldon. Or, they could do away with Eldon all together.

The Texas Farmworkers Union

The Texas Farmworkers Union is marching from Texas through the South, up to Washington D.C. this summer on a "March for Human Rights." The march is to publicize their cause and rally support. They are demanding an Agricultural Labor Relations Board to be set up to deal with disputes between farmworkers unions and growers in much the same way as the NLRB acts for industrial workers.

They are also demanding, as previously stated, repeal of Section 14-b, to aid them in unionizing farmworkers, to save Northern jobs, and to guarantee decent wages and working conditions for Southern workers.

What we can do

The TFW needs our support. Stop and sign the petition which tells President Carter (who was sent to the White House by organized labor) to get on the ball with labor legislation, especially the repeal of 14-b. Or take a petition yourself and get it filled out.

They need money and medical supplies to continue the march, and resolutions of support of union locals, churches, block clubs, etc.

In 1977, unity of the working class means support for the Texas Farmworkers Union in their fight against "Right-to-Work."

Send donations, resolutions of support, etc. to:

TFW Support Committee  
Detroit Equal Rights Council  
8576 Mark Twain  
Detroit MI

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