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the rank and file in action

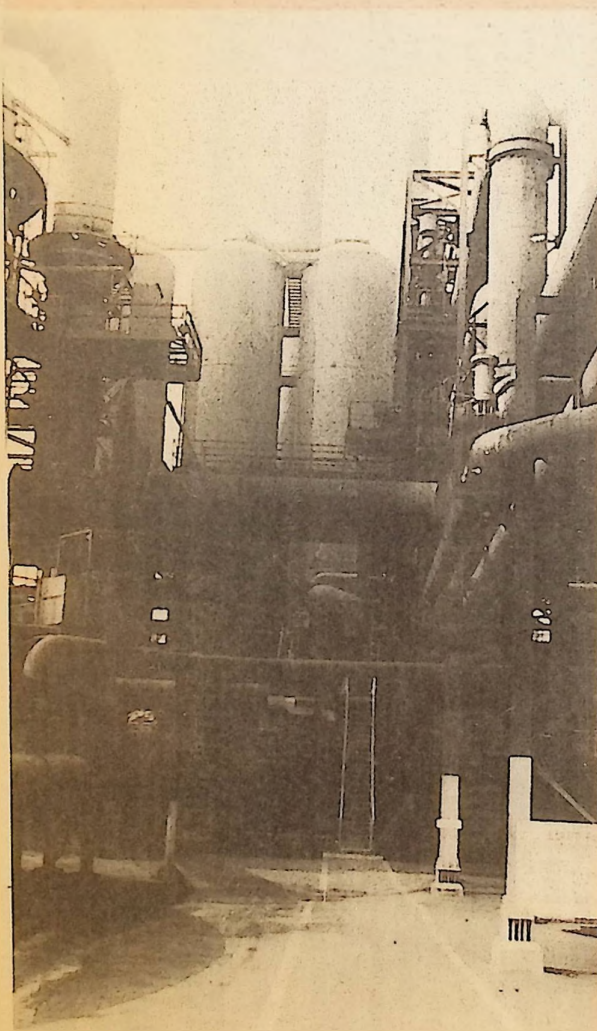
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# Labor today

VOLUME 26, NUMBER 3

FALL 1987



**6 . . . in this country, Corporate America has the unchallenged right to close down a plant or a store; to abandon its workers; to abandon the community; and to seek out some low wage sanctuary either in the United States or across the ocean.**

**How do we stop the trans-nationals from closing an operation, at will, and leaving?**

**We need national legislation that penalizes the trans-nationals. We need national legislation that makes it so expensive it's not worth their while to close and run. 9**

**Lewie Anderson  
International Vice President  
UFCW**

**see page 1**



# America Belongs to the People —Not the Profiteers

# Labor Today

By Lewie Anderson  
International Vice President  
United Food and Commercial Workers

Such forms as this Assembly are crucial to the labor movement and the challenges we're faced with today.

We must build coalitions because it makes the labor movement stronger. It makes us more able to deal with our problems.

This type of Assembly provides us with an analysis and an overview of the worker's dilemma. And the only way we can move forward is if we analyse and recognize who the enemy really is and what must be done.

In the meatpacking industry, we've probably had more plant closings than in most other industries. From 1969 to the present, 1200 meatpacking plants have been closed. We have lost 1/3 of our membership—over 50,000 workers—through plant closings.

We also conducted more strikes in meatpacking than any other industry. And, surely, with a lot of mixed results.

The membership was militant. They fought. But the plants still closed.

There was something wrong. It was not wrong to strike. It was not wrong to fight. But we were struggling against the symptom and not the disease.

For packinghouse workers, for every other American worker, we don't have any protection against the flight of capital. Against the company telling you on a Friday that your plant or your store is closed on Monday. Why?

Because in this country, Corporate America has the unchallenged right to close down a plant or a store; to abandon its workers; to abandon the community; and to seek out some low wage sanctuary either in the United States or across the ocean.

We can't deal with this kind of problem on just a plant by plant, a local union by local union, or an international union by international union basis. We can't deal with it strictly at the bargaining table. We have to get to the root of the problem, and that is, "How



do you stop the transnationals from closing an operation, at will, and leaving?"

Today, American workers fear for their economic survival. And damn it, they fear for their survival for good reason! From 1979 to 1983, 11.5 million workers lost their jobs due to plant closings or a layoff from which they'll never be recalled.

Since 1973, the American worker's standard of living has been reduced by an astonishing 14.3%.

It's not just a question of a certain sector, or one industry, or one group of workers, or one community that is suffering with these job losses. It is clear across this country.

The transnationals have not only attacked our standard of living, but have stripped us of any protection under the federal government. The business community has demanded and received pro-business, anti-union governmental policies; anti-union, government-appointed regulators; and reactionary judicial decisions that have gutted worker's rights from the Wagner Act of 1935 clear on up through OSHA.

Corporate America has demanded and received rigid controls on labor. Yet, they say, "We want government off our back. We want

to operate anyway we want because we have to maximize our profits. Rein in labor and let us monopolize industries. Let us close down plants in one location and take off to another location where we can pay slave wages. And don't say anything about it."

And, by God, the Reagan Administration has pretty well done that!

But, what we need is national legislation that penalizes the transnationals who seek out low wage sanctuaries abroad or at home. We need national legislation that makes it so expensive it's not worth their while to close and run.

We need a meaningful national industrialization program. This country just can't walk away from its smokestack industries. It would be disastrous.

We need to have national legislation when it comes to notice of closings, transfer rights, severance pay and job retraining programs.

And we need a counterbalancing international power. We've got a global situation.

We have to reject the idea that we have to be "competitive", especially as interpreted by the transnationals. Because, quite frankly, we'll all be starving under their definition of competitive.

What the transnationals are really doing is exploiting this country and every other country's most valuable national resource—its workers. Left unchecked, they will literally drain the lifeblood out of a country.

What we do about these problems is of great magnitude. You've taken the first step because you've come together. And at some point you're going to develop an agenda. That agenda is not just going to be for this group here, but an agenda that's going clear across this country.

Thousands of workers are saying, "We're sick and tired of our life getting worse while the corporate fat cats suck up millions at our expense. We're not gonna take it anymore."

The most important thing that we have to recognize, believe in and fight for is that America belongs to the American people, not to the profiteers!

Their day has gone, our day has come!

Brother Lewie Anderson started working at the age of 14 in the Iowa stockyards. His first job was shoveling manure from the hog pens. A few years later, he went to work at an IBP plant in Dakota City. This time his job was on the killing floor. Wages and working conditions were terrible, and Brother Anderson was one of the key organizers during many bitter and prolonged strikes.

Up through the ranks, Anderson became a fulltime local representative for UFCW in 1970, and in 1976, a full-time international representative. Since becoming Director of the Packinghouse Division in 1980, Brother Anderson has faced the Corporate fury of Hormel, Morrel, and Iowa Beef Processing, all determined to bust the union.

But, Lewie Anderson, an experienced worker in the meatpacking industry, has remained confident in the militancy and unity of the packinghouse rank and file and the International Union. Determinedly, he continues to fight the Corporate Profiteers, saying, "Their day is over. Our day has come."

Brother Anderson's mother and sister still work on the killing floor.

## Calm Before the Storm

By Leroy Hodge  
United Electrical Workers (UE)

The National Assembly held in Detroit on Oct. 17-18 should certainly lead to a broad-based beginning for effectively challenging the transnational corporations and the acquiescence of government policy towards these monstrous monopolies.

At the height of the Assembly, there were over 350 people in attendance, representing over 25 international unions and residents of at least 18 different states. Unemployed and retirees were also represented.

Many of the people who attended the Assembly were elected and middle-level leaders of the trade union movement; for example, Perry Johnson, a Regional Director of the UAW; a representative of the Director of USWA District 29; and 50-plus members and officers of UAW Local 22, including their President, M.L. Douglas.

The main speaker, Lewie Anderson, International Vice-President of the United Food and Commercial Workers, Packing-

house Division addressed the serious and determined audience. The mood represented a calm before the storm.

The general theme throughout his talk was that we cannot as workers be effective in dealing with plant closing issues unless it is approached as a national problem. He pointed to the many examples of shutdowns and the devastation they reap on communities; the continuing lowering of our standard of living; the transnational's scheme of pitting workers in one country against those in another. He concluded that at the present time, we have no protection against the "flight of capital" and this is at the root of the plant closing epidemic.

At the afternoon session, the participating audience was divided into four lively workshops: "Today's Fight Against Plant Closings", "Jobs and Economic Vitality", "Political and Legislative Action", and "International Solidarity."

The Sunday Plenary Session, chaired by Frank Rosen, UE Director of District 11,

heard panel/workshop reports including resolutions made by each workshop. These resolutions were then voted on by the whole Assembly.

The main resolution called on the AFL-CIO to organize a March on Washington for the Spring of 1988 to focus national attention on stopping plant closings and the fight for jobs.

All agreed that a march on Washington would only be a first step toward dealing with the serious problem of plant closings and loss of jobs.

There were expressions of international and interunion solidarity. Ed Scribner, Teamster Director of Detroit DRIVE received the Assembly's support in the Teamsters' fight against the government's takeover attempt.

Sensing the decline of Reaganism, victorious over the impending defeat of the Bork nomination, and witnessing the "fearful" gyrations of the stock market, the Assembly definitely had a sense of unity and purpose.

# Labor Today

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STAFF  
EDITOR: Debbie Albano  
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS: John Kallin, Jim Williams, Norm Roth  
ART DIRECTOR: Peggy Lipschutz  
ASSISTANT ART DIRECTOR: Diana Stokes  
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## FROM THE PANELS

### Jobs and the Economy

#### Wally Kaufman

*President, Painters Local 867, Cleveland:*

The Cleveland Administration issued a document called "The Cleveland City Vision: The year 2000." The facts are startling.

They predict the loss of over 75,000 jobs in Cuyahoga County alone.

The conclusion they draw is that by the year 2000 there will be no manufacturing jobs left in the entire city of Cleveland and its suburbs!

This study caused a lot of us trade unionists to get very excited! It got us involved in this Assembly and sparked local efforts to have a special regional meeting.

We can't accept this report. There have to be alternatives to this monstrosity they're projecting.

#### Greg Tarpinian

*Director, Labor Research Association, New York:*

Plant shutdowns are a symptom of a disease and the disease is our economic system—the way a capitalist system controlled by the large corporations works (or doesn't work.)

Plant shutdowns become a problem under conditions of unbridled capitalism—when corporations have total control over investment and disinvestment decisions. Under present circumstances in our country, there is no social control of American corporations. They have complete freedom.

There's a contradiction—a clash—going on in our country. It's a contradiction between what's good for the profit levels of the large corporations and what is good for the general welfare.

Today, the decision by a corporation to maximize profits comes at the absolute expense of workers, both in lost jobs and wage cuts.

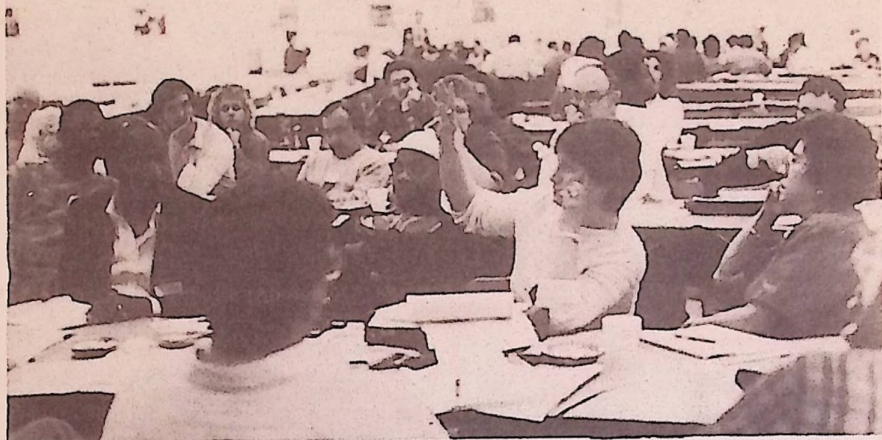
Any contract agreement or any strategy that is not directed at corporate profits or at limiting the corporation's ability to do as they please with those profits is a losing strategy. The money is there. It's a question of where it gets distributed.

We need a political fight whose objective is to protect workers. Protection that includes the right to a job and the right of the American people to an increasing standard of living, not a decreasing one. Our government policy has got to be directed not toward the freedom of the corporations but toward expanding the quality of life in the United States. That means full employment, rising incomes and rising purchasing power.

#### Joe Fahey

*Teamster, Watsonville, California:*

People are scared to death about losing their jobs. I'm for a March on Washington for jobs. I'm for action. But I think there needs to be more education with workers about the cause of the job loss. We can't have a fight without challenging the corporations.



#### Lance Cohn

*AFT Local 1, Chicago:*

We've had 9 strikes in 18 years in Chicago, our last one just over. At the same time, we've had a rash of plant closings. We all know that the tax base is lowered, property values go down, everybody is hurt when a plant closes.

#### UE Worker

*Minnesota:*

I'd like to endorse this idea of working to change our trade policy with socialist countries. I mean, our government had no trouble at all selling arms to Iran! (applause and laughter).

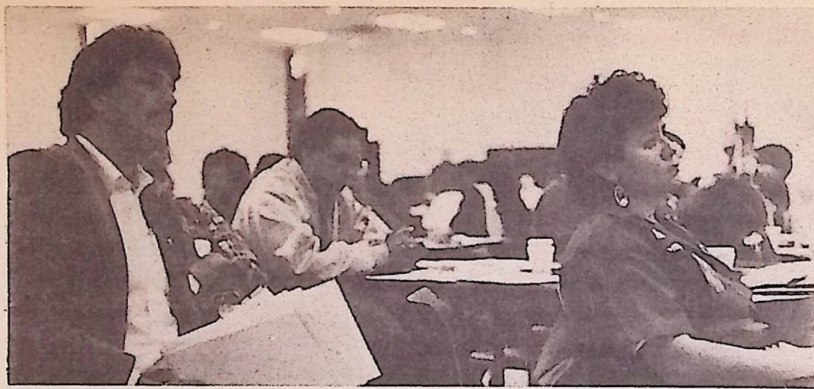
#### Judy Akins

*UE 209, Massachusetts:*

We need to make a break through in public ownership. In District 2, New England, 30% of our shops underwent an ownership change. Most of the new owners are now more in debt than the previous ones.

Why are the football players in danger of losing their union? The greed of private ownership. What if the cities and states "owned" their own teams and industries?

### Legislative & Political Action



#### Tony Larkin

*Unemployed Steelworker, Youngstown:*

The transnational corporations have no border lines. Wherever they go, they take on the characteristics of that country. The only thing they're concerned about is capital.

Unless we say capitalism is no good and it has to go, we've got nothing.

#### Auggie Waldron

*USWA Local 1104, Lorain*

In Lorain County, the labor movement is trying to do some things within the Democratic Party. But there's a basic problem. The Democratic Party is not run by organized labor. There are damn too few plain working people who determine the policies of government. We're putting on quite an effort to be sure that regular, honest, rank and file trade unionists, good hard-working people, are taking the time and effort to get involved in politics.

#### Paul Koczaha

*USWA Local 6787, Burns Harbor, Indiana*

I want to challenge something the bosses have

been pushing forever. And that is blaming "foreigners." Whether it's the "fault of" or because of "competition" from the men or women in the other department, down the street in another shop, in the next state, across the country or across the border in Mexico or Canada. They want everybody always blaming the other person for our problems. The people to blame are the ones telling us to blame somebody else. The people to blame are those people who own the plants.

#### Pete Goodman

*AFSCME, Los Angeles:*

Labor has got to play a significant role in the 1988 elections. Reaganism has got to be buried and its heritage removed. The content of the campaign is more important to us than the label is. (Just electing a Democrat doesn't mean you're going to get your needs tended to.)

On the AFL-CIO video tape of the Presidential candidates, they have answers to balancing the budget, all kinds of other "important" issues are spoken of at great length. But, plant closures and the shifting of American capital out of this country is never mentioned! It's up

## Welcome

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY to  
**STOP**  
PLANT CLOSINGS  
and FIGHT for JOBS



#### Erma Henderson

*President Pro Tem, Detroit City Council*

We have tried very hard to address ourself to this question—"How come they can close the plants whenever they see fit and the rest of the people can starve and flop?"—from the governmental level as vigilantly as possible.

We do gain strength as we go along. We gain momentum. We gain a feeling of unity. I keep on fighting, there is strength wherever we are.

This is a very auspicious beginning of a national movement that should set this country on fire! We're with you!

#### Cap Wheeler

*Financial Secretary, UAW Local 599, Flint Michigan*

I have a deep feeling for the cause that we have come together to address at this Assembly. Our people are scared to death not knowing whether they're going to have a job from one week to the next because of plant closings.

Here in America, we're saddled with a government that has seemingly forgotten the people and only knows Big Business. We take people to put a President in and elect Senators and Congressmen. And we've got a job to do—to make sure the people we elect from now on have the interests of the working people at heart.

to us to mention it. So, we have to dog every candidate from one end of this country to the other until they come up with answers to plant closures.

Legislation on a federal level that takes control of the corporations is absolutely necessary. It will allow capital to do an end run around labor. They will take our lifeblood to all the corners of the earth. And that's got to be said to every candidate and he/she must be asked what they intend to do.

#### Student

*Young campus worker, Detroit:*

Here in Detroit, the youth unemployment rate is between 60 and 80%. Full employment is the most powerful tool we have to fight the transnational corporations. Yet, under the Reagan Administration, the top priority has been the militarization of the economy.



# nt Closings and Fight for Jobs

## to Detroit!



**Tom Turner**  
President, Detroit Metro AFL-CIO

In saying good evening tonight, you might ask, 'What's good about it?'

Whether we're talking about commerce, trade unions, defense spending, privatization, outsourcing, schools, foreign policy, civil rights, womens' rights, voters' rights, crime, drug abuse, alcoholism, divorce, poverty, social justice, jobs, affirmative action, budget deficit, deregulation, family farms, minimum wage, international competition, foreign trade, foreign debt, health care, plant closings, unemployment or the national debt, the news has been the same since January, 1981—terribly bad.

Today, our country is being held hostage by these problems. Not since the Great Depression of the 1930's have we seen corporations shut their doors at such a rate.

Few decisions in our complex society have such far-reaching effects as decisions to close or move a plant. Yet these decisions are made behind closed board room doors, beyond public scrutiny. They are based solely upon corporate economic self interest.

Congress and the Administration refuse to act. We have to organize to cause the debate on unemployment and shutdowns to happen in this country.

**Bernie Leibowicz**  
Treasurer, IBEW Local 58

This local union is out of the Building Trades. But plant closings affect our people as much as anybody else in this country. And even if they didn't, we've got to open our eyes to what's happening.

And what's happening is the erosion of our standard of living.

I got a phone call last night. The person on the phone told me, "The stock market fell 100 points." I'll be honest with you. I don't care about the 100 points. What I care about is when somebody else calls me up and says, "A hundred people have been laid off."

# THE RESOLUTIONS

## Program Summary

Resolutions passed unanimously

1. Call for public ownership and/or nationalization of private industries as alternatives to moving of plants overseas. Work for establishment of public authorities and encourage usage of eminent domain powers for public takeover of plants and facilities where feasible.
2. Eliminate tax breaks for corporations that close plants and/or relocate without concern to communities. These corporations should be heavily penalized for shutdown actions, including the enforcement of such measures as:
  - a. End the corporate tax write-offs for shutdowns.
  - b. Change corporate foreign tax credits and free tariff laws which provide incentives to U.S. corporations for offshore investments.
  - c. Demand repayment to the communities by corporations of all public expenditures, tax abatements, free services provided to locate and operate in that community.
  - d. Compensate employees for years of service; guarantee federal protection for laid-off workers including jobs at fair wages and retraining.
3. Support the Jobs With Justice Campaign including the three campaign slogans: 1. Jobs 2. Decent income 3. Right to organize.
4. Endorse and support Hayes Quality of Life Bill HR 1398 and Economic Bill of Rights Bill HR 2878.
5. Work to reverse increases in military expenditures; support investment in industrial conversion to domestic civilian projects.
6. Support trade unionists becoming fully involved in the political process, from voter registration to running for political office. Promote an agenda that would be in the interest of all labor.
7. Support a campaign for federal legislation that would create a Federal Plant Closing Disaster Act including measures as:
  - a. The federal government, as an employer, mitigate the effects of plant closings of government or private facilities with full income replacement, continued health and welfare benefits, retraining and educational benefits for a period of six years after a plant closure.
  - b. Funding for such a program be provided from a corporate tax on overseas profits.
8. Work for greater cooperation between the U.S. labor movement and all other international labor bodies.
9. Continue the campaign against the system of apartheid and all other dictatorships where labor unions are banned or repressed, including continued support for the AFL-CIO boycott of Shell Oil.
10. Adopt and enforce the International Labor Organization standards regarding foreign imports.
11. Modify Jackson-Vanik restrictions on trade with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.
12. Support and participate in campaign for national health care.

## Labor Unity

**Cap Wheeler**  
1st Session Chairman

"Not too long ago, we were really upset with all the Japanese imports 'causing so much trouble' in this country. Today we received this resolution from our Japanese brothers and sisters who are facing the same problems we are.

If you're a trade unionist, you're a trade unionist, whether from the United States or Japan. Sooner or later you'll find we all have the same problems. Why? Because the transnationals have no respect for country."

## Greetings from Japanese Trade Unionists

More than one hundred trade union leaders from Japan and other Pacific Rim Countries and Europe are meeting in Tokyo, Japan on October 15 and 16, 1987 in an international trade union symposium. We will discuss the new means employed today in the monopoly capitalist offensive—such as deindustrialization, deregulation and privatization.

Your struggle against plant closings, for jobs, economic vitality, for political action in support of working people and for international solidarity and trade union unity is also our struggle. Many of those attacking your conditions, are attacking ours as well and many times in the same ways.

## March on Washington

**Dick Cummings**  
Directing Business Agent, IAM Lodge 60, Detroit:

We have got to get the attention of the people in office, and who are going to come to office, that the labor movement is alive and well and we're tired and we're fed up!

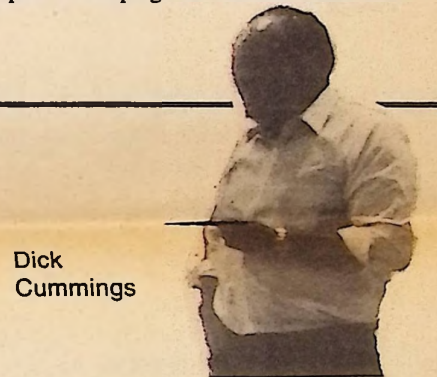
The most important thing is jobs and our way of life. Anybody who's out of work and their unemployment comp has run out knows that.

We know how many millions of dollars we pour into the system to get somebody elected. TV time is \$60,000/second. We can't beat them corporations with the money, and we know that. But if we can put a million people out in the street in Washington, DC and these state capitols, they're gonna know where the voters are. That's the important message.

**Scott Dewberry**  
Staff, USWA District 29, Detroit

We've been pushed and now it's time to push back. We've got to push back even if it takes going to Washington and camping out on the steps of the White House. This has to be done now and in a unified manner.

I'll tell you honestly, we've got more people not working than working. We need all our unemployed brothers and sisters to be with us. We've got to keep them involved in action. We've got to change the consciousness of America about plant closings and unemployment.



**Dick Cummings**

## Labor March Resolution

**WHEREAS:** The Reagan Administration, while on its last legs and losing credibility daily, continues its assault on the labor movement with its outright unionbusting attacks, including cooperation with the transnational corporations to close down plants in the U.S. and move both capital and jobs abroad;

**AND WHEREAS:** The resistance of unions to these attacks has grown dramatically in recent years, especially since the emergence of the Jobs With Justice Campaign of the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO, which has given a great boost to labor's fightback;

**AND WHEREAS:** The record of struggles against plant closings, lockouts, takeaways and massive layoffs has clearly demonstrated that local unions or individual national unions on their own cannot effectively combat the giant transnational corporations;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:** That this National Assembly to Stop Plant Closings and Fight for Jobs calls upon the AFL-CIO to initiate plan and organize a giant demonstration and rally to be held in Washington, DC and San Francisco, CA in the spring of 1988 and in every State Capitol. Such a demonstration would manifest the strength and determination of the U.S. labor movement for a change in direction by the next President and Congress to address the real needs of America's working people—to pass laws and develop programs to stop the export of our jobs and develop our economy to benefit the needs of our nation's workers.





# Hey Stockholders!

New lyrics by Pete Leki  
IAM Lodge 48, Chicago

(Sung to the tune of Bo Diddley's "Hey, Mona")



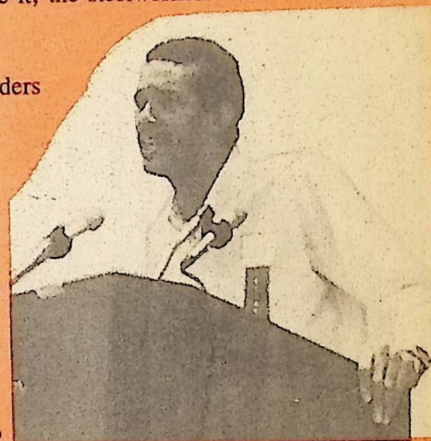
Pete Leki

Tell you, owners, what we're gonna do  
Gonna take that mill away from you  
You can come visit sometime  
When you're ready to work for the better of mankind

Say, hey, owners  
Say, hey, stockholders  
Think about it!  
Think about it!

Spent 20 years workin' in the mill  
Just to keep the man fat livin' up on the hill  
Well, the country needs iron and the country needs steel  
If they won't make it, the steelworkers will

Say, hey, owners  
Say, hey, stockholders  
Think about it!  
Think about it!



Jerome Pettus, UAW 22

## Unity — Take It Home

from Summary Report  
Debbie Albano  
Editor, Labor Today

Now we have to go back home and take the next step; we have to carry this program into the labor movement, the communities, city halls, State Legislatures, Congress and into the 1988 Presidential Campaign.

We have to go back to our regions and raise the demand for a march on Washington and help formulate the slogans for that march: Stop Plant Closings! Handcuff the Transnationals!

International Solidarity! Jobs, Jobs, Jobs and more Jobs!

The basic ideas that brought us together will keep us moving forward:

1. **Unity** - of the labor movement from top to bottom and across industrial, craft and jurisdictional lines
2. **Unity** - of the unemployed and the employed, the organized and unorganized
3. **Unity** - of all workers to defend the interests of the people of our country
4. **Unity** - of the U.S. labor movement with the workers of all countries

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Please fill out the following form and mail to Labor Today, 7917 S. Exchange, Chicago, IL 60617

1. I would like to endorse the work of the Assembly.  
Please find contribution enclosed:  
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