

## **Module 06: "Which Side Are You On?" The Flint Sit-Down Strike, 1936-37**

### **Evidence 7: The Settlement, February 11, 1937**

# **A**

#### **Introduction**

On February 1, 1937, more than four weeks into the strike, the UAW attempted to break the stalemate by going on the offensive. Union leaders spread rumors that they planned to stage a sit-down strike at Chevrolet No. Nine, drawing company police to the plant. The move, in fact, was a diversion that allowed workers to occupy the real target: Chevrolet No. Four, the producer of Chevrolet engines and "the most important single unit" in the GM complex.

Following the capture of Chevrolet No. Four, GM obtained a court injunction ordering the UAW to evacuate the two Fisher Body plants, but the sit-down strikers refused to budge. Although Governor Murphy had moved National Guard troops to Flint in mid-January, he was anxious to avoid bloodshed and refused to order the troops to enforce the injunction. Facing determined strikers, the takeover of Chevrolet No. Four, and the continued restraint of the governor, GM finally sat down at the bargaining table. Following a series of marathon negotiating sessions involving Knudsen, Lewis, and other company and union officials, GM agreed to bargain solely with the UAW for six months after production resumed (although they were allowed to refrain from stating such a concession in the formal agreement the two sides signed). Claiming victory, the strikers marched triumphantly out of the factory late on the afternoon of February 11, 1937. After six weeks, the historic Flint strike was finally over.

#### **Questions to Consider**

- What did GM agree to do in the agreement?
- What did the UAW agree to do in the agreement?
- Why had it taken so long to achieve an agreement?

#### **Document**

Agreement entered into on this 11th day of February, 1937, between the

General Motors Corporation (hereinafter referred to as the Corporation) and the International Union, United Automobile Workers of America (hereinafter referred to as the Union).

The Corporation hereby recognizes the Union as the Collective Bargaining agency for those employees of the Corporation who are members of the Union. There shall be no discrimination, interference, restraint or coercion by the Corporation or any of its agents against any employee because of membership in the Union.

The Corporation and the Union agree to commence collective bargaining negotiations on February 16th with regard to the issues specified in the letter of January 4th, 1937, from the Union to the Corporation, for the purpose of entering into a collective bargaining agreement, or agreements, covering such issues, looking to a final and complete settlement of all matters in dispute.

The Union agrees to forthwith terminate the present strike against the Corporation, and to evacuate all plants now occupied by strikers.

The Corporation agrees that all of its plants, which are on strike, or otherwise idle shall resume operations as rapidly as possible.

It is understood that all employees now on strike or otherwise idle will return to their usual work when called and that no discrimination shall be made or prejudices exercised by the Corporation against any employee because of his former affiliation with, or activities in, the Union or the present strike.

The Union agrees that pending the negotiations referred to in Paragraph Two, there shall be no strikes called or any other interruption to or interference with production, by the Union or its members.

During the existence of the collective bargaining agreement contemplated pursuant to Paragraph Two, all opportunities to achieve a satisfactory settlement of any grievance or enforcement of any demands by negotiations shall be exhausted before there shall be any strikes or other interruption to or interference with production by the Union or its members. There shall be no attempts to intimidate or coerce any employees by the Union and there shall not be any solicitation or signing up of members by

the Union on the premises of the Company. This is not to preclude individual discussion.

After the evacuation of its plants and the termination of the strike the Corporation agrees to consent to the entry of orders, dismissing the injunction proceedings which have been started by the Corporation against the Union, or any of its members, or officers or any of its locals, including those pending in Flint, Michigan and Cleveland, Ohio, and subject to the approval of the Court to discontinue all contempt proceedings which it has instituted thereunder.

#### GENERAL MOTORS CORPORATION

/s/ William S. Knudsen

/s/ J. T. Smith

/s/ D. Brown

#### UNITED AUTOMOBILE WORKERS

/s/ Wyndham Mortimer, First Vice-President

/s/ Lee Pressman, General Counsel, CIO

/s/ John L. Lewis, Chairman, CIO

Source:

<http://www.uawlocal598.org/firstcontract.html>.