

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

Evidence 9: "Oh, Mister Sloan" by Gilliland and Beck

A

Introduction

(Sung to the tune of "Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Sheen.")

The Mister Sloan referred to in the song below is Alfred P. Sloan, the president of GM, while the Mister Travis is Bob Travis, the UAW organizer who started the Flint sit-down strike. The song parodies "Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Sheen," a popular vaudeville tune from the 1920s.

Questions to Consider

- How was Sloan depicted in the song?
- What specific complaint(s) did the workers make?

Document

Oh, Mister Sloan! Oh, Mister Sloan!
We have known for a long time you would atone
For the wrongs that you have done,
We all know, yes, every one.
Absolutely, Mister Travis!
Positively, Mister Sloan!

Oh, Mister Sloan! Oh, Mister Sloan!
Everyone knows your heart was made of stone.
But the union is so strong
That we'll always carry on.
Absolutely, Mister Travis!
Positively, Mister Sloan!

Oh, Mister Sloan! Oh, Mister Sloan!
We are absolutely sure that you would burn
If the salary that you got
Was less than what you earn.

Absolutely, Mister Travis!
Positively, Mister Sloan!
Oh, Mister Sloan! Oh, Mister Sloan!

Our homes are what we all wish to own.
But the living costs are high,
So we're out to do or die.
Absolutely, Mister Travis!
Positively, Mister Sloan!

Source:

Henry Kraus Collection, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Personal Collections, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University. Also available in Alan Lomax, compiler, Pete Seeger, music transcriber and editor, *Hard Hitting Songs for Hard Hit People* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 243.