

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

### Evidence 12: Women's Auxiliary Song, Anonymous, 1937

# A

#### Introduction

(Sung to the tune of "Let's All Sing Like the Birdies Sing.")

The sit-down strikers relied on a variety of individuals outside the factory walls to maintain their position. Though not allowed to remain inside the plants, women performed many vital support functions. On New Year's Eve, one day after the strike began, about fifty women organized themselves into the Women's Auxiliary, celebrated in the song lyrics reproduced below. Composed of the wives, sisters, daughters, and friends of strikers, the Auxiliary created a publicity department, walked on picket lines, staffed a first-aid department, prepared meals for strikers, opened a nursery, and maintained close contact with the "widows" of striking workers.

Female strike supporters also formed the Women's Emergency Brigade, a special unit of the Auxiliary. The idea came from twenty-three-year-old Genora Johnson, the wife of a strike leader, who had participated in the Battle of Running Bulls and urged other women to do the same through the union's sound car. The episode convinced her of the need for "courageous women" to fight together with their men if a similar crisis should emerge. In addition to their role staffing picket lines, members of the Women's Emergency Brigade played an important role in the takeover of Chevrolet No. 4.

#### Questions to Consider

- What functions of the Women's Auxiliary did the song celebrate?
- What basic needs did the song emphasize?

#### Document

Auxiliary women are in the fight  
In the fight to stay  
They will battle with all their might

Onward every day  
For their homes and their kiddies too  
For their union men  
You can bet your last dime  
They'll be there every time  
Fighting to the end.

When the workers sit-in the plant  
Who stands on the line?  
When the workers must get their food  
Who gets it there on time?  
When the spirit is running low  
Who will make it rise?  
It's the woman you know  
Who makes everything go,  
They are Union-Wise.

Every woman should have a house  
She can call her own  
Decent living for every child  
In a decent home  
Food and shelter and clothing too  
For the family  
So she joins in the fight  
For a cause that's right  
Sharing Victory!

Source:

Joe Brown Papers, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University. Also available in Timothy P. Lynch, *Strikes Songs of the Depression* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 110-111.