

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

Evidence 22: "Resources Against Extremists," Editorial in the *New York Times*, January 27, 1937

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Introduction

In addition to providing extensive news coverage of the sit-down strike, the *New York Times*, the nation's leading daily newspaper, also published the following editorial, which revealed its position on the issue.

Questions to Consider

- How did the editorial characterize the sit-down tactic and the UAW's decision to strike against one particular automobile company?
- How did the editorial respond to businessmen and others who felt they were powerless against the sit-down strike?

Document

The new tactics used by certain labor unions and labor leaders have not only puzzled but somewhat alarmed many Americans. What can they do against the sit-down strike? It is a French importation, but seems for the time to be highly effective here. Then there is the new strategy adopted by Mr. John Lewis and his organizations. They order a strike not against all automobile manufacturers but solely against one big company. The aim is to cripple it not only directly but by subjecting it to the pressure of competition by rival companies. They are expected to rush in and take away a part of the business of General Motors. The whole is done in a domineering, arbitrary and reckless spirit, which we have never before encountered in the activities of organized labor on so great a scale. Against its novel methods and disregard of the rights of others, there are some who fear that we have no efficient ways of protecting ourselves and the public.

On reflection and after a little time, however, however, this apprehension will diminish. It will be found that the old ways of defense are still available against new forms of attack. The laws are yet on the statute books which prevent you from seizing my property and forbidding me to make use of it.

The long cultivated dislike or even hatred of monopoly can easily be turned against monopolistic claims and acts in the name of organized labor. It is no more agreeable to be hampered and exploited by groups of laboring men than by groups of promoters and capitalists. Nor is the love of fair play to be left out of the reckoning. When a hundred thousand men want to go back to work and are ordered not to do so by 5,000 men and their leaders, we all feel that here is an intolerable condition which cannot long endure. With this resources against labor extremists and monopolists goes the American belief in rule by the majority. Mr. Lewis has assumed that his minority has all the rights of a majority. That will not go in the United States.

The American people have been patient and tolerant while this new form of domination was being set up. They have waited and watched to see whereto this thing will grow. But they have not admitted that they are powerless against it, and when the time comes will be prepared to show that the weapons they have forged against the old wrongs can be used against new ones. To the public men who are ready to lead them in doing this, they will rise in no uncertain temper and with overwhelming support.

Source:

New York Times (27 Jan 1937), 20.