

# THE HAMMER



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AT DETROIT FORGE

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## Health & Safety

Everyday, workers at Detroit Forge and all across the country risk their lives just by going to work. Each year, 14,000 workers are killed in work accidents; and 25 million are injured on the job. Here at Detroit Forge, everyday workers are injured, wither by suffering cuts, smashed fingers or hands or burns as a result of defective machinery and intense speed-up. But most of these accidents are not even reported. Getting hurt has become such a way of life in this plant, that unless the injury is very serious, many times we don't even ask for medical attention. This is fine with the company because it keeps their accident report down and keeps production moving, and they don't have to be bothered with spending time and money to correct unsafe conditions. Chrysler is only concerned about Health and Safety when it affects production. We must be concerned about Health and Safety because it affects our very lives.

In 1973, health and safety conditions at this plant got so bad that the workers were forced to go out on a wildcat strike, for which 3 workers are still out in the streets fighting for their jobs. This year is again contract time and the Plant Management is using the same tactic of forcing us to work under dangerous conditions until someone loses an arm or a leg or gets killed, hoping to force another wildcat strike before the contract talks.

Not only are the conditions here unsafe in terms of accidents, the whole environment presents a clear and present danger to our health with immediate and long term effects. The tremendous level of noise generated from the hammers and presses presents a serious danger of permanent hearing loss. Speed-up and harrassment from foremen to meet production causes tension, ulcers and high blood pressure.

In Dept. 126, for example, over a dozen workers have been injured during the past couple months. One of the worst happened in February when a probationary employee, Bobby Dandridge, had two fingers smashed in the Steering Shaft Press and has yet to return to work. Bobby survived a tour of duty in Vietnam, only to return home and fall victim to Joe Neroni and Chrysler speed-up. Time after time, new workers are put on a job without any instructions or warnings about unsafe conditions.

Workers on the sway bar line are exposed to fumes and the danger of liquid salt splashing back without protective shields or masks. Defective wheelabrators produce great amounts of dust which we inhale, and coats our noses and mouths with black dust causing headaches, sinus infections, and ultimately, respiratory ailments.

Several months ago, after following a direct order from his foreman who took no regard for his safety, a worker fell into an acid tank and was hospitalized for five months! Truck drivers are forced to use hi-los with no brakes, thus endangering themselves and the workers around them. Everywhere you go in this plant you can see maimed and bandaged workers as a result of the unsafe conditions.

Why is it that our jobs are unsafe? Under capitalism, the basic reason for production is profit for the capitalists. The capitalist only makes money from the portion of his capital that he pays the workers. Health and safety devices, ventilation equipment, disposable uniforms, sound-proofing noisy areas, health check ups for workers, enclosing dangerous industrial processes don't produce profits, and it is cheaper to replace one worker with another when he or she dies or is disabled, than it is to provide safe working conditions. Therefore, in pursuit of maximum production and maximum profit, the capitalists are more than willing to sacrifice our hands, our health, and even our lives.

In December, 1970, The Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) was signed into law, and the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) was created to enforce the provisions of OSHA. This was hailed by George Meany as "a major victory for American workers", but lets look closer at the results of these laws.

First, there are only about 500 safety inspectors to inspect 4 million workplaces. At the rate they visit workplaces, it would take 230 years just to visit each plant once. Second, inspectors are frequently paid off by the bosses not to report violations, and in some cases the bosses will know in advance when the inspectors are coming so they can "clean up the shop." Third, the fines levied for violations of safety standards are such that it is often cheaper for the company to pay the fine than to correct the safety violations.

What can we do to insure better health and safety conditions at Detroit Forge? We need a Health and Safety committee that will inform the workers of health and safety conditions in the plant, of their rights under the contract, OSHA and NIOSH. The committee will publicize accident information; who was hurt, when, what dept. and machine to identify dangerous areas and dangerous foremen who put our lives in jeopardy. We must fight to insure that these unsafe and hazardous conditions are corrected. At present, we have only one health and safety representative who is only allowed two hours per week to check conditions. We must fight in our national and local contract agreements to have a full time representative with the power to shut down unsafe jobs.

While we must fight to have the legal protections provided by OSHA enforced, it is not until workers control the state, and through the state power their workplaces, and profit is ended as the reason for production that we will have safe working conditions. And it is only under socialism that these goals will be achieved. In the USSR workers are screened for deleterious effects from their jobs, and switched to other jobs if they have health problems related to their work. In China, factory workers wear masks and protective clothing, and workplaces are spotless. In China, too, almost all waste products from a given industry are reused to make other much needed products, rather than dumped into the air and water.

The Communist Labor Party is presently engaged in the campaign to get on the ballot in Michigan. Ours is a party of proven working class fighters who have developed from the struggles in the factories, mines, mills, farms and communities of the USNA. As workers ourselves, we are well aware of the needs and demands of the working people of this state, and among our platform demands are the calls for a job for every worker at the expense of the military budget, with no compulsory overtime or speed-up. We demand guaranteed safe and healthy working conditions for all workers.

Our struggle to get on the ballot in Michigan will be to serve as a tribune to fight for the interests of the working class in its struggle for socialism.

The pages of The Hammer are open to all workers to express their opinions about the conditions which we live and work under. It is put out by members of the Communist Labor Party and other concerned workers to address the crying need for working class unity and to provide information of the events and conditions that affect our lives. In coming issues we will focus attention on the upcoming UAW contract talks at the national and local levels and examine the key demands we will be fighting for.

GET THE CLP ON THE BALLOT!

READ THE PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE!