

March 6, 2009

Dear President Obama,

We were glad to see that your administration suspended the February 17th deadline on the anti-union restrictions in the loan agreement President Bush signed with General Motors and Chrysler. Total wages and benefits for production and skilled trades' workers in the industry represent 10% or less of the total cost, yet lowering our wages and benefits was the focus of that agreement. In the face of the March 31st deadline we urge you to lift these restrictions.

We are enclosing a set of petitions we have gathered, asking that you not implement these concessions. We do not believe workers are in any way responsible for the economic crisis under which we are now living. Just after your inauguration we sent you the first set of these petitions, also handing copies to U.S. Congressman John Conyers (Detroit).

We urge you to direct your administration to create green jobs and keep health care benefits rather than abide by restrictions made by an administration that clearly did not have the well-being of American working people and manufacturing in mind. The ramifications of the economic crisis should not be placed on the backs of working people, and in this specific case, on autoworkers.

In providing loans to aid the auto industry governments around the world often require—as they have in France and Japan—that workers must not be laid off. In an economic crisis the last thing a country needs is workers with less spending power! This creates a range of problems, including driving up the number of people seeking unemployment and Medicaid coverage, or forcing families into foreclosure.

During World War II the U.S. government told the auto companies they weren't to produce cars, but whatever was needed for the war. Well there's a war on now! It's an economic war in which working people are losing our jobs, our health care, and our houses. So it's necessary to turn the plants into producing what's needed. For starters we should be producing:

- Fuel-efficient vehicles
- Machinery to produce renewable energy including wind and water turbines and solar panels
- Trains for mass transit and light rail

Once upon a time everyone in our communities understood that when unionized autoworkers fought and won good wages and benefits that raised the standard for all workers, whether in a union or not. Ever since the air traffic controllers were fired by President Reagan, higher-paid workers have been demonized. We are not the cause of the problem but the source of the solution. We demand good jobs for ourselves, our communities and our children.

Mr. President, you have it within your authority to demand these things from the auto industry. We are counting on you to intervene to make these necessary changes. Thank you.

Active and retired rank-and-file autoworkers

www.autoworkercaravan.org

