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**EMPTY SPACES: DIVERGENT RESPONSES TO INDUSTRIAL TRANSFORMATION
IN NORTH AMERICA, 1969-1984**

by

Steven C. High

Thesis submitted to
the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Ph.D. degree in History

University of Ottawa / Université d'Ottawa

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ABSTRACT**EMPTY SPACES: DIVERGENT RESPONSES TO INDUSTRIAL TRANSFORMATION
IN NORTH AMERICA, 1969-1984**

Steven C. High

University of Ottawa, 1999.

Supervisor:

Professor Donald F. Davis

This thesis explores the meanings that North Americans derived from mill and factory closings between 1969 and 1984. In doing so, it finds that the significance drawn from industrial transformation was filtered through one's nationality. In the United States, plant closings generally signalled the end of the industrial era. As the physical stature of blast furnaces and smokestacks made them stand tall in people's minds, the fall of industry from its privileged position in the American economy played itself out in their ritualistic demolition. Dramatic images of falling blast furnaces, in turn, lent authority to those who claimed that the industrial era had ended. Canadians, by contrast, interpreted plant shutdowns in nationalist terms. Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, shutdowns were blamed on American economic domination.

In the face of economic dislocation, workers on either side of the Canada-United States border struggled to retain their dignity and identity. Yet strategies of collective resistance differed dramatically as the narratives of displaced workers revealed. In the United States, the anti-shutdown movement was confined to the local by invoking a notion of "community" tied to place. This "miniaturization" of community proved to be a feeble weapon for workers facing job loss. Indeed, the nation's political, business and union leadership felt little attachment to communities based in towns or cities other than

their own. Hence, the "community" strategy, predicated on emotional appeals to people and place, failed to politicize a contractual -- and therefore private -- matter between an employer and his or her employees. To constrain the destructive tendencies of capitalism between 1969 and 1984, another weapon was needed, namely the ideal of a "national community."

The motive power of community to validate and legitimate resistance to plant shutdowns by enlargening the radius of trust was greatest in Canada. By literally wrapping themselves in the Maple Leaf flag, Canadian workers won important legislative victories that forced companies to soften the blow of displacement. In the final analysis, then, an emerging economic nationalist discourse incorporated plant shutdowns into the very centre of its anti-imperial critique of foreign -- usually American -- multinational corporations. For a time, the nationalist resistance to plant shutdowns enforced what could be called a "moral economy" on companies operating in Canada. Economic nationalism thus acted as a kind of ideological rust-proofing that denied the "Rust Belt" -- the image and the reality -- entry into Canada and slowed the pace of industrial change and the accompanying social disruption between 1969 -1984.

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A doctoral student incurs a large number of personal debts as well as financial ones over the course of his or her graduate studies. Where to begin? I would first like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Donald Davis for his constant encouragement to “think big” and for his guidance along the way. I would also like to acknowledge my friends and colleagues who have provided me with invaluable feedback on parts of this dissertation: Guy Chiasson, Kimberley Berry, Pam Roper, Don Wright, John Bonnett, Garth Williams, Jarrett Rudy, Dave Moorman, John Walsh, and Jo-Anne McCutcheon. I have also benefitted from the wise counsel of Dr. Chad Gaffield and Dr. Michael Behiels. My early field work with them proved formative in the thesis that eventually emerged. The very useful comments of Dr. Jeff Keshen and Dr. John Cumbler are also very much appreciated. In addition to the love and support that my parents have given me over the years, my father contributed greatly to this thesis by gathering over seventy songs relating to industrial work and job loss. Special thanks also goes to my partner-in-life, Barbara Lorenzkowski, whose incisive proof-reading made a vital contribution to this project.

Historians are largely dependent on the groundwork laid by archivists and librarians who collect and organize the “stuff” of history. This project would, therefore, have been impossible without the generous assistance of dozens of these wonderful people at thirty-three archives and libraries across Canada and the United States. As the financial burden of conducting extensive research in the United States was nearly prohibitive, I am particularly appreciative for the financial support granted by the Canadian Labour Congress, the Ontario Graduate Scholarship program and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, as well as the research contracts sent my way by Barry Cottam and Bruce Muirhead. I would also like to express my appreciation

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My decision to include an oral history component in this dissertation was triggered by the excellent work of Donna DeBlasio and Ken Clavette. Subsequently, a number of people assisted me in the identification of people willing to be interviewed for this project: Bill Scandlon, Bill Fuller, Nelson and Betty Sheehan, Dan McCarthy, Les Dickirson, the Canadian Labour Congress, the United Food and Commercial Workers, and the Steelworkers' Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR). I would also like to thank audio-visual services at the University of Ottawa for allowing me free use of videotape equipment and my old friend Rob Dobrucki for acting as "cameraman" in Lackawanna, New York. Above all, I owe a debt of gratitude to the twenty-six men and women who agreed to be interviewed individually -- often at short notice -- and the sixty former Republic and Bethlehem steelworkers in Western New York who attended the meeting organized by SOAR-Buffalo. Their plant shutdown stories need and deserve to be heard. This thesis is dedicated to them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	viii
LIST OF MAPS	viii
SECTION I: BACKGROUND	1
INTRODUCTION	2
CHAPTER 1: GOLD DOESN'T RUST: REGIONS OF THE NORTH AMERICAN MIND...	22
SECTION II: PLACE	58
CHAPTER 2: "HOME" AND "FAMILY" ON THE FACTORY FLOOR	59
CHAPTER 3: THE "POST-INDUSTRIAL" FACADE OF THE GLOBAL FACTORY	88
SECTION III: DISPLACEMENT	123
CHAPTER 4: THE DEINDUSTRIALIZING HEARTLAND: "RUNAWAY PLANTS" AND "OBSCOLESCENCE"	124
CHAPTER 5: "I-75 GYPSIES," "FLAT ROCKERS," AND OTHER DISPLACED PERSONS	178
SECTION IV: RESISTANCE	220
CHAPTER 6: THE LIMITS OF "COMMUNITY": THE AMERICAN RESPONSE TO PLANT CLOSINGS	221
CHAPTER 7: "I'LL WRAP THE F*#@ CANADIAN FLAG AROUND ME": CANADIAN WORKERS RESPOND TO PLANT SHUTDOWNS	279
CONCLUSION	322
APPENDIX 1: CERTIFICATION AND INTERVIEW GUIDE	329
BIBLIOGRAPHY	331

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1:	Manufacturing plants opening and closing in the United States, 1963-1982	127
TABLE 2:	Change in manufacturing employment in the East North Central Census District	129
TABLE 3:	"Job losers" as percentage of unemployed, 1975-1983	132
TABLE 4:	Plant shutdowns and displacement in Windsor, 1970-1983	147
TABLE 5:	Divestment strategies in the industrial heartland, 1969-1984 ..	150
TABLE 6:	African-Americans as a percentage of Chrysler's US workforce ..	157
TABLE 7:	Percentage of BOF technology in national steel production	169
TABLE 8:	Employment in American Steel Industry, 1973-1983	172
TABLE 9:	Discontinued local unions and displaced members in North America, USWA	242
TABLE 10:	Notice of mass terminations, Ontario Employment Standards Act of 1970	293

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ILLUSTRATION 1:	Drawing by Peter Illig, nd.	97
ILLUSTRATION 2:	"Stop runaway shops," Fred Wright, nd.	135
ILLUSTRATION 3:	Cartoon by Fred Wright, nd.	136
ILLUSTRATION 4:	Plant shutdown notice, Kaylee Textile in Hamilton.	191
ILLUSTRATION 5:	"Community's loss is corporation's profit," Fred Wright .	226
ILLUSTRATION 6:	"UE in Canada fights the multinationals," Fred Wright. . .	309
ILLUSTRATION 7:	Empty spaces in the Brier Hill Unionist, USWA Local 1462	324

LIST OF MAPS

MAP 1:	The industrial heartland of North America	5

SECTION I: BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

Except for the concrete retaining walls of the coal yards and the heavy-duty bridge to nowhere, there is no sign that a steel mill once stood here. Yet once, not long ago, the Campbell steel works of the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company would have loomed far above our heads over the bridge where we stood as trains of four different railroads jockeyed for space underneath. Indeed, throughout much of the twentieth century, the Mahoning Valley in Northeastern Ohio was second only to Pittsburgh in the production of North American steel. Now, only empty fields and silence remain. Nonetheless, while listening to over forty oral history interviews conducted by Donna DeBlasio for the Ohio Historical Society and reading forty other transcripts held at Youngstown State University, I learned it was easier to demolish sprawling mills than to erase people's memories. George Richardson, a displaced foreman of the open hearth furnace department, for example, remembers: "When I read those headlines [about the mill's closing] it made me sick. It makes me sick now to drive down Poland Avenue to see those *empty spaces* where the blast furnaces used to be. It was like a kick in the stomach to read that."¹ Emptiness disturbs and empty spaces beg explanation.² Under the clear blue skies of that Fall afternoon in 1997 (a smoke-filled sky would have meant "good times"), and in the company of other participants of an industrial archaeology

¹ George Richardson interviewed by Donna DeBlasio in 1991. The videotape recording of this interview is held at the Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor (YHCIL). Emphasis added.

² Gary McDonogh, "The Geography of Emptiness," in Robert Rotenberg and Gary McDonogh, eds. *The Cultural Meaning of Urban Spaces* (Westport, Conn.: Bergin and Garvey, 1993), 7.

conference, I discerned the gravity of what happened here and in many other towns and cities across North America.³

This dissertation is both a regional analysis of the economic and cultural destruction of North America's "industrial heartland" and a study of how workers made sense of their displacement. Empty spaces thus refer to both the deindustrialized landscape of the Mahoning Valley as well as the psychological loss to workers such as George Richardson. My examination of the divergent meanings derived from plant shutdowns and job loss in Canada and the United States shows the value of focusing on social constructions and mentality in understanding a topic that is often analysed in economic terms.⁴ In sum, this dissertation is about "community" and "identity" in an age of profound economic, social, political and cultural disruption.⁵

When analyzing plant shutdowns and displacement we need to avoid what historian Michael Frisch has called the "unhelpful scripts" of abstract labels such as "post-

³ According to Dolores Hayden, the "traces of time embedded in the urban landscape of every city offer opportunities for reconnecting fragments of the American urban story." See: Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1995), 13.

⁴ In part because of the unwillingness of corporations to open their recent archival records to the public, this thesis does not attempt to determine whether companies were justified in closing plants. Nor does it suggest that companies should have continued to operate unprofitable plants indefinitely; all plants close eventually. Rather, this thesis focuses on what lessons were learnt by North Americans at this critical juncture and how these assertions shaped their responses to job loss.

⁵ See, for example, Francis Fukuyama, "The Great Disruption: Human Nature and the Reconstitution of Social Order," *The Atlantic Monthly* (May 1999), 55-80. Also see, John D. Kelly, "Time and the Global: Against the Homogeneous Empty Communities in Contemporary Social Theory," *Development and Change* 29 (1998), 865.

industrialism" that homogenize, essentialize and sanitize history.⁶ That is why it is so important to put a face and a name to otherwise impersonal economic forces that are said to shape our everyday existence.⁷ Accordingly, this thesis takes a closer look at how these socially-constructed "scripts" took hold and how they informed people's understanding of job loss. By adopting a socio-cultural approach, this study proposes to delve into the multitude of meanings attached to job loss in Canada and the United States between 1969 and 1984, a time frame beginning and ending with recession. It is especially important to ground our discussion of cultural meaning in the lived experience of real people inasmuch as social psychologists believe that we personalize the world around us as a way of "both adapting to it and creating order and significance."⁸ These places act as veritable "storehouses" of personal and collective memories anchoring us to the histories of our families, co-workers and communities, allowing us to "weather the swells and storms of change."⁹ Plant shutdowns and displacement are therefore *embodied* in the people interviewed and *embedded* in the

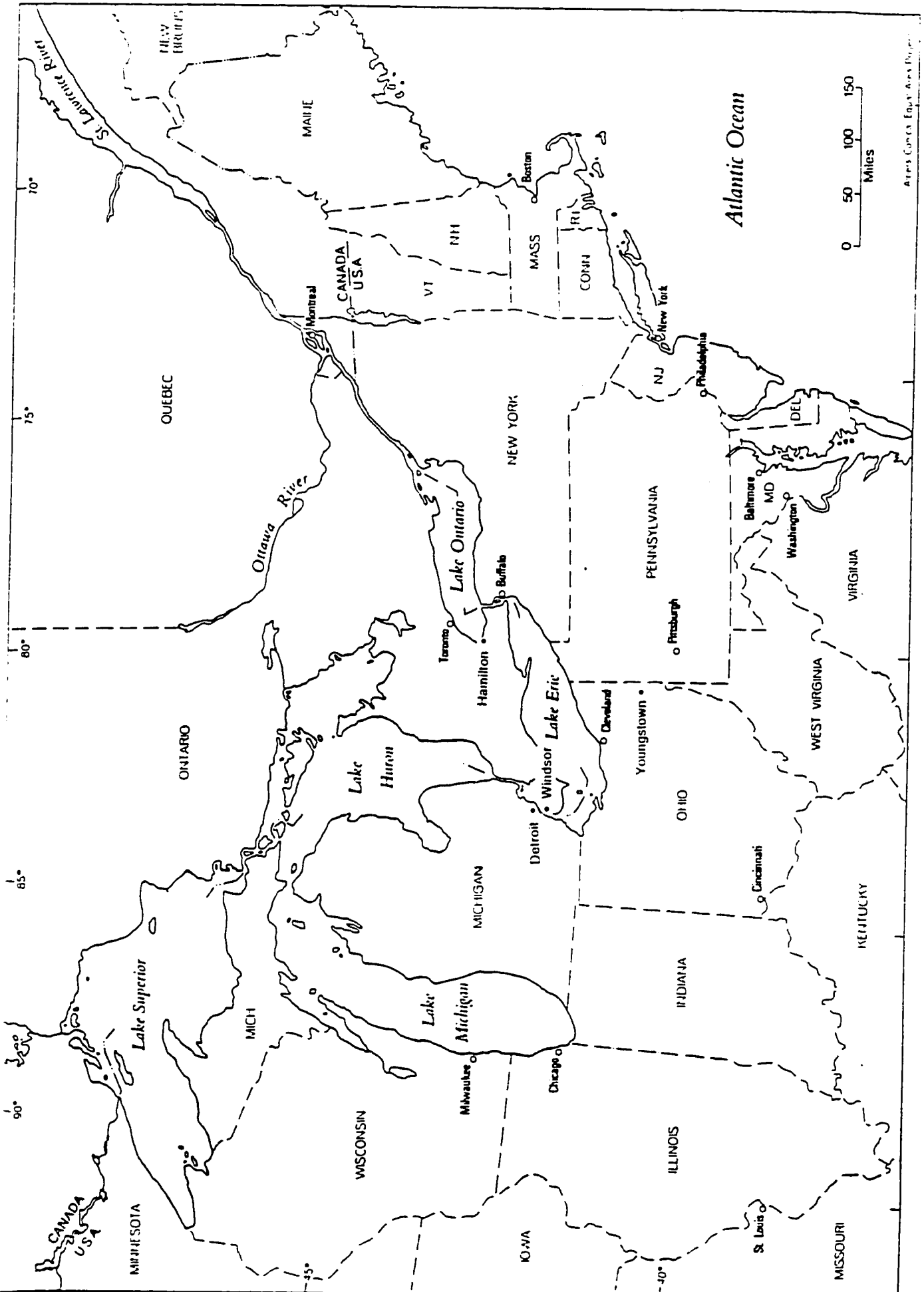
⁶ Milton Rogovin and Michael Frisch, *Portraits in Steel* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 4.

⁷ British labour historian E.P. Thompson once observed that our analysis should always be "embodied in real people and in a real context." See: E.P. Thompson. *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 9.

⁸ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, eds. *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 122.

⁹ Hayden, *The Power of Place*, 9. Also see Clare Cooper Marcus, "Environmental Memories," in Irwin Altman and Setha M. Low, eds. *Place Attachment* (New York: Plenum Press, 1992), 88.

Map 1: The "industrial heartland" of North America



industrial cities visited.¹⁰

In order to situate job loss in its social context (see Map 1), I focus on Youngstown, Ohio and Detroit, Michigan, both of which experienced early decline in the perceptual core of the "Rust Belt," as well as Hamilton and Windsor, Ontario, two cities located on its periphery. This choice of cities is predicated upon several considerations. First, rather than case studies, these four cities serve as points of special interest within the regional framework of my thesis. Thus, by examining specific cities within the industrial heartland, we will be able to see how perceptions of, and responses to, industrial decline varied across regional and national boundaries. We can also, by extension, determine the effectiveness of these responses to decline. Secondly, the choice of a steeltown and a motor city in each country facilitates comparative analysis. This thesis considers four key questions. Why did mills and factories close? What did plant shutdowns signify to North Americans? What did job loss mean to workers? How did Canadians and Americans respond to plant shutdowns and job loss? In exploring these questions this thesis will look beyond the material world to ascertain what job loss meant to industrial workers, their local communities, and to Canadians and Americans in general.

In the following chapters, we see that the border between Canada and the United States became much more visible for many North Americans during the industrial transformation from 1969-1984. For American fiction writer Joyce Carol Oates, who moved to Windsor, Ontario to teach at the university in the 1970s, "the river made a natural border. Across its chopping, rather ugly waters was the United States, looking

¹⁰ Public historian David Glassberg, for example, asserts that historical consciousness and place consciousness are "inextricably intertwined; we attach histories to place." See: David Glassberg, "Public History and the Study of Memory," *The Public Historian* 18, 2 (Spring 1996), 17.

like any dismal manufacturing city at this point -- smokestacks, billowing black smoke, ragged puffs of white smoke, occasionally small figures that must have been human."¹¹ In contrast, it is difficult to glimpse Canada from the downtown streets of Detroit. Plant shutdowns and displacement made the cultural crossing between the two countries wider than ever. Reflecting on the events leading up to the Canadian region leaving the United Auto Workers in 1985, Floyd Harris, a former employee of Kelsey-Hayes, an auto parts maker in Windsor, explained: "In the US and Canada, they talk different....I think we didn't think the same way they thought and it just drove us apart."¹² It will be argued here that Canadian economic nationalism acted as a kind of ideological rust-proofing that denied the "Rust Belt" -- the image and the reality -- entry into the country and slowed the pace of industrial change during the 1970s and early 1980s.

With the notable exceptions of geographers Glen Norcliffe and Ian MacLaughlan, historian Rianne Mahon and labour analyst Charlotte Yates, Canadian scholars have shied away from the subject. Historians, in particular, continue to be drawn to nineteenth century industrialization. By contrast, as we will see below, plant shutdowns have garnered much more attention in the United States. This scholarly divergence is the product of the events being discussed in this thesis. In part, it reflects the far more dramatic pattern of industrial transformation south of the border. While many huge industrial complexes closed across the United States, no integrated steel mills or auto assembly plants closed in Canada during the time period dealt with in this study. Added to

¹¹ Joyce Carol Oates, *Border Crossings* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1976), 81-82.

¹² Floyd Harris interviewed by Steven High in the Windsor, Ontario lunchroom at the union hall of Canadian Auto Workers Local 195 in February 1998. The videotape recording of this interview will be donated to the Windsor Municipal Archives (WMA).

this unevenness, is the dearth of comparative history being written between the two countries.¹³ This surprising observation reflects both American indifference to its northern neighbour and the continuing hold of nationalism in Canadian universities. In fact, there seems to be more comparative work being done in Canada with Australia than with the United States.

Studies of displacement flourished in the United States during the 1980s in reaction to massive job loss in the manufacturing and basic industries. Initially, at least, this "displacement" was narrowly construed as economic, leaving little room for individual agency, and casting the multinational corporation as the chief villain.¹⁴ However, the source of the wave of mill and factory closings in the 1970s and 1980s have been hotly debated in scholarly circles: those on the political right lean on Joseph Shumpeter's and Daniel Bell's notions of "creative destruction" and "post-

¹³ According to the Canadian Historical Association's most recent listing of dissertations in progress, there are only nine on-going doctoral projects that explicitly draw cross-border comparisons with the United States. Of these, only three projects -- including my own -- reach into the twentieth century. See: Paul Aubin, *Register of Post Graduate Dissertations in Progress in History and Related Subjects* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1998).

¹⁴ During the 1990s, however, scholarly attention has increasingly turned to the resistance of disadvantaged groups such as women, racial minorities, aboriginals, and the poor to displacement by the state. This thesis applies many of the methodological and theoretical insights developed by this new generation of scholars and applies them to a subject of particular interest to American academics a decade ago. What results from this meld is an original perspective: one that examines the meanings derived from industrial transformation. See: Daryl Michael Scott, "Comment," at the session "Displaced Persons: American Studies Perspectives on Urban and Rural Dislocation," American Studies Association General Meeting (October 1997), Washington, DC.

industrialism.”¹⁵ By contrast, critics of multinational corporations as well as Canadian economic nationalists have formulated the “deindustrialization thesis” to explain the disinvestment strategies of corporate managers.¹⁶ These important concepts will be discussed further in chapters three and four. While scholars disagree about the large economic picture, they largely concur on the tragic consequences of these shutdowns even in the heady last days of the twentieth century. The burgeoning social-scientific literature on closings has documented the deteriorating health of displaced workers and their families as well as their efforts to find work.¹⁷

By far the most popular political subject of study of the 1980s was the local struggle to keep workplaces open in the United States. Fight-back campaigns in the Mahoning and Mahongahela Valleys of Ohio and Pennsylvania, and in the Calumet region of Northwestern Indiana have all received scholarly attention from participant-authors like Staughton Lynd.¹⁸ Generally speaking, these studies presented industrial decline in

¹⁵ Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Books, 1976 [1973]); and Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976 [1942]).

¹⁶ The two key examples are: Robert Laxer, ed. *(Canada) Ltd. : The Political Economy of Dependency* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973); and Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison. *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

¹⁷ See, for example, Ronald J. Burke, “The Closing of Canadian Admiral: Correlates of Individual Well-Being Sixteen Months after Shutdown,” *Psychology Reports* 55, 1 (August 1984), 91-98.

¹⁸ Staughton Lynd. *The Fight Against Shutdowns: Youngstown’s Steel Mill Closings* (San Pedro, California: Singlejack Books, 1982); Also see: Bruce Nissen, ed. *Fighting for Jobs: Case Studies of Labor: Community Coalitions Confronting Plant Closings* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

keeping with the over-arching explanation presented by the deindustrialization thesis.

As scholars have tended to focus on the “big picture” composed of aggregate statistics and abstract economic forces, they have often lost sight of the human dimension of plant shutdowns, namely ‘ordinary’ people experiencing extraordinary events. While social historians have examined how men and, to a much lesser degree, women experienced job loss, their focus on a single shutdown and their inclination to “count” rather than to re-count life stories has limited their ability to evoke past experiences of job loss. How then do we narrow the distance between ourselves, our readers and the past? Like a growing number of historians, to bridge some of that gap I have adopted a research strategy that has been heavily influenced by the work of anthropologists and oral historians.

Two anthropological studies have greatly contributed to my understanding of plant shutdowns as a cultural event as well as an economic or political one. In *Magic City*, Gregory Pappas shows that the Labour Day parade in Barberton, Ohio, once a celebration of organized labour in the town's rubber industry, became the “Mayor's Autumn Festival” shortly after the plants closed down in the early 1980s.¹⁹ Another cultural transformation took place in Kenosha, Wisconsin where the shutdown of the town's AMC auto assembly plant in 1987 sparked a similar redefinition of place. Here, as anthropologist Kathryn Marie Dudley explains, a new generation of local politicians with a white-collar background redesigned an industrial town as a post-industrial playground.²⁰ These civic leaders celebrated the demolition of the old auto plant that was

¹⁹ Gregory Pappas, *Magic City: Unemployment in a Working-Class Community* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 161.

²⁰ Kathryn Marie Dudley, *The End of the Line: Lost Jobs, New Lives in Postindustrial America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 177.

to make room for a marina as a rite-of-passage into the new post-industrial era. Blue-collar workers did not fit comfortably into the town's new identity. Instead, they were a constant reminder of what had been lost. "People who once stood at the centre of things now seem out of place," Dudley remarks, adding that industrial workers had become "Primitive Americans" in a post-industrial era.

In the pages that follow, I try to make room for the partiality of other narrators -- a chorus of voices rather than one -- told from multiple perspectives.²¹ As Michael Frisch has noted, oral history has the capacity to redistribute intellectual authority between the historian and his or her subjects.²² On the meeting ground of autobiography and history, then, "displaced workers" have faces and names like Dorothy Routenberg in Hamilton, Gabriel Solano in Southwest Detroit, Ruby Kendrick in Southpark, Michigan, and Peter Wirth across the river in Windsor. Accordingly, oral history has a central place in this dissertation, allowing us to cut through abstraction to see "a complexity grounded in location, in history, and in the lives, labor, and communities of the people."²³

Critics of oral history question both the *representativeness* and *reliability* of interviews. In side-stepping these concerns, oral historians have stressed the *subjectivity* of each narrative and its relationship to individual and collective memory.

²¹ I would like to thank my University of Ottawa colleague, Kimberley Berry, for letting me read her wonderful MA thesis "She's No Lady: The Experience and Expression of Gender Among Women Taxi Drivers," MA: Saint Mary's University, 1996.

²² Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), xx.

²³ Michael Frisch and Milton Rogovin, *Portraits in Steel* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 11-12.

In short, these life-stories recorded the interviewees' "truths."²⁴ How the past is remembered and by whom are two questions that lie at the centre of the oral historian's project.²⁵ These "subjective realities" then tell us more about the meaning of plant shutdowns to workers than they do about the sequence of events that led to the closings. Indeed, silences sometimes prove to be more significant than what is actually spoken.²⁶ Hence, oral historians tell us not only what people did but what they wanted to do, what they believed possible then and what they think now.²⁷ Although each story is unique, patterns of experience, shared meanings and collective memories emerge.

Having interviewed current and former employees at General Motors' plant at Linden, New Jersey plant, Ruth Milkman observed that many workers did not share in

²⁴ Studs Terkel, *Working* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), xvi. Also see Luisa Passerini's remarkable study of the silences in the narratives of Italian workers that pass over the fascist era in "Work ideology and consensus under Italian fascism," *History Workshop* 8 (1979), 84-92.

²⁵ As Alessandro Portelli contends in his study of the working-class in Turin, Italy, distortions and oversights in memory are historically significant in that they tell us much about how the past is remembered. Portelli defines subjectivity as the study of "cultural forms and processes by which individuals express their sense of themselves in history." See: Alessandro Portelli. *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), ix.

²⁶ Peter Burke, *The Art of Conversation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 125.

²⁷ These narratives are nevertheless negotiated with the interviewer. See, for example, Allan W. Futrell and Charles A. Willard, "Intersubjectivity and Interviewing," in Eva M. McMahan and Kim Lacy Rogers, eds. *Interactive Oral History Interviewing* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), 85.

the "nostalgia" for the "bygone glory days of industrial America."²⁸ She even suggested that workers "may also" see deindustrialization in a "positive light."²⁹ However, Milkman was quick to add that the results of her work at Linden, New Jersey may have been influenced by the peculiar characteristics of the group of workers, mainly young employees in their thirties, who had accepted a generous GM buyout package in 1987 rather than continue working at the plant. Those choosing to leave were therefore a "self-selected group."

In contrast, my study records the plant shutdown stories of 137 men and women who *involuntarily* experienced job loss. They tended to be older workers with long service who expressed almost universal nostalgia for the good old days in the plant and a profound sense of loss that this way of life had ended. In fact, several of my interviewees felt that they began to appreciate what they once had only after it had been taken away from them. As Diane Garner, a former employee at Ford's foundry in Flat Rock, Michigan, pointed out:

When you're going through a plant closing and go back to work it's different from being laid off. When you're laid-off..[you think] 'I'm going back to work.' In plant closings you don't have anything to go back to....But when it happens you begin to appreciate your job. You have a different attitude about work.³⁰

²⁸ Ruth Milkman, *Farewell to the Factory: Auto Workers in the Late Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 134. Milkman also expresses frustration with recent debates about plant shutdowns and job loss that "have been conducted largely behind the backs and over the heads of the workers most directly affected." (p. 191)

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 95. Also see Kathryn Marie Dudley's examination of how middle-class professionals in Kenosha, Wisconsin celebrated the closing of that city's auto plant. Dudley, *The End of the Line*, 26-27.

³⁰ Diane Garner interviewed by Steven High at her Detroit home in February 1998. The videotape recording will be noted to the Walter Reuther Library at Wayne State University (WRL).

In the end, displacement mitigated the alienation from work that Milkman captured so vividly in her *Farewell to the Factory*. Had Milkman re-interviewed those workers who voluntarily terminated their employment with General Motors, years later, their fondness for their previous assembly line work may have grown over time.

Initially, I had hoped that people would come forward to be interviewed after sending public service announcements to thirty-eight community, ethnic, labour, religious and daily newspapers in Detroit, Windsor and Hamilton as well as distributing invitations to local labour councils and various union centrals. However, when only seven people contacted me, I compiled a contact list of names encountered in my archival research over the preceding two years who were still listed in local telephone books. This strategy resulted in several more people being interviewed. Nonetheless, it was only with the help of the Hamilton and Buffalo chapters of the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR), the Canadian Auto Workers Local 195 in Windsor, and the United Auto Workers Local 417 in Troy, Michigan that I managed to arrange twenty-six individual interviews: eight in Hamilton, eight in Windsor and ten in Detroit. In addition, I was invited to conduct a "community interview" in Buffalo with sixty members of SOAR in April 1998. Most of the interviewees were in their 40s when their plants "went down," male (eighteen of twenty-six) and white (three of my Detroit interviewees were African-Americans). Almost all of the people I interviewed in Detroit, Windsor and Hamilton had been displaced from small or medium sized foundries, auto parts plants, tool & die shops, plastics factories, textile mills, steel fabrication mills and electrical assembly operations. Many of these stories have previously escaped notice in more narrowly focused studies of the most visible industries in specific towns

or cities.³¹ However, those interviewees who responded to my invitation proved to be most likely to regard our conversation as a political, public act. Diane Garner and Gabriel Solano, in particular, were "bearing witness" in their oral history interviews.³² Their enthusiasm for the project originated in their stated desire to tell their stories in the hope that, in the future, others would not have to experience what they themselves went through.³³

This thesis also considers oral histories collected by others in Youngstown, Ohio; Buffalo, New York and Ottawa, Ontario. The Youngstown Sheet and Tube Shutdown project coordinated by Youngstown State University in 1981 interviewed local politicians and religious leaders almost exclusively. However, this omission was rectified a decade later when Donna DeBlasio of the newly opened Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor interviewed dozens of hourly and salaried steelworkers such as George

31 A notable feature of traditional oral history projects is their tendency to reinforce an area's "dominant narrative." Their design thus exclude those voices deemed peripheral to the main storyline. When women were considered at all it was usually in the context of the town's main industry. What we need to do, then, is acknowledge the limitation of the research: that the dominant narrative of working (white) men is quite different from the paths taken by women, new immigrants, ethnic and racial minorities in the industrial economy.

32 William Westerman, "Central American refugee testimonies and performed life histories in the Sanctuary movement," in Perks and Thomson, eds. *The Oral History Reader*, 224-234. Central American refugees turned to personal life-story testimonials in order to sway North American audiences. According to Westerman, these "anecdotal narratives" were so successful that they gave rise to the Sanctuary movement.

33 There proved to be a significant difference between conducting oral histories, watching others interview on videotape, and reading transcripts of interviews conducted by others. Even though oral histories encouraged personal identification and intimacy, I found the distance between "us" grew the further away I was from the interview-making process.

Richardson.³⁴ DeBlasio also recorded the stories of several former top executives such as Tom Cleary at Youngstown Sheet & Tube and Lawrence Weeks at Republic Steel. The voices of the steelworker, union activist, foreman, superintendent and senior manager were thus added to the oral record. In comparison, the oral history project in Ottawa focused on displaced workers from a medium-sized appliance manufacturer, Beach Foundry, that closed in 1980. As a result, I feel confident that I have gathered a wide range of stories from displaced industrial workers in the Canadian and American "heartland."

At the outset of each interview I tried to create a climate of trust by talking about my project and myself. For example, I told interviewees about my working-class background growing up in Thunder Bay, Ontario and the fact that my father was himself a "displaced" worker at fifty-one years of age.³⁵ This personal revelation allowed me to

³⁴ Interviewees were selected in a variety of ways. While several interviewees were recommended by the United Steelworkers office in the city, the Hispanics interviewed were identified with the cooperation of an Hispanic self-help group. In summarizing the oral project at the 1998 meeting of the Oral History Association, Donna DeBlasio said that "All of these interviews give visitors to the Youngstown Center different views of working in the steel industry, which dominated the life of the Mahoning Valley for so many years. By trying to be inclusive, people get a better understanding of the kinds of work steel mill employees performed, the discrimination facing people who were not white males, the love of these people had for their job and their country, and the nature of deindustrialization and how it impacted on communities like Youngstown, Ohio." See: Donna M. DeBlasio, "Oral History, Deindustrialization and the Museum Exhibit: 'By the Sweat of their Brow: Forging the Steel Valley,'" unpublished conference paper to October 1998 Oral History Association Meeting in Buffalo, New York. I would like to thank the Donna DeBlasio for her generous assistance.

³⁵ My choice of this topic is partly predicated on my own life-experience as my father, a railway employee, was obliged coincidentally to take early retirement after twenty-nine years of service just as I was beginning to research this dissertation. He proved, nonetheless, far luckier than most of the men and women I interviewed. A fifty-one-year-old blue collar worker, like my father, with less than thirty years service was, at that time, lucky to walk away with severance pay and a vested pension payable at 65. Many did not. In Ontario, at least, mandatory advance notification of job loss,

shorten the distance between my interview partners and myself. Interviewees welcomed the donation of the videotaped recordings of their interviews to an archives in their hometown (see Appendix I for the certification of institutional ethics review and the interview guide).³⁶ Like historian Luisa Passerini, I sought a spontaneous type of reply by keeping questions open-ended and my interventions to a minimum. The interviews generally followed the life-course of the interviewee. As a result, only a relatively small portion of the videotaped interviews dealt specifically with shutdown experiences. In many cases, I followed the lead of the interviewee. For example, Bill Scandlon's fascinating memories of the 1946 strike at the Steel Company of Canada in Hamilton added much to my understanding of that significant labour struggle even if his stories fell outside the parameters of this project.³⁷ In the end, the opportunity to talk to ordinary men and women who had experienced job loss during the 1970s and 1980s

severance pay and hiring preferences are now legislated and most unionized workers with long service can "bridge" to retirement. Even in the United States, private pension guarantees and prenotification of mass layoffs have somewhat mitigated the blow of job loss.

³⁶ I arranged to have the videotapes of the oral history interviews to be donated to archives in each of the towns where interviews occurred in order that these plant shutdown stories remain in the communities where they were given. These institutions are the Walter Reuther Library of Wayne State University in Detroit, the Windsor Municipal Archives and the archives of McMaster University in Hamilton. The interview guide and consent form were reviewed and recommended by the University of Ottawa's Committee on Ethical Research on Human Subjects.

³⁷ Bill Scandlon interviewed by Steven High at the Ontario Workers' Arts and Heritage Centre in Hamilton in February 1998. The videotape recording will be donated to the McMaster University Archives (MUA).

brought me face to face with the tragic consequences of industrial restructuring.³⁸

Besides these oral histories, this dissertation also brings together a wide range of archival, literary and audio-visual sources. The availability of archival sources differed greatly between Canada and the United States. For example, the Ontario Ministry of Labour as well as Consultative Manpower Services, a federal agency set up in 1963 to assist workers dislocated in plant shutdowns in Canada, provided plant-by-plant reports detailing the number of workers laid-off, their years of service, age, and the efforts to find them new jobs. In contrast, federal and state governments in the United States played little or no role in plant shutdowns until 1988 when new legislation came into force. As a result, I have been far more dependent on corporate and union records in the USA.

Yet the strength of American governmental records lay in voluminous in-coming correspondence files of the governors of Ohio and Michigan. In fact, I uncovered dozens of letters from ordinary men and women pleading for governmental assistance in keeping their mill or factory open. Indeed, there seemed to be a personal connection between these governors and their constituents that did not exist in Canada. Moreover, the Presidential libraries of Richard Nixon (College Park, Maryland), Gerald Ford (Ann Arbor, Michigan), and Jimmy Carter (Atlanta, Georgia) revealed the perspective of the executive branch of the US government. Paradoxically, files at lower bureaucratic levels are protected by a thirty-year rule. However, both countries established select committees or congressional sub-committees to look into plant shutdowns and displacement during the era surveyed. The transcripts of these hearings proved

³⁸ Most interviews were of two hours duration but a few were as brief as an hour. I quickly found that it was best to interview people in their homes where they felt most relaxed and could draw photographs, documents and, in one case, even tools into our conversations.

particularly useful.

Also useful were the thousands of newspaper clippings found in vertical files compiled by the Michigan State Library, Ontario Archives, Windsor Public Library, Hamilton Public Library, Youngstown Public Library, the *Plant Shutdown Monitor*, as well as by several unions. In addition, I systematically surveyed four news magazines and several trade journals. With the full cooperation of the union movement, I looked at a wide variety of records including those of the United Steelworkers of America (State College, Pennsylvania; Youngstown, Ohio; Hamilton, Ontario; Ottawa, Ontario), United Electrical Workers (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Hamilton, Ontario), International Union of Electrical Workers (Ottawa), United Auto Workers (Detroit, Michigan); Canadian Auto Workers (Ottawa, Ontario), United Rubber Workers (Akron, Ohio), International Association of Machinists (IAM), Canadian Labour Congress (Ottawa, Ontario), Detroit AFL-CIO (Detroit, Michigan), and the Michigan AFL-CIO (Detroit, Michigan). The archival records of the fight-back campaigns in Pittsburgh and Youngstown and the private papers of several politicians proved particularly fruitful.

Unfortunately, corporations have been unwilling to open their more recent records to the public. As a result, I have turned to those collections donated to public archives such as the extraordinary Frigidaire collection at GMI in Flint, Michigan, the extensive Youngstown Sheet & Tube records held in Youngstown and Columbus, Ohio, as well as the more limited records of Goodyear Tire and B F Goodrich held at the University of Akron, Acme-Cleveland, Fisher Body and TRW at the Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland, Allis-Chalmers in Milwaukee and the Beach Foundry collection at the National Archives of Canada in Ottawa. In addition, I turned to the records of the Canadian Manufacturers Association, the Windsor Chamber of Commerce, and the annual reports of about twenty-five major corporations.

Drawing from this assortment of sources, the four sections of this thesis highlight the dynamic tension between experience and meaning. As historian Joy Parr has noted, experiences are formed through discourses (webs of "connected meanings") which make experiences comprehensible.³⁹ The theme of *empty spaces* is at the heart of my findings. It speaks to the empty husks of what once had been vibrant working-class communities that remained after the gales of "creative destruction" swept across North America's industrial landscape between 1969 and 1984.

Each section of the thesis examines a stage in the plant shutdown process from a variety of vantage points: the factory floor, the corporate boardroom, the union office, and the political capitol. The introduction and chapter one set the stage. Chapter one explores how North Americans interpreted industrial decline through the filter of popular regional identities. Most notably, this chapter sketches the transformation of the "industrial heartland" of the United States into the "Rust Belt." By contrast, Canada's "Golden Horseshoe" did not rust.

The second section, "Place," looks at the conflicting world-views of workers and managers. Chapter two examines the world the workers lost, in the oral history interviews conducted with 137 of the displaced. Through the recurring metaphors of "home" and "family," we find that workers on both sides of the Canada-US border had developed associational ties and familial identification with mill and factory. By comparison, chapter three charts the growing detachment of employers from the factory floor by examining the changing attitudes of corporate executives towards local communities and industry. My examination focuses, specifically, on the emergence of a new kind of factory that, from the outside, was indistinguishable from an office-

³⁹ Joy Parr, "Gender History and Historical Practice," in Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld, eds. *Gender and History in Canada* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1996), 15.

building.

Section three, "Displacement," comprising chapters four and five, examines the nature of displacement. Chapter four looks at the macro-economics behind plant shutdowns including the "runaway plant" and "obsolete factory." The waning importance of industry as an employer since the 1920s, and its spatial re-organization, provide a dramatic backdrop to the series of economic crises that marked the period under review. In chapter five, the subjectivity of oral history provides a place where we can interrogate the meanings derived from job loss.

The final section, "Resistance," comprising chapters six and seven, determines to what degree worker's responses were embedded in distinct national contexts. Chapter six examines the failure in the United States of a local "community" as a rhetorical weapon to ward off companies that shut plants. By contrast, chapter seven finds that a national "community" in Canada proved to be far more effective in pushing reluctant politicians to regulate plant shutdowns, thereby mitigating some of the worst effects of job loss. Finally, the thesis concludes with the suggestion that this nationalist resistance to plant shutdowns in Canada enforced what could be called a "moral economy" on industrial firms operating there.

CHAPTER ONE

GOLD DOESN'T RUST: REGIONS OF THE NORTH AMERICAN MIND

In 1989, *Roger & Me*, Michael Moore's irreverent film documentary about corporate greed and the hollowness of the American Dream, propelled Flint, Michigan into the North American limelight.¹ The fall of Moore's hometown was a decidedly sharp one. To the upbeat music of the Beach Boys' "Wouldn't It Be Nice," Moore showed his audience what Flint had become: a town of abandoned homes, vacant lots, boarded-up businesses and empty streets. Interspersed between these scenes of urban decay were newspaper headlines announcing the closure of one General Motors plant after another. Moore's technique of juxtaposing contrasting images produced a devastating indictment of GM's relationship to Flint. The most damning example occurred at the end of the film when Moore overlaid GM Chairman Roger Smith's Christmas message of human fellowship with visual images of a family being evicted on Christmas eve. While a choir sang "You Better Watch Out, You Better Not Cry," the family's meagre possessions were piled onto the curbside; even the Christmas tree was added to the pile. The film's impact owed not only to the creativity of Michael Moore, but also to the fact that North Americans were already primed to interpret the history of Flint, and of other industrial cities in the Great Lakes region, in terms of decline. Had Moore made such a negative film at the outset of the 1969 recession about a city in what was then known as the

¹ Michael Moore (producer). 1989. *Roger & Me*. Warner Brothers.

"industrial heartland," he would have been dismissed as an alarmist.² By the 1980s, however, North Americans had become used to thinking pessimistically about the Great Lakes region. As the industrial heartland transmuted in the minds of Americans into the "Rust Belt," its cities became ideal targets for black humour.

The focus of this chapter is on the transformation of the image of the Great Lakes basin from industrial heartland to Rust Belt in the United States and the resilience of the "Golden Horseshoe" label in Canada. American geographer Wilbur Zelinsky defined these so-called vernacular regions, or popular regional identities, as shared spontaneous images of territorial reality represented by ordinary people.³ The mental process in which people comprehend the world around them is commonly referred to as cognitive mapping by scholars such as Roger Downs and David Stea. A cognitive map is a person's representation, or mental construction, of the spatial environment, including, but not limited to, vernacular regions. Downs and Stea suggest that cognitive maps "serve as coathangers for assorted memories. They provide a vehicle for recall -- an image of 'where' brings back a recollection of 'who' and 'what'."⁴

The ambiguity surrounding the meaning of region is largely due to the many purposes it has been asked to perform by North American scholars. "[I]ts content will vary with the purposes and standards of those using the concept," cautioned Frederick G.

² This chapter will use quotation marks to denote an imagined or constructed reality only when introducing the word to the reader in order to avoid their proliferation.

³ Wilbur Zelinsky, "North America's Vernacular Regions," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 70, 1 (March 1980), 1.

⁴ Roger Downs and David Stea, *Maps of Minds: Reflections on Cognitive Mapping* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 27.

Luebke.⁵ A new cultural conception of region emerged in the scholarship of the 1970s. The appearance of the "new cultural region" coincided, in Luebke's mind, with a new emphasis on pluralism. Region became increasingly seen as a complex and fluid mental construction rather than an objective spatial entity.⁶ Chad Gaffield, for one, has shown that regionalism is a mind set. As such, the criteria upon which regional identity is based have changed over time.⁷ Indeed, new regional images have evolved from and eventually have supplanted previous ones.⁸ The identification of prevailing regional identities did not go far enough for British geographer Peter Jackson; in 1989 he suggested that representation is a field of political contestation and negotiation because there is a plurality of cultures.⁹ The historian interested in the "making of the Rust Belt" must therefore go beyond the prevailing image and study the interaction of competing regional identities.

⁵ Frederick C. Luebke, "Regionalism and the Great Plains: Problems of Concept and Method," *Western Historical Quarterly* 15, 1 (1984), 19.

⁶ William Westfall, "On the Concept of Region in Canadian History and Literature," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 15, 2 (1980), 11.

⁷ Chad Gaffield, "The New Regional History: Rethinking the History of the Outaouais," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 26, 1 (Spring 1991), 69-70. In the case of the Outaouais region of Quebec, Gaffield shows that it, at one time or another, has been conceived of in terms of its geography (Ottawa Valley), economy (lumber industry) and political location (Western Quebec).

⁸ Despite the multiplicity of images projected onto a spatial area at any one time, R. Douglas Francis has argued that historians can ascertain the prevailing image of a region. See: R. Douglas Francis, *Images of the West: Responses to the Canadian Prairies* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1989), xvii.

⁹ Peter Jackson, *Maps of Meaning: An Introduction to Cultural Geography* (London: Routledge, 1989), 1.

The methodological approach taken by Robert A. Beauregard to urban decline in *Voices of Decline* acts as a convenient model. Confining himself to “public knowledge,” Beauregard found that images of abandoned homes, children in glass strewn lots, and urban renewal demolitions were intimately tied to urban decline. The term (urban decline) acted as a composite of these inter-related images. The city was thus “used rhetorically to frame the precariousness of existence in a modern world, with urban decline serving as a symbolic cover for more wide-ranging fears and anxieties.”¹⁰ Images of place are, of course, not confined to cities. Regions also exist in the imagination. Just as Beauregard found that a city such as Cleveland increasingly signified decline in the late twentieth century, entire regions could also be stigmatized. This connection leads to four questions dealt with in this chapter. How did the Rust Belt become public knowledge? What did it signify? Did the social construction of the Rust Belt follow or precede regional industrial decline in the Great Lakes basin? Did the international boundary make any difference to how North Americans understood industrial decline?

This chapter, organized into three parts, explores the social construction of the “Rust Belt” as revealed in four news magazines (*Time*, *Maclean's*, *The Nation*, and *Canadian Forum*), and in film, art, photography, literature, song and dictionaries. First, I will scrutinize two older, agreeable landscapes of the mind in the United States: the “Middle West” and the “Heartland.” Second, I will show that these prevailing images of the region were transformed by its deteriorating economic position during the 1970s and into the 1980s. Derived from the symbolic legacy of the Great Depression’s “Dust Bowl,” and the desire for a Northern counterpoise for the pre-existing “Sunbelt”

¹⁰ Robert Beauregard, *Voices of Decline: the Postwar Fate of U.S. Cities* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993), 4-5.

symbol, the Rust Belt emerged from, and eventually supplanted, previous vernacular regions in the early 1980s to become the primary regional label for the industrial cities on the American side of the Great Lakes basin. The Rust Belt, however, did not extend into Canada in the minds of most North Americans. North of the border one still found the "Golden Horseshoe" and the industrial heartland in Canada. Before ascertaining why these regions of the mind never metamorphosed into the stigma of the Rust Belt, we find that a different understanding of the North American recession originated, at least in part, from a relatively more favourable economic situation in Southern Ontario that allowed earlier notions of Canada's industrial heartland and the Golden Horseshoe to persist.

The Middle West has always been a place where Americans imagined the essential characteristics of the nation resided, although where that place might actually be has shifted over time. The precise configuration of the Middle West has been elusive. As geographer James Shortridge details in a 1989 book, the Middle West originally, when the term first arose in the 1880s, signified Kansas and Nebraska; it then had an exclusively pastoral connotation. Subsequently, the boundaries of this vernacular region expanded northward and eastward to include the Northern plains and the Old Northwest, that is to say the states carved out of the territory between the Appalachians and the Mississippi River north of the Ohio River and south of the Great Lakes. Shortridge explains the shift eastward as a consequence of the hard times of the 1930s: "The disaster of the Dust Bowl was probably a factor in the original perceived migration of the cultural core of the Middle West eastward from the [stricken] plains...."¹¹

Geographer Walter Zelinsky has also sought to locate the Middle West amongst the

¹¹ James Shortridge, *The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture* (Kansas: University of Kansas, 1989), 10.

vernacular regions of the United States, in his case by examining the regional labels that owners gave to private companies. He located the core of the Middle West primarily East of the Mississippi River. Zelinsky discovered, nonetheless, that a "secondary zone penetrates deeply into Canada's Prairie Provinces and into Colorado and Utah and as far south as Memphis and Fort Smith."¹² Geographer John H. Garland similarly included Southwestern Ontario within the so-called "Eastern Lower Great Lakes" district of the Midwest that boasted the largest concentration of heavy industry and urban population in the entire region. Stretching from Chicago in the West to Toronto in the East, Garland's district virtually ignored the international border. Southwestern Ontario was simply considered an extension of the American Midwest.¹³ Hence, the Midwest extended in the minds of some North Americans into Canada. Zelinsky and Garland are, however, the exceptions rather than the rule: for most American scholars the Midwest was a purely American phenomenon.¹⁴

The Middle West, as it made its journey eastward and northward across the continent, added an industrial dimension to its original pastoralism. Under the rubric of Industrial Midwest, the heavily industrialized states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin were simultaneously associated with, and differentiated from, the rest of the Middle West. This great industrial complex acted as the hub of the United States

¹² Zelinsky, "North America's Vernacular Regions," 11.

¹³ John H. Garland, ed. *The North American Midwest: A Regional Geography* (New York: John Wiley and Son, 1955). Other scholars have used the Great Lakes basin as their unit of analysis. For example, Donna Taylor, *The Great Lakes Region in Children's Books* (Brighton, Michigan: Green Oak Press, 1980) included Ontario with the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

¹⁴ Cotton Mather, "The Midwest: Image and Reality," *Journal of Geography* 85 (1986), 190.

economy. Wallace Akin, writing in 1968, claimed that the region's success was derived from the optimism and hard work of its inhabitants. Thus, the industrial dimension of the Middle West drew from the same well-spring of images commonly associated with the breadbasket, with Chicago as the metropolitan capital of the Midwest, Detroit acted as its industrial engine. The 'motor city' was, for Akin, where "mass production and industrial technology have reached their highest development."¹⁵ A certain nostalgia about this period of prosperity in the Industrial Midwest permeated the scholarship of the 1980s. Photographer Michael Williamson and journalist Dale Maharidge began their 1985 *Journey to Nowhere* with a chapter entitled "How It Was."¹⁶ In retrospect, the photographs and text revealed a golden age where the steel and auto industries symbolized American might and a time when industrial workers were honoured. "Life was good" for steeltowns such as Youngstown, Ohio. Michael Moore similarly began *Roger & Me* with his own childhood remembrances of Flint, Michigan where "everyday was a good day." In sum, Americans had grown accustomed by the early 1960's to seeing the Midwest as the dynamic heart of the industrial economy of the United States.

The region overlapped the heartland. The heartland is another vernacular region whose boundaries and location have shifted over time. Though not entirely co-terminus, the Middle West and the heartland were intimately tied together in the minds of Americans. This link can be seen in *MidAmerica*, a literary journal that has provided an important forum for exploration of the literary images of the region. Its editor, David D. Anderson frequently has evoked the heartland in his own writings. For example, in

¹⁵ Wallace E. Akin, *The North Central United States* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1968), 151.

¹⁶ Michael Williamson and Dale Maharidge, *Journey to Nowhere* (Garden City, New York: The Dial Press of Doubleday & Company, 1985).

1973, he asserted that just "as the Midwest is for [Frederick Jackson] Turner the interaction of frontier, nation, and democratic philosophy in microcosm, it is also the American heartland, as demonstrated not only by its geographic position, but by its political and social reality and by the inevitability of its future...."¹⁷ The association of heartland with the Midwest also surfaced in Lucien Stryck's 1975 poetry anthology, *Heartland II: Poets of the Midwest*.¹⁸ Implicit in these images of heartland was the sense of a region's cultural, political, geographic and economic centrality. As such, the heartland has often been presented as the centre of an authentic Middle America, the mythical heart of the nation.

In 1969, the industrial cities of the Great Lakes basin had a positive image. It was unimaginable that they would ever deserve a common negative label. They were heartland. They were Midwest. But over the next fifteen years, the cumulative impact of plant shutdowns in the auto, rubber and steel industries devastated the region, transforming its prevailing image. Writers in the popular press increasingly used the Great Depression as a reference point for explaining industrial decline. Hard times in the 1980s evoked memories of, and allusions to, the Great Depression of the 1930s. One image of the economic crisis in the Dirty Thirties seemed to have particular salience in the early 1980s: the image of the Dust Bowl. The Dust Bowl still had a powerful grip on the imagination of Americans thanks to John Steinbeck's classic, *The Grapes of Wrath*, the folk music of Woody Guthrie, the painting of Grant Wood, and the documentary photography of Arthur Rothstein. The dust storms and the sight of desperate families

¹⁷ David D. Anderson, "The Dimensions of the Midwest," *MidAmerica* 1 (October 1973), 9-10.

¹⁸ Lucien Stryck, *Heartland II: Poets of the Midwest* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University, 1975).

moving West made an indelible impression on the popular imagination.

There was, as we would expect from historian Paul Bonnifield, more than one dust bowl in the historical memory of North Americans, and therefore more than one image on which to connect past and present distress.¹⁹ These images are worth noting in detail because the symbolic legacy of the Dust Bowl influenced how Americans perceived industrial decline during the 1970s and into the 1980s. When capitalized, the Dust Bowl referred to a specific area of the Southwestern United States particularly devastated by drought and depression. The *New Century Cyclopedia of Names*, for instance, located the Dust Bowl between “a line near the 100th meridian, on the E., and the Rocky Mountains, on the W. More particularly, it applies to the high plains of the Southwest.”²⁰ A mental image was thus superimposed onto a specific geographic area. The editors of English language dictionaries, in turn, increasingly provided both a generic and a capitalized version that retained its historic and geographic associations. The fifth edition of the *Columbia Encyclopedia* suggested in 1993 that the Dust Bowl maintained its spatial association with the Southwest until government intervention and sustainable farming practices in the 1960s made the Dust Bowl phenomenon “a historical reference.”²¹

Because the Great Depression imprinted the symbolic cover, or composite image, of the Dust Bowl onto our popular imagination, whenever an agricultural crisis loomed, commentators were quick to warn of another dust bowl. As a result, North Americans

¹⁹ Paul Bonnifield, *The Dust Bowl: Men, Dirt and Depression* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1979), vii.

²⁰ Clarence L. Barnhart, *The New Century Cyclopedia of Names* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1954).

²¹ *The Columbia Encyclopedia* (5th edition) (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1993), 2383.

were constantly being reminded of the term after World War II.²² This recourse to Great Depression imagery led to the dislodging of the symbol from place as it no longer necessarily referred to the Southwestern United States. Amidst the economic turmoil of 1979, North Americans were deluged with a wave of commentary about the Great Depression in general, and the Dust Bowl in particular, as the continent commemorated the Crash. Donald Worster wrote that the Dust Bowl was "a place- a region whose borders are as inexact and shifting as a sand dune...."²³ The Dust Bowl, like the dust storms themselves, was more of an experience than a precise place. Oral histories by Studs Terkel and Barry Broadfoot further ensured that most North Americans were well acquainted with the symbolic legacy of the Great Depression at the outset of the recession of 1980-1983.²⁴ The persistence of the Dust Bowl region, even as its frontiers drifted across the imaginary landscape of North America, was one factor in the eventual creation of the Rust Belt, for it provided one half of the nomenclature.

The other half derived from a new vernacular region, the Sunbelt. Yet the

²² The recurring need of the mass media to refer to new manifestations of Dust Bowl was demonstrated frequently: "New Dust Bowl in the West," *US News and World Report* 38 (21 January 1955), 71-72; "Fifty Million Acres-Dust Bowl Danger Zone," *Newsweek* 43 (8 March 1954), 68-9; "Oklahoma 1970: The Dust Bowl of the 1930's Revisited," *Time* 95 (26 January 1970), 16-7; and Shona McKay, "Return of the Dust Bowl," *Maclean's* (6 August 1984), 17.

²³ Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 4.

²⁴ See, for example, Barry Broadfoot, *Ten Lost Years, 1929-1939: Memories of Canadians Who Survived the Depression* (Markham, Ontario: Paperjacks, 1975 [1973]); and Studs Terkel, *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression* (New York: Pantheon, 1970).

Sunbelt did more than provide part of the terminology for describing the decline of an industrial region no longer deemed worthy of such honorifics as Midwest and heartland; it also provided the foil. During the 1970s, the supremacy of the Industrial Midwest was increasingly challenged by the ascendancy of the Sunbelt. Etymological dictionaries suggest that the Sunbelt was coined by American writer Kevin Phillips in 1969 and ostensibly patterned after such pre-existing notions as the Bible Belt and Corn Belt. The *Second Barnhart Dictionary of New English*, published in 1980, indicated that the Sunbelt stretched from Virginia to Southern California. A somewhat more precise location was given in the dictionary's third edition, wherein the Sunbelt was identified as the southern tier of the United States "focused on Florida, Texas, Arizona, and California, and extending as far north as Virginia."²⁵

The economic and cultural ascendancy of the Sunbelt states cast a shadow over what had hitherto been the industrial heartland of the United States. Southern culture blossomed to such an extent during these years that historian James Cobb proclaimed the "Southernization of America" in 1982.²⁶ A growing number of Americans tuned into country and western radio stations, saw *Coal Miner's Daughter* and *Urban Cowboy* on the big screen, and waited impatiently over the summer of 1980 to find out who shot the Texas oilman "J. R."²⁷ Even though the stereotypical fan of country and western music was, until the 1970s, the Southern redneck, musicians such as Bobby Bare, whose song

²⁵ Clarence L. Barnhart, *The Second Barnhart Dictionary of New English* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980).

²⁶ James Cobb, "From Muskogee to Luckenbach: Country Music and the Southernization of America," *Journal of Popular Culture* 16 (1982), 81.

²⁷ Bernard Schwartz (producer). *Coal Miner's Daughter*. 1980. Universal Studios.

"Detroit City" recounted how Southerners were drawn into the auto plants of the 'motor city,' held enormous appeal to blue-collar listeners in the North. As the image of the South and Southwest was reborn with the Sunbelt, country and western music's newfound respectability allowed it to go mainstream with a new generation of singers such as Kris Kristofferson, Willie Nelson and Crystal Gale. Waxing eloquent over the brash upstart, the print and electronic media were impressed by the Sunbelt's rapid economic growth and remarkable sense of optimism. Even *The Nation* editorialized in December 1979 that the "American future, it has been said, has picked up and moved to the burgeoning cities of the Sunbelt."²⁸ Further evidence of the shift in the relationship between North and South could be seen in Bob Seger's 1982 album *The Distance*. His song "Boomtown Blues," about a homesick Michigonian forced to work in one of these rapidly growing Sunbelt cities, came full circle from Bobby Bare's "Detroit City."²⁹ The view from the South, on the other hand, did not dwell on things lost. In an opinion piece entitled "The Divided States of America," Bernard Weinstein, a paid Sunbelt lobbyist, credited the region's apparent success to its entrepreneurial spirit.³⁰

The ascent of the Sunbelt was synchronous with a reassessment of the industrial, urbanized region north of the Ohio River. There, race riots, urban decline, environmental concerns, and a wave of plant shutdowns in the late 1970s and early

²⁸ *The Nation* (December 1979), 1.

²⁹ Bob Seger and the Silver Bullet Band, "Boomtown Blues," on *The Distance*. Recorded at Studio 55, CDP 7 460052; and, Bobby Bare, n.d. "Detroit City," on *Detroit City and Other Hits*, song written by Donny Dill and Mel Tillis, produced by Chet Atkins. Recorded at RCA Victor's Nashville Sound Studio, LPM-2776.

³⁰ Bernard Weinstein, "The Divided States of America," *Current* (July-August 1980), 52-3.

1980s were producing intensely negative images that made anachronistic the positive connotations of the Middle West and heartland labels. In response, the Middle West began moving west to Nebraska and Kansas in the popular imagination of North Americans. Shortridge used the results from a questionnaire administered to students in thirty-two states in 1980 to chart this shift in the cognitive map of the Middle West westward to the Plains. When asked to locate the core of the Middle West, seventy per cent of the respondents selected Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri or Iowa.³¹ The incompatibility of the Middle West's dominant hearth-like image with the negative images emanating from the industrial cities acted to divorce rural and industrial dimensions in people's minds. Why would anyone "want to lump Ohio and Nebraska in the same region," asked Joel Garreau in 1981.³² The imaginative boundaries of the heartland also drew away from the troubled industrial cities of the Great Lakes basin. The core of the heartland had shifted northwest to Minnesota and Northern Wisconsin by the time John Borchert wrote *The Northern Heartland* in 1987.³³ The bond between rural and industrial dimensions of the Middle West and the Heartland was severed by the end of the 1970s, and new, negative regional labels had become attached to the industrial cities in the Great Lakes basin.

The metaphor of the life-cycle was central to the discourse in the early 1980s over industrial decline in the United States. The Industrial Midwest and the

³¹ Shortridge, *The Middle West*, 85.

³² Joel Garreau, *The Nine Nations of America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), xv.

³³ John R. Borchert, *Northern Heartland* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1987), 4-5.

Northeastern United States had, for Allan Ornstein, become "aged America."³⁴ *Time* magazine often explained industrial decline in terms of old age: "Like an aging heavyweight gone to flab, US industry has fallen behind some of its world-class competitors."³⁵ Continuing the metaphor, *Time* indicated that the older industrial areas "probably will take it on the chin" by the booming Sunbelt powerhouse. Historians such as Jon C. Teaforde even adopted the metaphor of the life-cycle to explain the rise and fall of the *Cities of the Heartland*.³⁶ The recourse to the metaphor of the life-cycle by media commentators and scholars reflected the pervasive sense of the inevitability of industrial decline in the United States.

For so many years the symbol of the American Dream, mass production and conspicuous consumption, the car had come to symbolize by 1979 what was wrong with the old industrial heartland. This was demonstrated in a *Time* photograph of Cadillac Ranch outside Amarillo, Texas, which had a caption that read "Industrial Stonehenge."³⁷ Detroit and the auto industry were represented as one by the national media. Crisis in the auto industry and the virtual bankruptcy of the Chrysler Corporation in 1979 were therefore projected onto the image of the "motor city" itself. This connection was demonstrated by the shifting literary image of Detroit during the 1970s and into the 1980s. The shutdown of many of the city's automotive plants threw tens of thousands

³⁴ Allan C. Ornstein, "Decline of the Frostbelt," *Dissent* 30, 3 (1983), 373.

³⁵ *Time Magazine* (10 December 1979), 79.

³⁶ Jon C. Teaforde, *Cities of the Heartland: The Rise and Fall of the Industrial Midwest* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), vii.

³⁷ *Time Magazine* (2 June 1980), 56.

out of work between 1979 and 1984. The social consequences were represented in a 1984 short story entitled "The Empty House" by Earl Shorris. The story was written from the perspective of a woman whose life was shattered when Chrysler let her go. Alone in her home, the narrator saw a new meanness from her window: "Houses crouch on the flat land, row after row, relieved only by the empty places where the fires are burned out and the rubble is bulldozed. There are few cars in the streets. There are no people walking, nothing moves except the dogs prowling inside the chain-linked fences...."³⁸ The story climaxes with the sheriff's auction of the woman's home, adding one more empty house to an already silent street. Canada's foremost poet of the workplace, Tom Wayman, also evoked the devastating impact of industrial decline on Detroit. Wayman wrote in 1983 that:

A Detroit poem has to have holes in it:
places where the words have been cleared out
by Housing and Urban Development
...
Larger themes have to be forgotten, too,
like the big factories on Jefferson
and elsewhere, standing empty
with as much damage done to their outsides
as can be humanly accomplished
and then ignored.³⁹

Detroit had indeed fallen victim to what economists euphemistically called post-industrialism. If this city and its region could no longer be called the American heartland, what should they be called?

For the sake of symmetry, the mass media and academics searched for a symbolic

³⁸ Earl Shorris, "The Empty House," in Earl Shorris, ed., *While Someone Else is Eating* (Garden City: Anchor Press, 1984), 70.

³⁹ Tom Wayman, "Detroit Poem," in *Counting the Hours: City Poem* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1983).

Northern counterpoise to the Sunbelt, settling on the "Frostbelt" and "Snowbelt" by 1977. These two new mental constructs ostensibly stretched from coast to coast in the northern tier of the United States. The *Second Barnhart Dictionary of New English* (1980) submitted that the two new vernacular regions were inter-changeable and indeed referential to the Sunbelt. Ironically, the example cited in this dictionary for the Frostbelt was drawn from a highly critical 1978 *Harper's* magazine article that questioned the accuracy of the Frost analogy. Even though economists Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison adopted the antithesis between the Frostbelt and Sunbelt in their influential 1982 monograph *The Deindustrialization of America*, they warned that these large vernacular regions were not homogeneous entities.⁴⁰ The spatial boundaries of rise and decline, in their minds, were not co-terminant with one or the other. Hence, almost immediately, the symbolic covers of the Frostbelt and Snowbelt came under attack for their imprecision. The debate revealed the need for a more precise label to identify the part of the North that was being associated with industrial decline. The ambiguity of the Frostbelt and Snowbelt labels resulted in such awkward or geographically vague adaptations as the "industrial Frostbelt," the "traditional Midwest Industrial America," "Smokestack America," and "The Foundry."

The social construction of Smokestack America was an attempt to tie to place the so-called smokestack industries of steel, rubber and auto. The industrial smokestack had come to symbolize heavy industry's pollution of the environment in the late 1960s. Environmentalists were using the dramatic image of steel plants belching black smoke in their campaign for stricter pollution standards. Environmental degradation was thus part of the "emotional baggage" carried by the industrial cities of the Great Lakes basin

⁴⁰ Bluestone and Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America*, 33.

after Love Canal, the Cuyahoga River fire, the near-death experience of Lake Erie and, after 1980, the spectre of acid rain, all blackened the reputation of the area. As a result, Smokestack America had almost completely supplanted the industrial heartland in the pages of *Time* by the end of 1981. Its popularity was such that Janice Castor could dryly observe in the magazine that the decline in America's smokestack industries was proving a boon for book publishers.⁴¹

The projection of the image of heavy industry onto an entire region reached its apex in *The Foundry*. Newspaper editor Joel Garreau re-wrote the map of the continent in favour of "understandable concepts" in *The Nine Nations of North America*, that rely "on a certain intuitive, subjective sense of the loyalties that unify it."⁴² In doing so, Garreau's nine vernacular regions ignored the international border entirely: The Foundry encompassed all of the industrial communities of the Great Lakes basin. Symbolized by the industrial smokestack, this mental map lumped Southern Ontario (and parts of Northern Ontario including Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie) in with the Great Lakes states and the Northeast. The gritty industrial cities of the area evoked unpleasant associations in the minds of North Americans. Garreau wrote that their "names mean one thing: heavy work with heavy machines. Hard work for those with jobs; hard times for those without."⁴³ In sum, the reputation of the industrial region was being undermined by images of environmental degradation, brute labour, and subsequently, and most forcefully, of industrial decline.

⁴¹ Janice Castor, "Book Audits," *Time* (23 May 1983), 44.

⁴² Garreau, *The Nine Nations of North America*, xv.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 57.

Depression talk in the United States escalated dramatically in 1982 as the economy fell deeper into recession. Twelve million Americans, or 10.8 per cent of the national workforce, were without work by October 1982. The recession ravaged the Industrial Midwest, pushing official unemployment figures up to 17.2 per cent in Michigan and 14.2 per cent in neighbouring Ohio.⁴⁴ In the depths of this recession, amidst fears of a new depression, the American media began referring to the devastated Great Lakes states as the "Rust Bowl." An obvious adaptation of the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, this new symbolic cover, or vernacular region, quickly established itself in the minds of North Americans. The Dust Bowl symbolized dust storms and abandoned farms in the Southwestern plains; whereas the emerging Rust Bowl became associated with rusting machinery, abandoned factories, the demolition of old mills, locked factory gates, and urban blight. The theme of abandonment permeated both mental constructs.

The social construction of the Rust Bowl can be seen in the business pages of *Time* magazine from 1980 to 1982, a period in which reporters grasped for a central idea, or symbolic cover, to encapsulate what they saw happening to the industrial cities of the Great Lakes basin. As early as May 1980, reporters described the devastated geographic area as a "crescent encompassing the aging industrial cities tied to the auto industry-Pittsburgh, Detroit and Chicago."⁴⁵ The calamity had befallen an even larger spatial area in the mind of Christopher Byron: "Stretching across the nation's manufacturing heartland from the foothills of the Alleghenies, west to the Mississippi River and north

⁴⁴ *Time* (13 December 1982), 54-5.

⁴⁵ "A More Severe Slump," *Time* (26 May 1980), 40-41.

to Michigan's Upper Peninsula, stands an idle army of jobless."⁴⁶ The transformation of the industrial heartland from economic powerhouse to basket case was even more apparent in labour reporter Charles Alexander's observation in December 1981 that "[w]ith each passing day, the industrial landscape is increasingly marred by padlocked factory gates and smokeless smokestacks."⁴⁷ Few could deny that something had gone terribly wrong in the once mighty industrial heartland.

The deepening of the recession in late 1982, and the many comparisons made to the Great Depression, gave the journalists writing for *Time* the symbolic cover they were searching for. In a December 1982 article aptly entitled "Booms, Busts and Birth of a Rust Bowl," Christopher Byron proclaimed the death of the region's economy. Battered by falling demand for metals and mass lay-offs, "the once pulsing industrial belt that stretches from Illinois across to western New England took on the grim, ground-down demeanour of a half century earlier, acquiring the glumly descriptive epithet of Rust Bowl."⁴⁸ The Rust Bowl struck a popular chord due to its historic association with abandonment and regional crisis. Expanding on the meaning of the Rust Bowl in a subsequent article, Byron painted a very bleak picture indeed. "Like mausoleums of a passing age," Byron asserted,

they stand shuttered and empty. They are the padlocked steel mills of what has come to be known grimly as the American Rust Bowl, and from the rail sidings of East Chicago to the icy waterways of western New York State, they offer mute

⁴⁶ Christopher Byron, "The Idle Army of Unemployed," *Time* (27 December 1980), 44-49.

⁴⁷ Charles Alexander, "Gathering Gloom for Workers," *Time* (14 December 1981), 64-65.

⁴⁸ Christopher Byron, "Booms, Busts and Birth of a Rust Bowl," *Time* (27 December 1982), 44-9.

testimony of the industrial damage that has been done by the longest economic decline in half a century.⁴⁹

The Rust Bowl signified the apparent death, some would say of old age, of the industrial heartland. The death of the region was illustrated, in turn, by weeds growing through concrete, the "dead hulks" of abandoned steel mills and their subsequent demolition.

The associated images of rusting machinery, padlocked gates, abandoned and demolished factories attracted the interest of documentary photographers in the United States. Photographic images of the remains of abandoned mills were common fare in popular magazines, in television news reports, and in monographs about deindustrialization. Even the 1988 *Historical Atlas of the United States* selected a photograph of a demolished blast furnace in Pittsburgh to illustrate the "Postindustrial Revolution."⁵⁰ Michael Williamson and Dale Maharidge recorded the brutality of industrial decline in *Journey to Nowhere*. The second chapter entitled "The Rust Bowl" included Williamson's haunting photographs of the dead hulks of abandoned steel mills in Youngstown, Ohio -- silent testimony to the physical and human devastation wrought by plant shutdowns. In particular, photographs of the cathedral-like shell of the Brier Hill steel work, the two ex-steelworkers (father and son) sifting through the rubble of what once had been US Steel's Ohio works, and the ghostly interior of a dead factory, where time seemed suspended, captured the death of the steel industry in the city. Historian James Guimond explained that almost "every image" of the Rust Bowl in the book "is an inversion of motifs from the 1940s and 1950s mass media":

⁴⁹ Christopher Byron, "Big Steel's Winter of Woes," *Time* (24 January 1983), 58-59.

⁵⁰ *Historical Atlas of the United States* (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 1988), 164-5.

Instead of glistening production lines and glowing blast furnaces in Life's hymns to American 'productivity,' Williamson photographed the 'dead hulk' of Youngstown Steel and Tube's Campbell Works, the ruined interior of the Brier Hill steel mill, and the wreckage of US Steel's Ohio works, which was dynamited and looked very similar to the ruins in Europe at the end of World War II.⁵¹

Maharidge's text contributed greatly to the powerful effect of this monograph. One unemployed steelworker, for example, observed that the steel companies achieved, in the destruction of the city's steel plants, what Hitler had failed to do.⁵² *Journey to Nowhere* documented this "achievement" in the tradition of the hard times photographers of the Great Depression.

While photography captured moments in time, moving images recorded the process of industrial decline itself. To demonstrate the disastrous effects of disinvestment from the United States by multinational corporations, *Controlling Interest*, a 1978 documentary showed abandoned American plants, broken windows, padlocked gates and barbed wire. The opening sequence of the 1984 film *The Business of America*, likewise, superimposed the opening credits over the demolition of a US Steel blast furnace to dramatic effect.⁵³ Other film makers have recorded similar spectacles.

⁵¹ James Guimond, *American Photography and the American Dream* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1991), 281.

⁵² Bruce Springsteen wrote "youngstown" in his 1995 cd *the ghost of tom joad* after reading Dale Maharidge and Michael Williamson's *Journey to Nowhere*. He has since said that he was "disturbed" by the book's power and "frightened by its implications." In writing and performing "youngstown," Springsteen draws heavily from these images and text. See: Dale Maharidge and Micheal Williamson, *Journey to Nowhere: The Saga of the New Underclass* (Garden City, New York: The Dial Press of Doubleday & Company, 1985). For Springsteen's views on this book see the liner notes in *the ghost of tom joad* and his introduction to the second edition *Journey to Nowhere* published by Hyperion Press of New York in 1996.

⁵³ *The Business of America*. 1984. California Newsreel. Resolutions Inc..

In *Roger & Me*, Michael Moore showed a GM water tower at an auto plant fall slowly to the ground after being dynamited. Even Hollywood feature films such as *All the Right Moves*, *The Deer Hunter* and *Slapshot* were set in dying industrial towns.⁵⁴ In the case of *All the Right Moves* (1982), the film maker focused on the eventually successful efforts of a youth to escape a dying Pennsylvania steel town through high school football.⁵⁵ The demise of the steel industry also provided the backdrop for NBC's brief 1980 drama series *Skag* about a middle-aged foreman at a steel mill in Pittsburgh.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, popular musicians, politicized by the recession, exposed North Americans to the plight of millions of people in the Rust Bowl. In the depths of the recession, Bob Seger, Billy Joel and Bruce Springsteen wrote songs that expressed the anger, disillusionment and confusion felt by blue collar workers who lost their jobs to plant shutdowns. In "Makin' Thunderbirds," Bob Seger captured some of the anger felt by autoworkers in the early 1980s.⁵⁷ Billy Joel's 1982 popular song "Allentown" dealt with disillusionment in a dying Pennsylvania industrial town.⁵⁸ The musician most

⁵⁴ Barry Spikings and Michael Deeley (producers). *The Deer Hunter*. 1978. Universal Pictures; and Robert J. Wunsch and Stephen Friedman (producers). *Slapshot*. 1977. Universal Pictures.

⁵⁵ *All the Right Moves*. 1983. 20th Century Fox.

⁵⁶ S. Lichter, Linda Robert, and Stanley Rothman, *Watching America* (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1989), 113.

⁵⁷ Bob Seger and the Silver Bullet Band, "Makin' Thunderbirds," on *The Distance*. 1982. Recorded at Studio 55, CDP 7 460052.

⁵⁸ Billy Joel, "Allentown," on *The Nylon Curtain*. 1982. Recorded at A&R Recording and Media Sound Studios, New York, TCTX 38200.

closely associated with the Rust Bowl was Bruce Springsteen, who exploded onto the international stage in 1975 with his *Born to Run* album.⁵⁹ According to Bart Testa, a music reviewer for *Maclean's* magazine, Springsteen "played to his working-class roots years after rock had become middle-class celebrity music."⁶⁰ With *The River* (1980), Springsteen moved beyond his earlier emphasis on working-class rebelliousness and young love to explore the effects of the economic crisis on local communities.⁶¹ This shift in emphasis was even clearer two years later in "Johnny 99," a song about a laid-off autoworker turned to violence.⁶² By the time that Springsteen's hit record *Born in the USA* appeared in 1984, the singer had become thoroughly associated with the cause of working people. In "My Hometown," Springsteen sang lamentfully about a father who once showed his eight year old son their hometown.⁶³ When the son grew to manhood, however, the town was dying.

Now Main Street's whitewashed windows and
vacant stores
Seems like there ain't nobody wants to come
down here no more
They're closing down the textile mill across the
railroad tracks
Foreman says these jobs are going boys and they

⁵⁹ Bruce Springsteen. *Born to Run*. 1975.

⁶⁰ Bart Testa, "Born to Run, Fight & Win," *Maclean's* (22 December 1980), 50-51.

⁶¹ Bruce Springsteen, *The River*. 1980. Recorded by Columbia Records.

⁶² Bruce Springsteen, "Johnny 99," on *Nebraska*. 1982. Recorded in New Jersey by Mike Batlin, CK 38358.

⁶³ Bruce Springsteen, "My Hometown," on *Born in the USA*. 1984.

ain't coming back to your hometown.

"My Hometown" ended with the young man showing his own son the shutdown factories before the family migrated to find work. Springsteen's music of the dispossessed, written and performed during the recession, made him the modern-day equivalent of Woody Guthrie.

The upturn in the United States economy in 1983, however, made such comparisons to the Great Depression seem overwrought, and by the end of 1984, the Rust Belt image had supplanted the Rust Bowl. The new expression had the advantage of being a counterpoise to the idea of the Sunbelt and a more accurate representation of the spatial distribution of heavy industry in a belt running from Chicago and Milwaukee in the West to Buffalo and Pittsburgh in the East. The *Oxford Dictionary of New Words* (1991) credited US Democratic Party Presidential candidate Walter Mondale for the "coinage of the term" in 1984.⁶⁴ It appears more likely, however, that the Rust Belt had become public knowledge long before Mondale's remarks.

The Rust Belt was located by American dictionaries as stretching across the Great Lakes states and the Northeast. The association was strongest, however, with the steel-producing areas of the Great Lakes states. According to the 1993 edition of *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, the Rust Belt "focused on the Midwestern...states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio, as well as Pennsylvania."⁶⁵ The *Oxford Dictionary of New Words*

⁶⁴ "Attacking Mr. Reagan's economic policies, Mr Mondale said: 'His...policies are turning our great industrial base of this...country...into a rust bowl.' This was picked up in the media and repeated as Rust Belt." *Oxford Dictionary of New Words*, 1981.

⁶⁵ *The Columbia Encyclopedia*. A generic definition was given by *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992) of historical and geographic associations. This trend can be seen in recent academic

submitted, somewhat insensitively, that the Rust Belt was: "Humorously formed by compounding: a belt or zone where once-profitable industry (in particular the metals industry) is left to rust away."⁶⁶ Ohio writer R. Douglas Hurt allowed that "By the last quarter of the twentieth century, Ohio was known more for being part of the 'rust belt' than the corn belt."⁶⁷ The making of the Rust Belt in the minds of Americans produced a stigma that attached itself to the once mighty industrial heartland, hastening its decline.

Would Canada's industrial heartland be similarly stigmatized? What label would be attached to Ontario, in particular? Ontarians historically have been so convinced that their province was, for all intents and purposes, "Canada" itself that they have not devised many regional labels.⁶⁸ The national mythology spun by J. M. S. Careless, Donald Creighton and others, further ensured that Canada's image of Southern Ontario has usually been juxtaposed with hinterland areas rather than seen as an autonomous region. A booklet produced by Ontario's Department of Travel and Publicity in the early 1960s, typically, boasted that the province was the "Heartland of Canada" and exalted in

scholarship that has explored rust belts as far away as Russia and Japan. Recent examples of publications focused on so-called rust belts outside of the United States include: Rose Brady. "The Great Russian Depression of 1992?" *Business Week* (20 April 1992), 47; and Roger Schreffler. "The new rust belt," *Automotive Industries* 174 (September 1994), 22.

⁶⁶ *Oxford Dictionary of New Words*. (1981)

⁶⁷ R. Douglas Hurt, "Ohio: Gateway to the Midwest," in *Heartland: Comparative Histories of the Midwestern States*, edited by James H. Madison (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 222-223.

⁶⁸ R. Douglas Francis, "Regionalism and the Region," in Mel Watkins, ed. *Canada* (New York: Facts on File, 1993), 236.

Ontario's close proximity to the industrial heartland of the United States.⁶⁹ The completion of the St. Lawrence Seaway in the mid-1950s had also reinforced this sense of centrality. *Seaway to the Heartland*, a documentary film produced by the National Film Board in 1975, depicted the seaway as the realization of an age-old desire to extend the water lifeline to the heart of the continent.⁷⁰ Ontario's sense of itself as Canada's heartland reflected not only the northward drift of an American regional construct, but also Canada's own tradition of conceptualizing its space in terms of metropolis and hinterland, core and periphery, and heartland and hinterland.⁷¹

Geographer L. D. McCann's classic *Heartland and Hinterland* explored the relationship between staples producing hinterlands and the industrial heartland.⁷² Canada's industrial heartland, located in the Quebec City-Windsor corridor, was integrated, McCann found, into an American heartland stretching from Wisconsin to the Atlantic Ocean and as far south as Kentucky. Canadian manufacturing activity was concentrated in "a crescent around the western end of Lake Ontario" from Oshawa to Niagara Falls, and "a broad belt extending from Toronto to Windsor. These two zones

⁶⁹ Ontario. *Ontario: Canada's Heartland of Industry, Finance, Culture* (Toronto: Department of Travel and Publicity, 1961), 1.

⁷⁰ *Seaway to the Heartland*. 1975. National Film Board. Fred Gorman Films.

⁷¹ For a thorough discussion of the many variations of the so-called "Metropolitan Thesis," including the use of the heartland concept by urban historians, see Donald F. Davis, "The 'Metropolitan Thesis' and the Writing of Canadian Urban History," *Urban History Review* 14, 3 (October 1985), 95-113.

⁷² L. D. McCann, *Heartland and Hinterland: A Geography of Canada* (Scarborough: Prentice Hall, 1982), 9.

comprise[d] the Western Axis Manufacturing Area."⁷³ Canada's "heartland" was, unlike the American, industrial from the start.⁷⁴

Competing with the "heartland" as a positive vernacular region was the Golden Horseshoe. The Golden Horseshoe has been public knowledge in Canada at least since 1959 when a *Canadian Geographic* article identified the Golden Horseshoe as "a popular name given to the urban complex around the western end of Lake Ontario...."⁷⁵ Similarly, R. Douglas Francis saw it as a product of post World War II prosperity in the "band of industrial sites" from Niagara Falls to Oshawa.⁷⁶ The construction of the Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW) in the 1930's was crucial, according to John C. van Nostrand, in the making of the Golden Horseshoe, for this super-highway generated an urbanized corridor from Toronto to Fort Erie on the Niagara River.⁷⁷

Those who wished to challenge the dominance of the regional label tended to manipulate the Golden Horseshoe image rather than the heartland image. Growing public

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁷⁴ However, sometimes one spoke of a "rural heartland" further west in the Prairie breadbasket. A recent example of the longstanding tendency to locate the rural heartland in Western Canada is Ottmar Bierwagon and Mark Abley. *Heartland: Prairie Portraits and Landscapes* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1989).

⁷⁵ Ralph R. Krurger, "The Disappearing Niagara Fruit Belt," *Canadian Geographic* 5, 4 (April 1959). Also, see: *Dictionary of Canadian English: A Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles* (Toronto: Gage Education Publishing Co., 1991), 297.

⁷⁶ Francis, "Regionalism and Region," 237.

⁷⁷ John C. Van Nostrand, "The Queen Elizabeth Way: Public Utility Versus Public Space," *Urban History Review* 7, 2 (October 1983), 13.

concern over the environment led the Nature Conservancy of Canada to advertise in an April 1970 issue of *Maclean's* a warning that rapid urban sprawl threatened to turn the Golden Horseshoe into the "Asphalt Horseshoe."⁷⁸ Geographer Maurice Yeates, similarly, rejected the accuracy of the Golden Horseshoe label in 1982 because the "image it creates is that of a beautiful, well organized, and planned environment. If the word 'golden' refers to anything, it is money, for the population within the region has the highest standard of living in the country. The word 'golden' can hardly refer to the environment...."⁷⁹ The political left also attacked the positive connotations implied in the Golden Horseshoe label. John Bachar and Wayne Roberts suggested in a 1981 article entitled "The unlucky horseshoe" that life in southern Ontario's Golden Horseshoe "has turned to dross. The Midas touch that kept this area bustling with activity is working in reverse."⁸⁰

Despite these critiques, the Golden Horseshoe, nonetheless, continued to act as symbolic cover for the wealth and industry of Southern Ontario. Thus, a 1982 multimedia teaching kit, for intermediate English as a Second Language students, entitled "Canada's Golden Horseshoe" characterized the region as "a wealthy industrialized area."⁸¹ The authors of the teaching kit explained that the Golden Horseshoe acquired its

⁷⁸ *Maclean's* (April 1970), 56.

⁷⁹ Maurice Yeates, "The Industrial Heartland in Transition," in L.D. McCann, ed. *Heartland and Hinterland* (Scarborough: Prentice Hall, 1982), 105.

⁸⁰ John Bacher and Wayne Roberts, "The unlucky horseshoe," *Canadian Dimension* 15, 7 (1981), 13.

⁸¹ Patrick Allen and Joan Howard, *Canada's Golden Horseshoe: An ESL/Geography Module* (Toronto: OISE, 1982).

name "because of its horseshoe shape and the rapid growth of its businesses and industries." One of the parallels between Canada and the United States was their claim that the inhabitants of the Golden Horseshoe were amongst Canada's hardest working, echoing a common stereotype of Midwesterners. The continued popular identification with the Golden Horseshoe was reinforced when the imaginative boundaries of the industrial heartland became even more closely tied to Southern Ontario, as Quebec declined. Canada's industrial heartland, according to geographer W. P. Anderson in 1987, had shifted from the lower St. Lawrence to Ontario.⁸² The decline of Montreal, and the concomitant ascendancy of Toronto as Canada's first city in the late 1970s, reinforced the industrial heartland's association with Southern Ontario.⁸³ Though environmental concerns tarnished the Golden Horseshoe by the 1970s, they did not obscure this region entirely in the imagination of Canadians. It still shone through.

But would that still be the case if one of Ontario's post-1969 recessions caused Canada's own Dust Bowl imagery to blow eastward from the Prairies, carrying with it the besmirching Rust Bowl analogy? As in the USA, Canadians knew they once had a dust

⁸² W. P. Anderson, "The Changing Competitive Position of the Hamilton Steel Industry," in M. J. Dear, ed., *Steel City: Hamilton and Region* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 216.

⁸³ If there was a Canadian equivalent to the Rust Belt in the early 1980s, it would have been the Montreal area. Even though there were fears that Montreal was experiencing "deindustrialization" and "industrial decline," the Rust Belt was explicitly rejected. See, for example, Pierre Lamonde and Mario Polèse, "L'évolution de la structure économique de Montréal 1971-1981: déindustrialisation ou reconversion?" *L'Actualité Économique* 60, 4 (décembre 1984), 490; Benjamin Higgins, *The Rise and Fall? of Montreal* (Moncton: Canadian Institute for Research on Regional Development, 1986), 170; Paul-André Linteau *Histoire de Montréal: depuis la Confédération (Montréal: Boréal, 1992)*, 433; and William J. Coffey and Mario Polèse, "Le déclin de l'empire Montréalais: regard sur l'économie d'une métropole en mutation," *Recherches sociographiques* 34, 3 (1993), 435.

bowl. Historians David Bercuson and J. L. Granatstein found that the idea of the Dust Bowl was applied to Canada's three Prairie provinces during the 1930s.⁸⁴ The Dust Bowl signified dust clouds and the abandonment of farms. The 1991 *Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles* located the Dust Bowl more precisely in Palliser's Triangle of the Canadian Prairies, a "Dry Belt" of low precipitation, roughly bounded by Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, and Medicine Hat, Alberta. This conception of a Dry Belt in Western Canada seems to have preceded the Great Depression by at least twenty-five years. Certainly, the area bore this epithet during the drought of 1917 to 1926.⁸⁵

Canada had thus its own Dust Bowl imagery available to nail to the Golden Horseshoe. There was some risk of this happening, for some Canadians -- especially those urging more interventionist government -- tended throughout the 1969-1984 period to exaggerate the difficulties of their own economy and society and to seek parallels with the rusting reputation of the erstwhile industrial heartland of the United States. The powerful influence of the United States on the Canadian imagination was demonstrated by the changing perception of the city. Most contributors to the liberal *Canadian Forum* contested the relevance of the so-called "urban crisis" to the domestic situation after the debate spilled over the border in 1969 from the United States.⁸⁶ However, the spectre of urban decline was such that the Canadian federal government

⁸⁴ David Bercuson and J.L. Granatstein, *The Collins Dictionary of Canadian History, 1867 to Present* (Toronto: Collins, 1988), 67.

⁸⁵ David C. Jones, *Empire of Dust: Settling and Abandoning the Prairie Dry Belt* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1987), 16.

⁸⁶ Des Morton, "Responsibility or Trusteeship," *Canadian Forum* (May 1972), 24.

formed the Task Force on Housing and Urban Development.⁸⁷ The diagnosis of urban decline may therefore have preceded the disease in Canada. When the debate turned away from the cities, and towards industrial decline, Canadian attitudes parted ways with what was considered to be public knowledge south of the border.

"Plant closing" was the term of preference in the United States, whereas Canadians appear to have used "shutdown" much more frequently in the national print media. The nuances between the two may appear insignificant, but they reveal remarkably different mind sets. According to *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, closing meant "an act of closing: the condition of being closed," whereas shutdown was defined instead as "the cessation or suspension of an operation."⁸⁸ The apparent natural pre-destination of the former contrasted sharply with the human action (and sense of reversibility) implicit in the latter.

In comparing Canadian and American magazines between 1969 and 1984, we discover remarkable differences in how industrial decline was explained to the public. Even though *Time* desperately hoped for a recession in 1979 to "cool-off" the economy to fight inflation, contributors to *Maclean's*, its Canadian counterpart, consistently cast the impending recession in a negative light. The wave of plant shutdowns that struck Southern Ontario particularly hard in the first six months of 1980, was likewise interpreted differently. American journalists and economists conceded the inevitability, and frequently even the desirability, of the closures in "sunset industries." Canadians, in contrast, blamed their shutdowns on American multinational corporations.

⁸⁷ N. H. Lithwick, "Housing: in a Search of a Crisis," *Canadian Forum* (February 1969), 250.

⁸⁸ *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster Inc., 1987), 251 and 1093.

Nationalism helped defuse the sense of crisis in Canada by giving people hope that the process was not part of the natural order but rather a foreign virus that could be suppressed without killing the host. In fact, a reading of *Maclean's* and *Canadian Forum* magazines from 1969 to 1984 did not uncover a single instance where anyone applied the Rust Bowl or Rust Belt analogies to Canada.

Even so, the confidence of Canada's "heartland" was, as in the United States, shaken by the economic challenge of another region, in this case, of Alberta and the Western "oil patch." Yet frosty Alberta was no "Sunbelt." Canada's heartland, unlike the United States, had the political power to transfer resources from Alberta to itself: through oil-pricing policies including, but not limited to, the National Energy Plan. Raw political power was used to contain Alberta through Parliamentary statutes. In sharp contrast, the Sunbelt was able, especially through defence spending, to transfer vast resources to it from the heartland of the United States. In consequence, the ascendancy of Alberta only momentarily challenged the centrality of Southern Ontario in the Canadian economy. For John Richards and Larry Pratt, in their 1979 monograph *Prairie Capitalism*, the "shift in power is not as far advanced in Canada as it is below the 49th parallel -- the periphery does not become the centre overnight -- but it certainly has begun."⁸⁹ To the authors this was demonstrated in the relative decline of the "central Canadian heartland." The comparison drawn between America's Sunbelt and the Canadian West was borne-out, to a certain extent, by patterns of migration at the height of the recession in 1980-81. While ex-autoworkers in Michigan headed for the Sunbelt, their Canadian counterparts travelled west to Alberta, as a University of Windsor sociology team studying the effect of lay-offs on autoworkers discovered in

⁸⁹ John Richards and Larry Pratt, *Prairie Capitalism: Power and Influence in the New West* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 174.

1980. The movement of capital and people to the West from Ontario proved but momentary, as the flow actually reversed itself by 1982.⁹⁰ Western Canada was unable to effectively challenge the industrial hegemony of Central Canada before 1984. As Francis wrote in 1993, the Prairies have continued to be an economic hinterland to the central Canadian heartland.⁹¹ Anti-Americanism, coupled with the faltering rise of Canada's frostier sunbelt and the relative health of Southern Ontario's economy staved off the corroding effects of the Rust Belt, as myth and reality.

The inability of industrial decline to take hold in the minds of Canadians, to the same degree as it did in the United States, could be seen in the paintings of Alma Duncan. Her series of industrial landscapes of Stelco's new Erie Works at Nanticoke, Ontario in 1985 provided a startling counterpoint to Williamson's photographs of the dead steel mills on the other side of Lake Erie. Using pastel on paper, Duncan's portraits communicated the still awesome power of the steel mill. Glen Norcliffe observed that the Erie works depicted in Duncan's "Steam, Clouds and Blast Furnace" resembled a rocket launching pad.⁹² Duncan's decision to paint the newest steel mill in North America certainly reflected a remarkably different mind set than the one that had brought

⁹⁰ Francis, "Regionalism and the Region," 237.

⁹¹ There was, however, a great deal of anxiety in industrial towns such as Windsor, Ontario. A 1982 opinion survey of 300 Windsor residents, for example, found that 67% of the respondents believed "people in other parts of Canada" had a negative image of their city. MacTavish, Donald J., ed., *Windsor & Essex County Blueprint for a Brighter Tomorrow* (Windsor: Windsor Star, 1982), 28.

⁹² Glen Norcliffe, "In a Hard Land: The Geographical Context of Canadian Industrial Landscape Painting," in *A Few Acres of Snow: Literary and Artistic Images of Canada*, edited by Paul Simpson-Housley and Glen Norcliffe (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1992), 79-80.

Williamson to Youngstown, Ohio a year earlier.

The literary images of the industrial cities of Ontario, though exceedingly rare, were also sympathetic. W. J. Keith's 1992 Ontario Historical Series monograph *Literary Images of Ontario*, included only three pages dedicated to the industrial communities of the province.⁹³ The inclusion of David McFadden's observations about his hometown of Hamilton, in Keith's study, was therefore unusual. Though McFadden recognized that Hamilton was "not considered a great place to live," he nonetheless wrote about the "incredible beauty of steel mills, all the more beautiful because it wasn't intended to be and is not widely considered to be."⁹⁴

The visual images of abandoned steel mills and urban blight that signified industrial decline in the United States did not resonate in Canada; but the image of the padlocked factory gate certainly did. Canadian television reporters were often shown in front of locked factory gates, for dramatic effect, during the recession of the early 1980s. The 1980 NFB documentary film *Shutdown* vividly focused on a Canadian flag, viewed through a chain linked fence, being lowered as local union activists outside the padlocked gate blamed "the Americans" for closing an American branch plant in Sarnia.⁹⁵ Similarly, a special issue on plant shutdowns in *Our Times*, an independent labour magazine, featured a photograph of a padlocked factory gate on its front cover of October

⁹³ W. J. Keith, *Literary Images of Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

⁹⁴ David McFadden, *A Trip Around Lake Erie* (Toronto: Coach House, 1980), 71.

⁹⁵ Don Hopkins and David Springbett (producers), *Shutdown* (National Film Board, 1980).

1984.⁹⁶ These Canadian images of padlocked sites were clearly meant to energize, not enervate. The images thus complemented the language of "shutdown," not "closing." In effect, the almost supernatural post-industrial landscapes of Youngstown, Ohio likely reinforced the pervasive sense of irreversible decline in the United States, whereas the locked gate and the shutdown plant in Canada implied human agency and, therefore, reversibility.

Although Canadians were affected by developments in the United States, most people were able to distinguish between the projected images of industrial decline emanating from the United States and the more favourable situation in Canada. The stigma of the Rust Belt therefore did not attach itself fixedly to Southern Ontario in the minds of Canadians. Southern Ontario continued to be associated with Canada's industrial heartland and Golden Horseshoe in the minds of Canadians in the 1969-1984 period.

In sum, this chapter has taken the hypothesis that region and regionalism are a mind-set rather than a fixed reality and applied it to the transformation of the prevailing image of the Great Lakes states -- from the Midwestern industrial heartland to Rust Belt -- in the period 1969 to 1984. Wilbur Zelinsky's conception of the vernacular region as a shared spontaneous image of territorial reality allowed us to explore the process of contestation and negotiation that went into the making of the Rust Belt in people's minds. In doing so, we found that North Americans interpreted industrial decline through the filter of these popular regional identities. The same economic criteria that once honoured the Great Lakes states as the industrial heartland, eventually, now stigmatized the area with the Rust Bowl and Rust Belt labels. If the Dust

⁹⁶ On the cover of *Our Times* (October 1984).

Bowl symbolized the failure of rural society on the Southwestern Plains in the 1930s, the Rust Bowl signified the death of the Industrial Midwest fifty years later. The Rust Belt, which soon supplanted the Rust Bowl in the national media, similarly and more permanently signified regional decline in the United States.

The imaginative boundaries of the Rust Belt, however, did not extend into Canada in the minds of North Americans even though earlier images had done so. Industrial decline in Canada was not considered to be inevitable. Instead of regional abandonment, the locked factory gate symbolized the dangers of direct foreign investment. Even though Canada's industrial heartland and the Golden Horseshoe continued to signify the wealth and industry of Southern Ontario, they were not the only regional images of the area. In fact, Canadians' sense of regional identity has rarely been defined exclusively in economic terms. The recession of the 1980s, for example, did little to undermine "Central Canada's" association with regional power. As the following chapters will show, Canadians understood industrial decline differently because the economic situation was not nearly as grave as it was south of the border. But, in order to understand the meaning of job loss on either side of the Canada-United States border, we must ask ourselves what it meant for mill and factory workers in the first place.

SECTION II: PLACE

CHAPTER TWO

"HOME" AND "FAMILY" ON THE FACTORY FLOOR

What were to become "empty spaces" were once vibrant places where an intricate web of relationships bound "factory" and "home" together. In exploring the nature of these relationships, this chapter draws upon oral history interviews with 137 Canadian and American workers who lost their jobs in the 1970s and 1980s. Memories of factory work tended, we will see, to be framed around the metaphors of "home" and "family." This chapter takes a closer look at the attachment of blue collar workers to their jobs, to their co-workers and to their home towns. Working in the mill or factory was invariably described in familial terms: "like a family," "a home atmosphere," "a second home," or "a family affair". Indeed, this theme surfaced time and again during oral history interviews with working people in Canada and the United States. After spending much of their adult lives working on the factory floor, blue collar workers such as Ruby Kendrick, who worked at Al-Craft Manufacturing in Troy, Michigan (a Detroit suburb), evoked "family" and "home" to describe their attachment to old work sites: "We were like a family. We did alot of things together. Just everything. And like I said, we were like a family."¹

The frequent references to "home" and "family" present, in fact, a metaphor laden with ideological meanings that shape, and are shaped by, the world-view of those

¹ Ruby Kendrick interviewed by Steven High at her home in Southpark, Michigan in February 1998. The videocassette will be donated to the WRL. For similar findings see: Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, James Leloudis, Robert Korstad, et al, *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), xvii; and Tamara Hareven and Randolph Langenbach. *Amoskeag: Life and Work in an American Factory-City* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 12.

who invoked them.² Literary theorist Raymond Williams felt it significant that familial terms were used to denote class affiliation and/or trade union membership on the one hand; and on the other, that "brother" and "sister" appeared "comic" in middle class eyes.³ In trying to describe differences between the collective mentalities of production workers and corporate executives, metaphors prove especially useful. Indeed, the structuring power of "dominant metaphors" have been taken seriously by linguists,

² Gareth Stedman Jones. *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working-Class History, 1832-1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 20-22. This is not to suggest that the languages of class are simply expressions of "experience." Speaking of the Chartist movement in England, Jones argues that "consciousness" cannot be related to experience except through the "interposition of a particular language which organizes the understanding of experience." Thus, the languages of class exist within a "complex rhetoric of metaphorical association, causal inference and imaginative construction." Likewise, Cecilia Morgan has recently noted in her book about "gendered languages" in Upper Canada, *Public Men and Virtuous Women: The Gendered Languages of Religion and Politics in Upper Canada, 1791-1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 13-14., that discourses consist of "competing ways" of giving meaning to the world. Also, see: Joan Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry* 17 (1991), 777; and Joan Scott's "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91 (1986). It appears, then, from social-scientific and historical research that people's sense of themselves is bound up with place identities and articulated through languages. See, for example, Anne Buttner, "Home, Reach, and the Sense of Place," in Anne Buttner and David Seamon, eds. *The Human Experience of Space and Place* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), 167.

³ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana Press, 1983), 133. The prosperity of the post-war years and the paranoia of the Cold War discourse diluted and subverted working-class consciousness in the United States. In part, these "dirty words" -- working class -- were replaced by a parochial sense of community attached to geography and a rewarding "way of life." As we will see, displaced workers often invoked "family" and "community" as euphemisms of class. In consequence, this thesis assumes that "class" -- a relationship and not a thing -- continues to be a meaningful mode of analysis. See, for example, E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 11.

philosophers, literary critics and social anthropologists.⁴ According to Ruth Smith and Eric Eisenberg, who have applied linguistic theory to explain deteriorating labour management relations at Disneyland, root-metaphors provide "rich insight" into the origins of conflict as they present "symbolic frames that provide an inferential base for understanding more discrete attitude and behaviour."⁵ Root metaphors, in other words capture a fundamental, underlying world view. In consequence, we will examine the web of ties that bound mill and factory imaginatively and physically to human communities.

Heavy industry and mass production have often been construed as dehumanizing and alienating.⁶ Indeed, so frequently were iron and steel towns compared to "hell," that

⁴ Peter Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 181. Also see: W. H New, *Borderlands: How We Talk About Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), 5.

⁵ Ruth C. Smith and Eric M. Eisenberg, "Conflict at Disneyland: A Root-Metaphor Analysis," *Communications Monographs* 54, 4 (December 1987), 369. Also, see: Arthur Adamson, "Identity Through Metaphor: An Approach to the Question of Regionalism in Canadian Literature," *Studies in Canadian Literature* 5 (September 1980), 87; Robert F. Haskell, *Cognition and Symbolic Structures: The Psychology of Metaphoric Transformation* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1987), viii. Also, see George Lakoff, "What is a Conceptual System?" in Willis F. Overton and David S. Palermo, eds. *The Nature and Ontogenesis of Meaning* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), 84. As we have seen, metaphors are the main mechanism we have available to understand abstract concepts.

⁶ For an excellent discussion of de-skilling and worker alienation see: Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974). For a useful discussion of the gendering of "skill" see Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1990), 172-73; and Ava Baron, "Gender and Labor History: Learning from the Past, Looking to the Future," in Ava Baron. *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 14. Baron notes that research on male workers has "often ignored the role gender played in defining work as skilled." Also see Anne Phillips and Barbara Taylor, "Sex and Skill: Notes Toward a Feminist Economics," *Feminist Review* 6 (October 1980), 9-88.

it is hard to imagine how workers in these "satanic mills" could equate factory with home and co-workers with family.⁷ To be sure, industrial smokestacks, once an icon of prosperity, later of pollution, towered over steeltowns along the Mahoning River where residents had to inhale smoke-filled air and houses bore the black "stains of Mill Town."⁸ The sight of these mills left an indelible impression on many people. James C. Davis, for instance, learned numbers by "counting the stacks" of the Brier Hill mill near his Youngstown, Ohio home.⁹

Prior to the emergence of suburbs and "industrial parks," mills and factories were frequently located in and around residential areas. In Detroit, Marilyn McCormack fondly recollects how she used to visit her father at work in a small factory just around the corner from where they lived.¹⁰ Tool-and-die maker Jim McHale, also of Detroit,

⁷ Roy Lubove, *Twentieth Century Pittsburgh: Government, Business and Environmental Change* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1969), 1. Also see: S. J. Kleinberg, *The Shadow of the Mills: Working-Class Families in Pittsburgh, 1870-1907* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1989), 65.

⁸ Along the Mahoning River in Northeastern Ohio, for instance, seven integrated steel mills dominated life along a fifteen mile stretch of the river front for much of the twentieth century. A short distance south of the city of Youngstown was the Campbell Works of the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company, the largest employer in the valley. Republic Steel's Youngstown Works, a three minute walk from the city centre, in turn, rose above the Market Street bridge. Two other steel mills -- the Brier Hill Works owned by the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company and US Steel's Ohio Works -- dominated Youngstown's working-class west end.

⁹ James C. Davis interviewed by Donna DeBlasio in Youngstown on 26 September 1991. The videotape recording of the interview is held at the YHCIL.

¹⁰ Marilyn McCormack interviewed by Steven High at the Troy, Michigan office of United Auto Workers Local 417 in February 1998. The videotape recording of the interview will be donated to WSU.

remembers how his father, a machine assembler at Burroughs Adding Machines, used to walk home everyday for lunch and catch a ten minute nap.¹¹ In Hamilton, finally, the physical proximity of working-class neighbourhoods to mills and factories provided daily clues as to the nature of the products of Life Saver candy. Indeed, David Christopherson's family lived so close to this factory that he could tell what they were producing by the smell: "It was either butterscotch or strawberries. You could smell it. Some days it was beautiful. Some days it was annoying. But it was part of [us]" Here, again, we see that something many people would have described as "ugly" or a "nuisance," could represent "home."¹² In each case, an intricate web of associations tied mills and factories to families living nearby.

Ultimately, workers' sense of belonging was rooted in different combinations of our five senses.¹³ Indeed, it is surprising to hear just how frequently interviewees recalled sounds, smells and even tastes in oral history interviews.¹⁴ Notably, these

¹¹ Jim McHale and Dolores McHale interviewed by Steven High at the Walter Reuther Library (WRL) at Wayne State University in February 1998. The videotape recording of the interview will be donated to the WRL.

¹² A resident of Akron, Ohio similarly recalls that growing up in that city: "You'd go downtown and you could smell the odor of rubber mingled with the sweet scent of Quaker Oats....Dad cured tires at Goodyear's Plant One. When he came home, you could smell him coming up the sidewalk." in Norman Mlachak, "Can Akron survive more plant closings?" *The Cleveland Press* (Wednesday 26 March 1980).

¹³ See, for example, Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place*, 16; and Yi-Fu Tuan, "Place: An Experiential Perspective," *The Geographical Review* 65, 2 (April 1975), 151-165.

¹⁴ Peter Bailey, "Breaking the Sound Barrier: A Historian Listens to Noise," *Body & Society* 2, 2 (June 1996), 49-50.

were often remembered more vividly than the sight of the mill or factory even though my questions often took -- 'What did the plant look like?' -- as its point of departure. David Christopherson described working at True Temper in Hamilton as "a *real* experience because it was very loud." During our conversation, he recalled the "incredible sound" in the plant and "a lot of smell because they also did this curing of the steel and you did that in molten lead. Again, I can remember the crashing sounds that took me forever to get used to....I really did not get used to [it]." He wore asbestos gloves and dipped the shovels into a large molten vat:

They had a large vat of molten lead and, literally, you had asbestos gloves and you took the shovel as they came off the stand. You lifted them and, by hand, drove them into the molten lead. The only distance between your [asbestos] gloves...and the molten lead was probably the better part of a foot of coals. They had all of this electronic gadgetry around it and yet all the work was manual. All of it....I remember thinking what is all of this about?¹⁵

Those with the highest seniority in the plant had their pick of the best jobs. While John Livingstone worked away from the noise and smells of the shop floor in the shipping department, newcomers like David worked in the least desirable areas. In describing what it was like inside Detroit's Northland Plastics, another newcomer Marilyn McCormack said: "Just huge and noisy. Very noisy....It was a plastics plant. And the stink; the smell was awful."¹⁶

While outsiders might have been in awe of the sheer size of monumental industrial complexes, workers displayed an intimate knowledge of the inner geography of

¹⁵ David Christopherson interviewed by Steven High at his Hamilton constituency office in February 1998. The videotape recording of the interview will be donated to McMaster University Archives (MUA).

¹⁶ Marilyn McCormack interviewed by Steven High at the hall of UAW Local 417 in Troy, Michigan in February 1998. The videotape recording of the interview will be donated to the WRL.

the factory floor. Every mill or factory had its own vernacular geography. Workers related directions within the Kelsey-Hayes in Windsor, for instance, in terms of "down-the-hill" or "up-the-hill" as there was a three-foot grade level change between old and new parts of the plant. Similarly, in his autobiography, *Rivethead*, Ben Hamper gave readers a tour of the General Motors assembly plant in Flint, Michigan where he worked in the Cab Shop, known as "the Jungle": "It wasn't difficult to see how they had come up with the name for the place. Ropes, wires and assorted black rubber cables dropped down and entangled everything. Sparks shot out in all directions-bouncing in the aisles, flying into the rafters and even ricocheting off the natives' heads. The noise level was deafening."¹⁷ By contrast, tool-and-die maker Jim McHale provided a more loving description of the Chase factory in downtown Detroit, recalling how the wood floor "saved" his legs as his tool-and-die work required him to stand and how nice it was to work in natural light as his work station was on the second floor beneath a sky light. Large windows also afforded him a magnificent view of downtown Detroit as he worked.

Yet interviewees repeatedly observed that their mill or factory was "old" "very old" and "ancient." One of the most memorable descriptions of an obsolete plant was provided by Ed Lawrenson who worked at the Bendix Automotive plant on Argyle Street in Windsor's old industrial belt. According to Ed, "It was an old plant....part of the plant was originally stables for Hiram Walker's animals. There was huge oak beams, solid white oak beams....In the cement floors you could see the urinal troughs where they...had

¹⁷ Ben Hamper, *Rivethead: Tales from the Assembly Line* (New York: Warner Books, 1986), 33.

cemented it in."¹⁸

While visitors to industrial towns such as Youngstown might have only noticed black stains on the houses, workers, themselves, recall growing up in close-knit neighbourhoods where factories represented a community institution. Youngstown, the largest city in the Mahoning Valley with a population of 140,000 people, emerged as the most important steel-making region in the United States, next to Pittsburgh. To be sure, "factory" and "home" were closely intertwined. Reverend Fred Williams, for example, grew up in the "Flats area" in the shadow of the Republic Steel plant in Niles, Ohio (just down the river from Youngstown).¹⁹ As long as he could remember, he "could see the workers going back and forth to work in the morning." When he joined the workforce himself, he became part of the fourth generation of steelworkers in his family. In short, the symbiosis of the valley's social life with iron and steel over many generations made that industry a central reference point in the identities of residents.²⁰

For former workers at Beach Foundry, a stove and furnace manufacturer located in Ottawa, Ontario, the factory occupied a special place in their memories. "C'est bien

¹⁸ Ed Lawrenson interviewed by Steven High at his home in St. Clair Shores in February 1998. The videotape recording of the interview will be donated to the Windsor Municipal Archives (WMA). This now-aging generation of plants was discussed by historian Daniel Nelson in his study of the origins of the twentieth century factory system in the United States. Daniel Nelson, *Manager and Workers: Origins of the Twentieth Century Factory System in the United States, 1880-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 11.

¹⁹ Reverend Fred Williams interviewed by Donna DeBlasio on 27 September 1991. The videotape recording of the interview is held at the YHCIL.

²⁰ "Mahoning River Valley Steel: From Yesterday Into Tomorrow?," *Commentary* 10 (October 1976).

proche comme une petite village à ce coin là," Marc Desrochers recalls. "Cette usine d'une petite village dans milieu d'Ottawa."²¹ As he grew up with the children of hourly and salaried personnel living in the neighbourhood known locally as "Mechanicsville," Marc knew about Beach Foundry long before he worked there. Like Marc, many employees began working at Beach Foundry at the age of sixteen. As employees grew older Raymond Fauvelle recalls, they moved from one department to the next. Young employees tended to begin their working lives in the physically demanding steel room before gaining enough seniority to move into assembly or the paint shop.²² Omer Pletilic met co-workers everyday inside the plant and regularly encountered them in the evenings and on weekends around the neighbourhood. Even though the company's owners spoke English, the language on the factory floor was predominantly French.²³ This linguistic fact also set the neighbourhood apart from the anglophone areas around it. It becomes clear, then, that Beach Foundry, like the neighbourhood school or church, represented an important community institution: a site of social interaction and familial

21 Translation: "It is very close to being a small village in this part of town. This factory of a small village in the middle of Ottawa." Marc Desrochers interviewed as part of an oral history project focused on former employees of Beach Foundry conducted by the Ottawa and District Labour Council-Workers' Heritage Committee of Ottawa-Carleton in 1996. The videotaped interview is being donated by the project to the City of Ottawa Archives. I would like to thank Ken Clavette for allowing me free access to all videotaped interviews and the documentary video entitled *Made In Ottawa* (1997) produced in conjunction with Ground Zero Productions.

22 Raymond Fauvelle interviewed by Ottawa and District Labour Council-Workers' Heritage Committee in 1996. The videotape recording of this interview is held by the City of Ottawa Archives.

23 Marcel Guilbault interviewed by the Ottawa and District Labour Council-Workers' Heritage Committee in 1996. The videotape recording of this interview is held at the City of Ottawa Archives.

identification for the Franco-Ontarian residents of "Mechanicsville."

Rather than thinking of themselves as poor, the women and men interviewed evoke the image of blue-collar neighbourhoods where people knew each other and looked after each other. David Christopherson, for one, remembers his East End Hamilton neighbourhood as a homogenous working-class area where most neighbours worked in the steel industry, at Stelco, Dofasco, or at Firestone tire. According to him, "every street had a teacher or *the* cop. Some neighbourhoods were lucky enough to have *the* doctor or *the* lawyer, we didn't. It was very, very blue collar. But by the same token, there wasn't any abject poverty nearby either. Very, very working-class in the very traditional sense of the word."²⁴ In larger cities such as Detroit as well, a special bond emerged between area residents. Ruby Kendrick, Diane Garner, Bernice Adams and Marilyn McCormack all remembered neighbours who protected children. Diane Garner recalls a world where "I couldn't stand Miss Evelyn. She'd stand on the street and see everything that went on... My mother could be away, if it started to get dark, we knew to get on the porch. Nobody had to tell us....Everybody hated Miss Evelyn but as I look back we need more people like that today."²⁵ Marilyn McCormack added that in Detroit's east side, near 6 Mile Road and Van Dyke: "Everybody knew everybody. Everybody watched everybody else's children."²⁶ In fact, all the children in the neighbourhood used to play

²⁴ David Christopherson interviewed by Steven High at his Hamilton constituency office in February 1998. The videotape recording of this interview will be donated to the MUA.

²⁵ Diane Garner interviewed by Steven High in her Detroit home during February 1998. The videotape recording of this interview will be donated to the WRL.

²⁶ Marilyn McCormack interviewed by Steven High at the hall of United Auto Workers Local 417 in Troy, Michigan during February 1998. The videotape recording of this interview will be donated to the WRL.

games under one street light: "There was one lady, an elderly woman, that lived right by that street light, and everybody called her 'Grandma Kercha'. She had no children we knew of and she lived by herself. She'd invite us in for cookies and milk. She was everybody's grandma." Similarly, Bernice Adams, who grew up on Detroit's East side in the French Road area, fondly remembers how her two grandmothers lived within easy walking distance from their house and "everybody" helped one another "get by."²⁷ Their memories stretch back to a time when neighbours looked out for each other. There was no talk of "slums" then and the "inner city" did not have the meaning it does today. "We didn't know we were poor," summed up Ruby Kendrick.²⁸

From the perspective of the inhabitants of these industrial towns and cities, and in spite of the growing number of "white collar" workers and women entering the workforce, this was perceived as an area where men went to work in hard hats and work boots. Anthropologist Thomas Dunk has shown us in *A Working Man's Town*, that the spatial division between mental and manual labour resonated with residents and contributed to a "structure of feeling" that dominated the region.²⁹ Assembly-line worker Gabriel Solano, for example remembered his southwest Detroit neighbourhood fondly as a "wholesome community" interconnected to nearby factories. In his oral history narrative, factory work promised security and rootedness:

²⁷ Bernice Adams interviewed by Steven High at the hall of UAW Local 417 in Troy, Michigan during February 1998. The videotape recording of this interview will be donated to the WRL.

²⁸ Ruby Kendrick interviewed by Steven High at her home in Southpark, Michigan during February 1998. The videotape recording of this interview will be donated to the WRL.

²⁹ Thomas W. Dunk, *It's A Working Man's Town: Male Working-Class Culture* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 54.

I came from a blue collar family. My dad was a steelworker for Great Lakes Steel. A union man. Put in his thirty years....I came from a rather large family, there's ten brothers and four sisters. He stressed the points to us growing up: education and work for your living. Nothing is given to you. Since, we've all applied that...we are a family of skilled workers, professionals and well educated. Myself, I grew up in Southwestern Detroit which is a predominantly blue collar part of the city of Detroit. The factories were the prevalent workplace.... As I grew up, I had hopes of college but the factories, the lure--the money, the pay, the stability. As young men we all came out of there and that's where we went--into the factories. We found them to be the 'golden nugget.' And it was!... I started off after high school...it was a whole new world to me. Working for GM. The 'business of businesses.' We were partners. We were going to do this for life. This thirty year ambition.³⁰

For Gabriel, the boundaries between "community" and "factory" were blurred. In his mind, this community was an extension of his "blue collar family," a place where class and community became intertwined.

The close-knit character of these working-class neighbourhoods had created informal networks that proved crucial in job placement. These informal networks encompassed neighbours, acquaintances and family members. Growing up in Flint, Michigan, where General Motors employed most adult men, Ben Hamper recalls that no matter how much he loathed the thought, he knew by grade ten that he would follow his father and eight other family members into the plant: "Right from the outset, when the call went out for shoprats, my ancestors responded in almost Pavlovian compliance."³¹ Everyone hired "in the family." While standing outside the closed Fisher Guide plant operated by General Motors in Southwestern Detroit, Gabriel Solano, for one, explained:

you asked earlier... about how I got hired....A good friend I went to high school with and graduated with--I came to visit him one afternoon and he was working

³⁰ Gabriel Solano interviewed by Steven High in his Detroit home in February 1998. The videotape recording of this interview will be donated to the WRL.

³¹ Ben Hamper, *Rivthead: Tales from the Assembly Line* (NY: Random Books, 1986), 1-3.

here. He'd been working here for roughly six months, so as I'm sitting there, his mom says 'Gabriel, where you workin'?' And I said, 'I'm working for this plating company on the Northwest Side of town,' And she said, 'well how is it?' And I says 'its a tough shop. Its a small shop. Its got a union but its rough and tumble work.' And, Mrs Jones stated as matter of factly: 'you wait until I call that brother of mine, Reggie, over there in the employment office at Fisher Guide at the Turnstead plant.' Well I says, 'Mrs Jones you don't have to do that, I'll find my own work.' She says: "I'll be damned if a young man I know in the neighbourhood has to work in some small sweat shop.' And I can tell she made the call as I was told to report to employment and handed an application--mind you this was all in the same week--this man walks up to me and he says 'are you Gabriel?' I says 'yes sir. I am.' He say, "Reggie wants to see you.' So I go in the office and I see Reggie and he says 'fill this out.' I said 'yes sir.' 'Hand it to the lady and you got it.' I hand it to the lady. He says "are you done?' He says 'you start today as a matter of fact walk over to this area of the plant which was the plant behind us, the one we filmed just now--He says 'you're hired.' It was an amazing thing. I got hired on the spot. Now in the '90s that is unheard of.³²

While Gabriel was aided by a friend's mother, others found a helping hand closer to home. Dan McCarthy got hired into Dana Corporation's Ecorse factory through the assistance of a neighbour who worked in the personnel department. Likewise neighbours came to the aid of Ralph Brubaker on two occasions: once when the next door neighbour helped him get hired into Chrysler's Missile Plant in the 1950s and second, when the fellow living on the other side got him into Sahlin Engineering after the Missile Plant had closed.³³ By contrast, Peter Wirth's talent as a baseball player ensured that he "never had to look for a job" in Windsor, as factory teams were constantly on the lookout.³⁴

³² Gabriel Solano interviewed by Steven High at his Detroit home in February 1998. The videotape recording will be donated to the WRL.

³³ Ralph Brubaker interviewed by Steven High at his home in Clawson, Michigan in February 1998. The videotape recording will be donated to the WRL.

³⁴ Peter Wirth interviewed by Steven High at his home in Windsor, Ontario in February 1998. The videotape recording will be donated to the WMA. Even in the 1970s, Ed Lawrenson noted that, at Bendix Automotive, if you were a good baseball

Associational ties in ethnic clubs like the Italian Service Club in Hamilton's North End made it easier for Basil Adili and his father to find work quickly as many of the families in the neighbourhood originated from the same villages in Italy. These familial ties proved very important in the many small foundries scattered across the city as foundry workers were prone to down-time and layoffs. Word of a foundry's re-opening swept through the North End making it unnecessary for employers to contact them directly. As Basil remembers:

in those days people worked in a place but they knew then there was layoffs. The economy was up and down: 'Today you're here, tomorrow you're gone.'[laugh] So people were not getting concerned. I don't think people were as upset [about layoffs] as they are today. The simple reason was that there was a lot of employment. The mills were here. The plants were here.³⁵

Basil started working in the city's foundries, at fourteen years of age, when his father asked "how would you like to learn the pour [iron]-making trade?" Basil served his three years apprenticeship and struck out on his own. Informal social networks and family ties thus proved crucial in job placement.

Factory and mill work represented a way of life in many towns and cities across the industrial heartland. When asked whether or not he had wanted to work in steel as a youth, one former Bethlehem steelworker responded matter-of-factly: "My father worked there. His father worked there....It was like your family. All my uncles worked there. All my relatives. All my friends. Everybody I knew. When you were from Lackawanna[, New York] or [neighbouring] Hamburg, the steel plant was the livelihood

player, "you got a job there." Ed Lawrenson interviewed by Steven High at his St. Clair Shores, Ontario home in February 1998. The videotape recording will be donated to the WMA.

³⁵ Basil Adili interviewed by Steven High at his Hamilton home in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the MUA.

for the whole area."³⁶ Journalist John Hoerr also recalled that he had only two choices growing up in the steel town of McKeesport, Pennsylvania: to work at the mill or leave.³⁷ While successive generations of men worked in the steel mills of the Mahoning Valley, familial identification was perhaps strongest with those who worked for the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company. For many interviewees, "Sheet and Tube," as it was fondly called, presented part of the fabric of the valley. As the only major steel company based in the Youngstown area, it carried the city's name around the world. Many steelworkers like Robert Galmish chose to work for Youngstown Sheet and Tube because it was locally owned: "Well, it was local. It was to me *the* company. If you were going to work in a steel industry, it was the company to work for in Youngstown."³⁸ Francis McHugh agreed: "That's it, that was basically the feeling of everybody in this Valley, you did what your Dad did." His brother, an uncle and a cousin also worked at Sheet and Tube.³⁹ Family momentum, then, as well as the lack of other jobs and poor education restricted the choices available to young people. When young men, and a growing number of women, chose to work at the mill, they frequently found themselves

³⁶ Anonymous worker (#1) interviewed during the "community interview" arranged by the Steelworkers' Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) Chapter in Lackawanna, New York during April 1998. The videotape recording of the community interview is in the possession of the author.

³⁷ John Hoerr, *And the Wolf Finally Came: The Decline of the American Steel Industry* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988), 8.

³⁸ Robert Galmish interviewed by Philip Bracy on 3 February 1991. The transcript of the interview is held by the library of Youngstown State University.

³⁹ Francis McHugh interviewed by Philip Bracy on 29 January 1981. The transcript of the interview is held by the library of Youngstown State University.

working among friends from school and neighbourhood.

Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s it remained common to have multiple family members working in the same plant. John Livingstone, for example, a Scottish immigrant to Canada, secured employment in True Temper in 1965 "through the influence of father and Uncle Jimmy." When asked whether many people were hired at True Temper's Hamilton plant through family connections, he replied: "Ya, it was a family thing. You can say that 'you're in the family.' There were a lot of my relatives in there at one time."⁴⁰ Indeed, having followed his father and uncle into the plant, John subsequently got his three sons hired there as well. While John worked in the shipping department, his father tempered shovels in the forge, Uncle Jimmy was a die grinder in the machine shop and his sons shovelled sand and worked on the sand machine. John expressed real pride at seeing his son Alec working in the plant: "He was a hell of a worker." For a time, then, there were three generations of Livingstone men working side-by-side in True Temper, a plant that employed only 109 people.

Union membership also reinforced ties between employees. Ruby vividly remembers the day when she and her co-workers voted to join UAW Local 417: "The most exciting day was when we had our elections because the company got alot of people, I don't know where those people came from, to vote against it. I said 'where are those people coming from?' But it did work. It did work."⁴¹ Subsequently elected plant chairperson, Ruby spoke with pride about the hard-fought wage increases she helped negotiate. At six dollars (US) per hour, the pay was very good for the time. When

⁴⁰ John Livingstone interviewed by Steven High at his Hamilton home in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the MUA.

⁴¹ Ruby Kendrick interviewed by Steven High at her home in Southpark, Michigan in February 1998. The videotape recording will be donated to the WRL.

interviewed, what stood out in her memory most were the people she worked with. In some factories, this metaphorical bond became a "real" one when female and male co-workers decided to marry.

Dorothy Routenberg was one woman who married a co-worker. One of six children born to farming parents near Owen Sound, Ontario, Dorothy left home at age sixteen to start a new life in the big city. After a short stint working in a Hamilton restaurant, Dorothy was drawn into International Harvester's twine mill in 1946 by its wages. According to Dorothy, the twine mill "was smelly, oily, hard work.[laugh] And I told Bob Kerr, that was my foreman, I says: 'I am going to stay until one good pay and then I'm quitting.' Twenty-five years later I was still there.[laughs again]"⁴² Our two-hour conversation revealed a close-knit workplace composed overwhelmingly of women working as spinners, cutters and inspectors. Men worked as machinists and mill foremen. It was in her recollection "a big happy family." Dorothy remembers the little things during her night shift such as the coffee trolley that made its rounds of the factory floor at two o'clock in the morning. It was terrible coffee; but Dorothy remembers it fondly. It was while getting coffee that Dorothy met her future husband, Bernie. Dorothy Routenberg's story illustrates that even in Steeltown, where the image of the male breadwinner was supreme, many women worked in the industrial sector.

As a result of all the social ties developed on the factory floor, workers emphasized that there were "no strangers" on the factory floor.⁴³ For his part, Ed

⁴² Dorothy Routenberg interviewed by Steven High at her home in Hamilton, Ontario in February 1998. The videotape recording of this interview will be donated to the MUA.

⁴³ Ralph Brubaker interviewed by Steven High in his Clawson, Michigan home in February 1998. The videotape recording of this interview will be donated to the WRL.

Lawrenson recalled that "everybody knew each other" at the Bendix automotive plant in Windsor.⁴⁴ At Fabricon Products in River Rouge, Michigan, Dan McCarthy related a similar story of a plant workforce dominated by two population bubbles: a generation of older workers hired-in during or just after World War II and a younger baby boom generation.⁴⁵ Ed and Dan, both of whom belonged to this younger generation of industrial workers, stressed that all workers were bound together by associational ties and familial identification. When several workers such as Jim McHale, Basil Adili and John Livingstone introduced group photographs or seniority lists into our conversation they did so in order to tell stories of others, thus pointing to the fact that their plant shutdown story was not their's alone. Rather, it was a story of collective belonging and eventual collective displacement.

Friendships formed inside the mill and factory often carried over into leisure time as workers recounted stories of playing sports, going on fishing trips and drinking with co-workers during off-hours. In Windsor, laboratory worker Ed Lawrenson fondly remembers how a half-dozen guys at Bendix Automotive set aside ten dollars a week for their annual fishing trip. Each year Ed spent the first week of his annual vacation with his colleagues from work and the second with his family: "We had a ball. We looked so forward to that....We were fishing buddies and that was that."⁴⁶ Machinist Ralph Brubaker recalled that almost everybody who worked at Sahlin Engineering, a small

⁴⁴ Ed Lawrenson interviewed by Steven High in his home in St. Clair Shores in February 1998. The videotape recording will be donated to the WMA.

⁴⁵ Dan McCarthy interviewed by Steven High at the hall of United Auto Workers Local 417 in Troy, Michigan. The videotape recording will be donated to the WRL.

⁴⁶ Ed Lawrenson interviewed by Steven High in his home in St. Clair Shores in February 1998. The videotape recording will be donated to the WMA.

machine shop in the Detroit suburban community of Clawson, Michigan, bowled on Friday nights: "It was like family."⁴⁷ Across town, Dan McCarthy stressed the comraderie in the Fabicon Products plant in River Rouge, Michigan: "We played ball. We ran together. We partied together."⁴⁸ After each shift, Dan and other "Fabrads" crossed the street to a "little blue collar bar," whose owner proved willing to cash their cheques. Nearby taverns figured in many of these oral narratives. As Ben Hamper dryly observed: "Find a factory, you'll find a bar."⁴⁹

Colleagues also provided support in times of personal crisis. Ruby Kendrick, for example, remembers virtually the entire plant attending her father's funeral. Our two hour conversation revealed that working at Al-Craft meant much more to Ruby than a pay cheque. It had become a second home for her as there were "a lot of friendships formed there."⁵⁰ Life in and around factories and mills, then, presented a way of life from which workers reaped both emotional and material benefits.

Mill or factory work provided an important source of pride and self-esteem.⁵¹ A

⁴⁷ Ralph Brubaker interviewed by Steven High at his Clawson, Michigan home in February 1998.

⁴⁸ Dan McCarthy interviewed by Steven High at the hall of United Auto Workers Local 417 in Troy, Michigan. The videotape recording will be donated to the WRL.

⁴⁹ Hamper, *Rivethhead*, 139.

⁵⁰ Ruby Kendrick interviewed by Steven High at her home in Southpark, Michigan in February 1998. The videotape recording will be donated to the WRL.

⁵¹ Social psychologists Irwin Altman and Setha Low have written extensively of the saliency of human emotions about place in fostering individual and group self-esteem and identity. See: Irwin Altman and Setha M. Low "Place Attachment: A Conceptual Inquiry," in Altman and Low, eds. *Place Attachment* (New York: Plenum Press, 1992), 10. Also see: Peter Jackson and Jan Penrose, "Preface" in Jackson and Penrose, eds.

bricklayer at Republic Steel in Buffalo, New York, for example, said it was manly work. He recalled the day he laid sixteen ton of brick in one shift. Women working in North American mills and factories also derived a great deal of self-esteem for surviving in what tended to be a man's world. Marilyn McCormick related the story of her first day at Northland Electric in Troy, Michigan: "the foreman came up to me and said 'You're a spray-painter come with me.' 'I'm a what?' He says, 'you're a spray-painter.' He put a spray gun in my hand and said 'paint.' I never seen a spray gun in my life. I did it for ten and a half years and I loved it."⁵²

Working in the mill or factory also provided material benefits such as homeownership. Indeed, homeownership was one of the most powerful markers of their entry into the "middle class." Willy Eugene Eady said with evident pride that: "The house that I bought in Highland Park, Michigan, is the same house that I used to deliver the *Shopping News* newspaper to. I always dreamed as a young fellow that 'one of these days when I get older I'm going to buy a big house like this over here.' And the lord blessed me and I was able...."⁵³ In his memory, Highland Park was "like one great big family." In Hamilton, Dorothy Routenberg, as well, derived an enormous sense of achievement and satisfaction from owning a house. As her first husband had a drinking problem and caused her nothing but grief:

Constructions of Race, Place and Nation (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 12.

⁵² Marilyn McCormack interviewed by Steven High at the hall of UAW Local 417 in Troy, Michigan in February 1998. The videotape recording will be donated to the WRL.

⁵³ Willy Eady interviewed by Steven High at the United Auto Workers office of Local 417 in Troy, Michigan in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WRL.

I decided to buy a house. Don't ask me what on. I phoned this real estate guy and asked him about a house. He took me down and showed me this house on Superior Street. All I had was \$5 in my purse, going out to look at a house. I had nerve I'm telling you. I liked the house. And he said, 'how about a down-payment?' I said, 'well not tonight we'll have to talk this over. I'll see about it.' I went into work the next day and I wanted that house but I thought 'how can I get a house with five bucks?' My foreman, then, was Scotty Wilcox. So I went and talked to Scotty and I told him I had to have a house. He agreed with me. He knew everything about me and I never missed a day of work. He said, 'go over and see the credit union.' I said, 'I got nothing in the credit union to buy a house.' He said, 'I'll give you time off of work. Go on.' I went over [there]...and talked to the guy. He said: 'you hardly have any money in here.' I said: 'I know but I want to buy a house.' So he told me 'you got more nerve than anything I ever seen! Well, if you can get somebody to co-sign for you I'll give you the money for the house.' I [went] back over to see Scotty. Talked it over with Scotty. Scotty says 'I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll sign for you. Where's the papers?' I had the papers all ready. I says 'here they are.' He says, ' Oh my god you have nerve.' He signed them....I never missed a day off of work. I worked in there and I got that house paid for....'Five buck house' I called it. That's all the money I had.⁵⁴

Dorothy was justly proud of owning her home. Like the factory itself, her new home signified: security and rootedness. Dorothy's "second-home" at work had begotten her first.

Thus, in the personal narratives of displaced workers, allegedly "satanic mills" bore a human face, and presented an integral part of the community's fabric. Nowhere were the bonds that wove home and factory together better captured than in the moment when Diane Garner made a fist, a symbol of tightness, and told me that "Flat Rock was almost like family." Diane liked the atmosphere in Ford's Flat Rock, Michigan factory: "I know my Dad often said that 'the more dangerous the job is the more close-knit the

⁵⁴ Dorothy Routenberg interviewed by Steven High in her Hamilton home in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the MUA. For a more general look at house ownership in Hamilton see: Michael Doucet and John Weaver, *Housing the North American City* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 12.

people are."⁵⁵

It is hard to imagine more important touchstones in North America during the late twentieth century than "home" or "family." According to cultural historian John R. Gillis, as the influence of religious and communal institutions diminished in an increasingly market-driven society, the family has become our chief means of refuge and defence. Namely, we have two families: "one we live with and another we live by."⁵⁶ In this context, then, "family" has come to signify an oasis of security, belonging and rootedness; precisely the notions projected by displaced workers onto their old establishments. Even though these idealized "families" bear little resemblance to their real life co-workers or their own families, they are no less real in the minds of the men and women interviewed. It is clear that interviews with 137 displaced workers revealed that they became less "at-home" in the world around them once their mill or factory closed.

What does it mean, then, to equate a mill or factory with "home" and co-workers with "family"? Historian Lisa Fine has suggested that recourse to the family metaphor by industrial workers reflects the internalization of the paternalism of their employers.⁵⁷ Though I do not dispute that paternalistic employers tried to instill such a

⁵⁵ Diane Garner interviewed by Steven High at her Detroit home in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WRL.

⁵⁶ John R. Gillis, *A World of their Own Making: Myth, Ritual and the Quest for Family Values* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), xv.

⁵⁷ Lisa M. Fine, "'Our big Factory Family': Masculinity and Paternalism at the Reo Motor Car Company of Lansing, Michigan," *Labor History* 34, 2-3 (1993), 274-291; See, also, Susan M Reverby and Dorothy O. Helly, "Converging on History," in Helly and Reverby, eds. *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women's History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 13.

hierarchical world-view, employers no longer cast themselves in the role of the father-figure by the 1970s. Instead, the working people I interviewed usually placed management and the company outside the family unit. For example, when asked whether the sense of "family" dissipated at Dominion Forge in Windsor once labour-management relations took a sharp turn for the worst in the 1970s, Paul Hansen claimed it did not. For him, it became "a more solidified family because of the tactics of management. They made the workers get tighter together."⁵⁸ When asked about the meaning of "family," they almost always pointed to the special bond between (unionized) workers. Only once during an interview with Ed Lawrenson, a former employee of Bendix Automotive in Windsor, Ontario, did I explicitly ask whether the plant was "like family," and again the interviewee adamantly agreed. "You hit the nail on the head," he said.⁵⁹

As historian John Bodnar recently noted in his study of public memory and commemoration, citizens "view the larger entity of the nation through the lens of smaller units and places they know first hand."⁶⁰ Although workers rarely invoked community, preferring instead to raise the more intimate metaphors of "home" and "family," their familial identification with mill and factory referred to an imagined

⁵⁸ Paul Hansen interviewed by Steven High at his home in Windsor, Ontario on February 22, 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WMA.

⁵⁹ Ed Lawrenson interviewed by Steven High at his home in St. Clair Shores, Ontario on February 26, 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WMA.

⁶⁰ John Bodnar. *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), 16.

community.⁶¹ Their strong attachment to place was grounded in spatial relationships. As one Lackawanna, New York steelworker said, everybody working in a steel mill “had something in common. We had steel in our blood that’s what it was....The people made that steel plant [Republic], not the steel companies.”⁶² When Canadians employed in large and small plants summoned the metaphors of “family” and “home,” they also identified themselves as “Canadians” against their mainly “American” employers.

Community-ties provided an inclusive and nurturing social space while, at the same time, excluding and isolating others. The narrative paths taken by interviewees, for example, diverged between “skilled” tradespersons and “unskilled” assembly-line workers. Skilled workers not only missed people and place but their work as well. Basil Adili, a Hamilton foundry worker, took out his homemade coremaking tools during the course of the interview: a fifty year old pig skin mallet, patching tools, slicks, trowels, metal clamps, wood screw nails, and a vent wire.⁶³ Similarly, it shone through when Jim McHale, a Detroit tool-and-die maker, showed me some of the items he designed.⁶⁴ In these exchanges, we see that “skilled” workers such as Jim and Basil had a passionate love for their work that few assembly-line workers could match.

⁶¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 1.

⁶² Anonymous worker (#2) interviewed during the “community interview” arranged by SOAR in Lackawanna, New York during April 1998. The videotape recording of the community interview is in the possession of the author.

⁶³ Basil Adili interviewed by Steven High at his Hamilton home in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the MUA.

⁶⁴ Jim McHale interviewed by Steven High at the Walter Reuther Library in Detroit in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WRL.

Unsafe workplaces like Windsor's Bendix Automotive also undermined the nostalgia of factory as "home." It is hard for Ed Lawrenson to speak about his experience at Bendix without turning to the devastating effect that asbestos dust, used in brake linings, had on many of his co-workers. He recalled: "The office was clean. I had asked around and people said 'boy, if you get a job in Bendix, man, you're set for life.'" Later, Ed realized that the asbestos in the air was slowly killing some of his co-workers:

I can remember coming in and they had an air filtration system and they used to suck it outside into a huge hopper. I can remember the air ducts plugging up and the system backing up and the whole plant was white with asbestos. It used to blow out all over the place. I come to work in the morning, and I was in a closed laboratory, we'd come in the morning and clean off our stuff because the dust was on the desk. You'd just go like this here [making a sweeping motion with his hand] and you could see your hand print and that was just after one night.⁶⁵

At the time, nobody knew the deadly effects of asbestos. Ed recalled in the interview a man named Paul, working in maintenance, regularly covered in the white powder: "I've seen him covered head to toe." Moreover, as there were no showers at work, employees like Ed brought the deadly powder home with them. In fact, it took the death of co-worker Tommy Dunn and an Ontario Worker's Compensation Board decision to compensate his family for asbestosis to convince many employees that they were in danger. Once the issue became public knowledge, Bendix Automotive asked employees to wash their clothing separately from the clothing of their families and rinse the washer after use. Ed also suspects that area residents may have been contaminated:

I could remember blow outs through the air system and the company having to pay to have cars painted because the flecks got on the paint. And once, it got on the paint this eat into the paint. I know of three supervisors who, for sure, had their cars totally repainted...If it ruined car paint two hundred feet away from

⁶⁵ Ed Lawrenson interviewed by Steven High at his home in St. Clair Shores in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WMA.

the building, and people always had their clothing hanging out to dry...⁶⁶

Thus, fond memories of worker solidarity during strikes and friendships developed on the factory floor co-existed with the grim reality that asbestos was killing them.

While whole families came to identify themselves with a particular company -- "We're a Ford Family" explained Diane Garner of Detroit -- women often faced discrimination. Diane, herself, got hired into Ford's Flat Rock foundry through an affirmative action program in July 1973. As one of the first women working in the foundry, Diane Garner's male co-workers resented her at first: "some men felt that we had invaded their territory. Now women could work in the parts division...but women never worked in the foundry."⁶⁷ One nasty incident in the cafeteria still stands out in her memory: after a male co-worker had been told to watch his language in the presence of "ladies," he said "'these aren't women. If they were, they wouldn't be here.'"

In addition, pervasive racial discrimination in hiring, promotion and job assignments ensured that African Americans were largely confined to the least desirable and lowest paying industrial jobs. In his autobiography, *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*, Charles Denby related how difficult it was for an Afro-American to get hired by the Big 3 automakers in Detroit.⁶⁸ As racial minorities were only wanted as lowly-paid labourers, Denby worked in the "dope room" where the smell of glue was overpowering. Historian Thomas Sugrue has recently shown brilliantly the

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*.

⁶⁷ Diane Garner interviewed by Steven High at her Detroit home in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WRL.

⁶⁸ Charles Denby (Matthew Ward), *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal* (Boston: South End Press, 1978 [1952]), 87.

interconnection of racial discrimination and deindustrialization in the Detroit of the 1950s and 1960s.⁶⁹ Elsewhere, African-Americans were largely restricted to working in the coal plant or the blast furnace in the steel industry. According to Joseph Sims of Youngstown, these discriminatory practices were "crass" and "open."⁷⁰ Ed Mann, local union president at the Brier Hill work in Youngstown, recalled that in the open hearth department:

...We would work in a gang, in a circle--each shovel[ed] then you'd walk over and get a shovel full of material, walk around in a circle, shovel again: almost a rhythm. The first helper had control of that furnace. He'd pull that door up a little higher when the black guy would come by. He would set the damper in the hole and the flame would shoot out the door instead of out the stack.⁷¹

Until the steel industry agreed to the consent decree of 1974 that divisional seniority lists be consolidated plant-wide, there was little chance for an African American to transfer into another department or to become a skilled tradesman.⁷²

Like Detroit, the steel town of Homestead, Pennsylvania had an ethnically and racially diverse population that lived in segregated neighbourhoods. As John Hinshaw

⁶⁹ Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). Also see the symposium on Sugrue's work in *Labor History* 39, 1 (1998).

⁷⁰ Joseph Sims interviewed in 1980. The transcript of the interview is held at the Ohio Historical Society in Columbus.

⁷¹ Ed Mann interviewed by Donna DeBlasio on 16 April 1991. The videotape is held at the YHCIL.

⁷² However, as historian Dennis C. Dickerson showed, it proved to be a "Pyrrhic victory" as layoffs and plant closings in the 1970s and 1980s rolled back these gains and then some. Dennis C. Dickerson, *Out of the Crucible: Black Steelworkers in Western Pennsylvania, 1875-1980* (Albany: State University New York, 1986), 215.

and Judith Modell have argued, oral narratives of Homestead's white residents indicated that "everyone got along" before the US Steel works closed.⁷³ Studies of deindustrialization, they say, have glossed over the racial discrimination and conflict endemic in Homestead and other industrial towns and cities. By digging deeper, the authors uncovered "hidden texts" in white and black accounts of Homestead's recent past. Most notably, a convention of "live-and-let-live," which demarcated racial boundaries in this mill town, had served as a justification of social segregation and workplace stratification for decades.

This chapter examined the world-view of 137 industrial workers who related the emotional and material benefits of mill and factory work in their lives. "Home" and "family" usually surfaced as metaphors of the close-knittedness of workplace relations without any correlation to gender, race, locality or nationality. When industrial workers recalled past associational ties with co-workers and familial identification with mill and factory, they did so from the perspective of a sometimes lonely present. They evoked a familiar place where displaced workers once felt secure and rooted. Whether interviewees' extended the "home" and "family" metaphors to encompass a class-community bounded by the plant or the nation, they wished to bring-home the full import of job loss.⁷⁴

⁷³ John Hinshaw and Judith Modell, "Perceiving Racism: Homestead from Depression to Deindustrialization," *Pennsylvania History* 63, 1 (Winter 1996). For a wider examination of the meaning of industrial decline in Homestead, Pennsylvania see: Judith Modell and Charlie Brodsky, *A Town Without Steel: Envisioning Homestead* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998).

⁷⁴ For a discussion of "community" see the forthcoming essay by John Walsh and Steven High, "Rethinking the Concept of Community," in *Histoire Sociale/ Social History*. For "home" see, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, eds. *The Meaning of*

We often think of "factory" and "home" separately. Yet these oral narratives suggest that the two were physically and psychologically interconnected. Like the church and the tavern, the factory represented a communal institution, a world that grew more complex as generation after generation of family members entered the factory gates. Industrial workers developed strong attachments to co-workers and identified with mill and factory.⁷⁵ Mill and factory were filled with memories of people and place. As we have seen, industrial workers developed a rich social world on the factory floor. In their oral narratives, these plants were filled with the sounds, smells and sights of work -- the very antithesis of empty spaces. This intricate fabric of relations conceived of as a community, was destroyed by plant shutdowns and the resulting displacement.

Things, 121. And, for the related notions of "race" and "nation" see: Peter Jackson and Jan Penrose, eds. *Constructions of Race, Place and Nation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 1.

⁷⁵ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspectives of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978), 54.

CHAPTER THREE

THE POST-INDUSTRIAL FACADE OF THE GLOBAL FACTORY

In the 1970s, the nature of local boosterism changed dramatically as urban elites across the industrial heartland attempted to redefine the dominant narratives of their mill and factory towns.¹ In Hamilton, Ontario, for instance, the local business community "aggressively sought to change the image of the city."² For decades, the integrated steel mills of the Steel Company of Canada (Stelco) and Dominion Foundries (Dofasco) had towered over the working-class neighbourhoods nestled under the Niagara Escarpment.³ Yet in the hey-days of environmentalism, the smoke billowing out of the stacks came to symbolize pollution, not prosperity. No longer did heavy industry represent prestige and status. Instead, Hamilton's old industrial image was gradually supplanted by a new post-industrial one, bleaching Hamilton's "blue collar" workforce "white." In the process, Hamilton's reputation as a "lunch bucket town" -- a label that had graced David Proulx's 1971 coffee table book *Pardon My Lunch Bucket: A Look at*

¹ John A. Jackle, "Images of Place: Symbolism and the Middle Western Metropolis," in Barry Checkoway and Carl V. Patton, eds., *The Metropolitan Midwest: Policy Problems and Prospects for Change* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 74-79. The "signature institution" in the Midwestern United States was arguably the assembly line.

² David Walker and Stephen McBride, "Hamilton: Copps and Steelers," *Canadian Forum* 623 (December 1972).

³ In the imaginative realm, Hamilton's steel mills loomed even larger in the pages of the *Financial Post*, *Chatelaine*, *Saturday Night*, and *Marketing* during the 1970s and 1980s: D. Foster, "Hamilton Hometown: Despite Poor Markets the Future is Solid in 'Steel City,'" *Financial Post* 71 (18 June 1977), 7.; D. MacDonald, "Hamilton Rediscovered Itself," *Chatelaine* 44 (February 1971), 30-33.; D. Adeney, "Hamilton's Booming and Lunch Buckets..." *Marketing* 80 (6 October 1975), 28-29.; D. MacFarlane, "Hard Times in Steel City," *Saturday Night* 98 (May 1983), 3-42.

the New Hamilton -- was downplayed by urban boosters such as Mayor Victor Copps: "I don't particularly mind Hamilton being called a lunch-bucket city. It's no crime to take your lunch to work. There's nothing indecent in getting your hands dirty in the foundry or rolling mill, making a decent living so you can bring up one of those large families that steelworkers are so fond of."⁴ In due course, Copps asserted, the old lunch bucket was destined to "become a museum piece, something that us old-timers can take our grandchildren to see one of these days to point out the way it used to be."⁵ In Hamilton, then, we see how a new set of post-industrial values and images displaced the pride of place that industrialism once engendered.

This chapter examines the emergence of the "post-industrial" factory, one that blended into the natural landscape rather than dominating its surroundings by industrial chimneys, belching black clouds of smoke. Much like the nineteenth century tableau depicting workshops in the wilderness, factories built after the Second World War reflected concerns over the adverse effects of industrialism on the natural and human environment.⁶ In order to trace changing concepts of plant design, this chapter delves into the "image worlds" presented in annual reports, newsletters, and in the trade

⁴ David Proulx's *Pardon My Lunch Bucket: A Look at the New Hamilton...with a bit of the old thrown in*. (Hamilton: City of Hamilton, 1971), i.

⁵ *Hamilton: A Community in Symphony* (Burlington: Windsor Publications, 1986), 7.

⁶ Marvin Fisher. *Workers in the Wilderness: The European Response to American Industrialization, 1830-1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 187. For an interesting discussion of the Ford Motor Company's building of "rational" factories in the early twentieth century see: Lindy Biggs. *The Rational Factory: Architecture, Technology, and Work in America's Age of Mass Production* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996).

publications *Architectural Record*, *Industrial Development* and *Industrial Canada*. As the notion of "post-industrialism" was enthusiastically adopted by many managers, this chapter then turns to the collective mentality of corporate executives in North America. In promoting international big business and high technology, corporate managers grew increasingly distant -- both physically and socially -- from their personnel. Thus, behind the post-industrial facade of factories and mills, the global factory was born -- an event that was intimately connected with the massive displacement of industrial workers in the 1970s and 1980s.

"Image worlds" are not simply illustrations, supplementing the text. They provide crucial insight into cultural values, beliefs, symbols and ideas.⁷ Historian David Nye, for one, has examined the dynamic tension between the local and the global in his study *Image Worlds: Corporate Identities at General Electric, 1890-1930*. Struck by the fact that images of workers rarely appeared in the million photographs examined by Nye and his research team, he argued that the company presented the factory as an "empty industrial landscape waiting to be divided and controlled."⁸ This impersonal look at the factory fashioned it as an abstract space rather than a site of human interaction, a construction of reality through images that revealed ideological underpinnings: The company's control over vast spatial areas encouraged local managers to "think big." Industrial photographers, Nye asserted, composed images that,

emphasize a repetitive order. They used long aisles, regularities in the ceiling, or a recurring element of the machinery to create coherence, perspective, and

⁷ Indeed, according to Franklin Moore, "the exterior of an industrial plant often represents its attitude towards the community." Franklin G. Moore *Manufacturing Management* (Homewood, Ill: Richard D. Irwin, 1965), 144.

⁸ David E. Nye. *Image Worlds: Corporate Identities at General Electric, 1890-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1985), 105.

order in a space that might easily have been photographed as incoherent. Their work thus created a metaphor for managerial control through design.⁹

Attention to "controlled space" in these images acted to confirm notions of managerial prerogative to manipulate labour and machines. In effect, "empty space" was "controlled space."

A different -- yet equally fascinating -- look at the image worlds of corporate capital is provided by Carolyn Polizotto who has juxtaposed the "public face" of six Australian factories with oral testimony from workers. In her wonderful book *The Factory Floor: A Visual and Oral Record, 1900-1960*, Polizotto analyzes how companies represented themselves through visual images.¹⁰ Once again the public face that emerges conveyed the power, efficiency and promise of mill and factory. With each image, Polizotto discusses the angle and distance of the photographer in order to interpret the purpose of the frame. Aerial photographs, for example, showed the factory's dominance over its surroundings. In addition, the cropping of photographs gave a perspective of unlimited distance. Like General Electric, workers were shown separately from their factories. Accordingly, the "1930s factory was defined not by its workers but by what it made." In the pages that follow, I have taken Polizotto's approach to the study of factory images and applied it to interpret the changing face of factory design in post-World War II North America. This chapter demonstrates that corporate managers perceived mill and factory largely in abstract terms. Through their control over space, they reconfigured the public face of mill and factory to conform to new societal values about the environment, workplace relations and corporate responsibility. In the

⁹ *Ibid.*, 103-104.

¹⁰ Carolyn Polizzotto, *The Factory Floor: A Visual and Oral Record, 1900-1960* (Freemantle, Australia: Freemantle Arts Centre Press, 1988).

process, boundaries between "blue collar" and "white collar" workers, "factory" and "office," "industrial land" and "park land" became blurred.

Since the Industrial Revolution, managers and entrepreneurs have manipulated the public face of the mill and factory in response to external social and technological forces.¹¹ Early in the twentieth century, booster publicity in North America featured factories billowing black smoke in order to signal "prosperity." As the sub-text to these images revealed, booster publications tended to measure "progress" in quantifiable terms by showcasing the number of mills or factories, dollars of assessment, and the value of manufacturing.¹² The common artistic formula of exaggerating the size of the factory was designed to instill a sense of the "technological sublime."¹³ Individual firms also summoned architectural means to establish a beneficial corporate image. The purpose of embellishments in plant design, for example,

¹¹ Historian Kenneth Turney Gibbs examined how the skyscraper functioned as "an image-forming vehicle for American big business, as a means of expressing the ideas and predispositions of business clients and as a response to external forces." He noted that public criticism of big business during the Progressive Era required "an imagery that would defend the interests of particular companies, industries or business...." See: Kenneth Turney Gibbs, *Business Architectural Imagery in America, 1870-1930* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984 c. 1976), 4. Industrialists paid increasing attention to "pleasing" plant exteriors. See, for example, Gordon B. Carson, ed., *Production Handbook* (New York: Ronald Press, 1958), 32. Companies became "aware of their obligation to present an attractive face to the community."

¹² Dominic T. Alessio, "Capitalist Realist Art: Industrial Images of Hamilton, Ontario, 1884-1910," *Journal of Urban History* 18, 4 (August 1992), 442.

¹³ David E. Nye, *American Technological Sublime* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1994), 107-112. For an interesting discussion of the role of an industrial exhibition in reassuring people about the pace of change see: Keith Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), xvi.

lay in the desire to instill confidence in a particular company, thus encouraging investment on the one hand and sales on the other. Textile mill owners, in particular, frequently embellished factory facades to enhance their status within the local community. Entrepreneur John Penman, for one, insisted on an impressive architectural facade for his textile mill in Paris, Ontario, featuring a six-story slate roofed bell tower, thereby conveying an image of textile work as "respectable womanly employment."¹⁴ Likewise, the bell towers of the Amoskeag industrial complex in Manchester, New Hampshire represented "the most prominent expression of the corporation's sense of pride."¹⁵ It was both an industrial achievement -- with eight million square feet of production space -- and an aesthetic wonder, resembling a walled, medieval city.

In the late 1940s and 1950s, as well, the need to boost employee morale and improve the self-esteem and dignity of employees presented a prominent theme in the trade journal *Architectural Record*. Yet rather than boosting pride by the construction of massive bell towers, factory design guidelines now entailed locating plants in pleasant landscaped surroundings, and making washrooms and cafeterias more attractive.¹⁶ For his part, General Robert Johnson, head of the Johnson & Johnson Company, declared at war's end that the vast majority of American factories were "obsolete" and ought to be

¹⁴ Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 36.

¹⁵ Tamara Hareven and Randolph Langenbach. *Amoskeag: Life and Work in an American Factory-City* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 10.

¹⁶ Arthur W. Dana "employee Cafeterias," (c. 1953) and Julian Ellsworth Garnsey, "Functional Color in Industrial Buildings," (c. 1948) in *Architectural Record. Building for Industry: An Architectural Record Book* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972).

razed to the ground. By way of comparison, Johnson said his small factories located in rural areas inducted pride in work and loyalty to the company. Outlining corporate policy, F.N. Manley, director of construction said: "It will be a one-story building....It will be out away from congested city areas, away from any 'industrial slums.' Johnson does not want to operate in industrial slum conditions." In pursuing this goal, the company expected employees to drive to work and walk in with management through the front doors:

The general rule is to enclose everything possible in clean, colorful coverings, hiding all possible working parts and oily bearings. Usually an industrial designer is retained to modify machine designs and work out color schemes, all to the end that girls can operate them safely and simply, without soiling the nurses' uniforms that management provides for them.¹⁷

As early as 1948, then, we see an employer of a mainly female workforce, a source of cheap non-unionized labour, in the process of re-designing factory work as white collar.

With larger parcels of land available in the countryside or in industrial parks, post World War II designers had a considerable amount of freedom. Writing in 1953, Frank L. Whitney noted that the "architectural concept of the industrial plant has in the past decade been radically revised." Once designed to stand fifty years and be "dignified" in its representation of "institutional quality," factories became increasingly functional.¹⁸ Moreover, industrial firms proved more willing to "enlarge it, change it, sell it, or abandon it entirely, whenever it begins to hamstring the operations. We expect a certain fluidity in manufacturing operations, and we design for it as we can." In

¹⁷ "An Enlightened Look at A Factory," (c. 1948) in *Architectural Record*. *Building for Industry*, 15.

¹⁸ See, for example, Frank L. Whitney, "Newer Trends in Industrial Buildings," in *Architectural Record*, *Building for Industry*, 3. Whitney lamented the fact that "Too frequently the old pile did last that long, and the industry suffered accordingly."

abandoning masonry, that formerly symbolized dignity and longevity, Whitney encouraged prospective clients "to think of the industrial plant more as a shell over a mechanical process than as the ancestral home of a corporation, and try to design for fast changing times."¹⁹ Post-war factory designers thus discouraged corporate executives from "institutional monumentality" and, instead, promoted factories designed for "flexibility, expandability, perhaps even demountability." Across the Canada-US border, Michael F. Roberts, a partner in the Toronto-based architectural firm Wilson Newton Roberts, informed business readers of *Industrial Canada* that "an industrial building is an envelope wrapped around a manufacturing process."²⁰ In light of this new-found concern for "flexibility," older factories had become disposable.

By 1970, inflexible multi-storied factories had "lost out" to single-storied ones, in part because vertical material-handling proved to be far less efficient. In the pre-war decades, factory designers had built narrow industrial buildings, allowing in natural light and ventilation: shaped like so many letters of the alphabet ("I," "L," "E," "T," "U," "H" or "F").²¹ Inexpensive electricity not only eliminated the need for natural light, but also made redundant many industrial smokestacks.²² As a result of

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁰ Michael F. Roberts, "Building For Industry," *Industrial Canada* (December 1970), 31.

²¹ James M. Moore, *Plant Layout and Design* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1962), 71.

²² K. G. Lockyer, *Factory and Production Management* (London: Pitman, 1974 [c.1962], 92-93. The advantages presented by one story structures included faster building time, lower building costs (10-20%), maximum use of natural light (roof), easier ventilation, easier location, simpler internal transport, greater flexibility, maximum free floor space, easier general supervision. On the other hand, the

these technological developments, a 1954 survey of manufacturers found strong demand for single-storey buildings. By comparison, multi-storey plants began "to be a drug on the market, with more offered for sale, fewer buyers, and prices weakening."²³ According to the editors of *Architectural Record*, the survey further demonstrated that sprawling single-story sites located in rural or suburban areas "had proved economically sound." At the same time, the trend was decidedly towards constructing smaller plants with less than 50,000 square feet of floor space. We can see, then, that multi-storied factories carried the stigma of obsolescence.

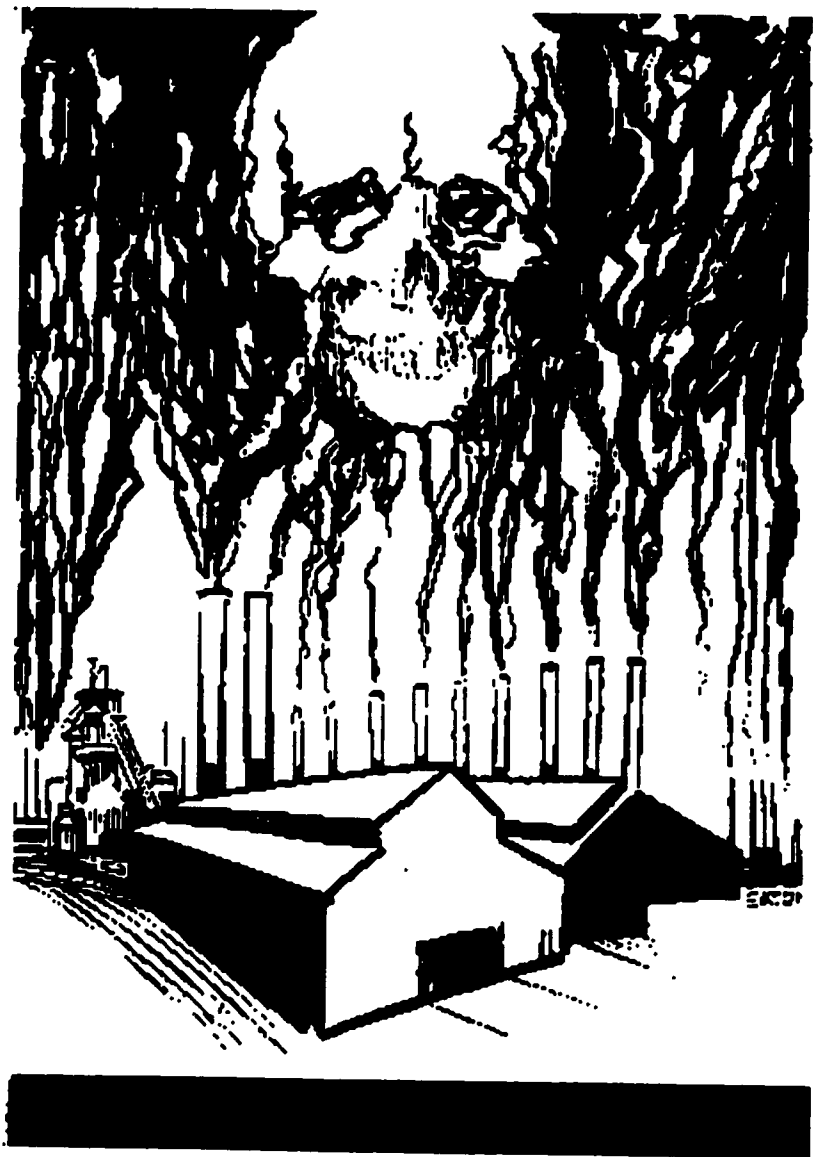
Factories also carried the stigma of environmental degradation. To be sure, industry released a great deal of hazardous wastes, causing extensive degradation of air, water and land.²⁴ In the big cities, new zoning by-laws, and urban renewal schemes, drove out many long-established industrial firms in the name of public health. Similarly, in the course of a century of industrial activity, old greenfield mill or factory towns had turned brown both metaphorically and physically. Assisted in no small part by spectacular ecological disasters such as the Cuyahoga River fire and the poisoning of people's homes in Love Canal, environmentalists and consumer rights

advantages of multi-story factories included lower site cost, easier siting of service sections, shorter service runs, lower heating costs, reduced circulation time, use of gravity possible and better departmental supervision. "It proved cheaper to open out horizontally where everything could be seen and where material handling was easier."

²³ "Factors Affecting Industrial Building Design," (c. 1954) in *Architectural Record*, *Building for Industry*, 8-9.

²⁴ Joel A. Tarr, *The Search for the Ultimate Sink: Urban Pollution in Historical Perspective* (Akron: University of Akron Press, 1996), xxx.

Illustration 1: Drawing by Peter Illig, nd.



Source: Penn State University Archives. Peter Illig Papers.

advocates put large corporations on the defensive in the early 1970s. In 1972, the editors of the trade journal *Industrial Development* warned their corporate subscribers to consider "changing socio-economic priorities" to avoid tarnished corporate images and financial loss. Three years later, the editors claimed that years of "environmental hysteria" had severely battered the image of large corporations: "Golden Boy had gone bad and had to be regulated and watched via permits, reports and approvals of his activities."²⁵ Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, as well, credited anti-business and anti-growth attitudes for a policy shift in the early 1970s, from a "war on poverty" to a "war on dirty air."²⁶

In responding to the growing force of environmentalism, industrial firms set out to eschew their smokestack image. To that end, many development agencies dropped "industrial" from their names in favour of "community" or "economic." During the 1970s and early 1980s, large steel-makers such as US Steel and National Steel eliminated "steel" from their names or, in the case of the Steel Company of Canada, adopted the less noxious sounding acronym "Stelco." As "factory" became associated with environmental and human degradation, the word gradually disappeared from the corporate vocabulary. The environmentally correct vocabulary included "facility,"

²⁵ Editorial, *Industrial Development* (November-December 1972), 2-6

²⁶ Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *The Federal Government and the Economy of New York State* (15 July 1977), 6. Book found in the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library. Atlanta, Georgia. Box 301, Eizenstat records, File Urban Affairs (O/A 6244). Moynihan also blamed the nature of the taxation system in the United States and changes to the international economy for the exodus of New York City's clothing industry.

"real estate," "building," "operation," and "plant" instead.²⁷ These words could just as easily have described an office building as a factory.

Another concept that took a firm hold among entrepreneurs was the "industrial park." Inaugurated with Chicago's 220 acre "Central Manufacturing District" in 1903, the number of industrial parks multiplied "as if by magic," in the words of one booster.²⁸ By 1970, the trade journal *Industrial Development* counted 2,400 in the United States alone, a seventy-eight per cent jump since 1965. Many of these new industrial parks were situated along transportation arteries such as major highways and near airport hubs, thus making aesthetics especially important:

Developers, tuned in to the national clamor against environmental quality, are paying increasing attention to controlling the industrial park environment through such requirements as ample setbacks; architectural approval of plant design and construction materials; underground utilities; wide streets and off-street parking; screened outdoor storage.²⁹

Part of this trend towards regulating industrial landscapes related to concern for property values. In the case of the Bramalea Industrial Park, near Toronto's Pearson Airport, the promise of lower taxes, full-serviced lots and geographic location proved

²⁷ Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," in Stuart Hall, David Held and Kenneth Thompson, eds. *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 596. Overall, the cluster of representations surrounding "industry" form a discourse as do those images that coalesced around the "post-industrial" ideal. See, for example, Richard Gillam, "The Perils of Post-industrialism," *American Quarterly* 34, 1 (Spring 1983), 78.

²⁸ David C. McNary, (President of the National Association of Industrial Parks) "Industrial Parks: If they're well-planned, they're profitable," *Industrial Development* (March/April 1970), 7-11.

²⁹ *Industrial Development* (March/April 1970), 10.

important.³⁰ In addition, many industrial parks had strict regulations barring "obtrusive industry" from locating there.³¹ The industrial park was therefore the destination of choice for light manufacturing industries ready to re-describe their business as "post-industrial."

If plant design and location underwent significant revision in the decades following the Second World War, the representation of mill and factory went even further in redefining these as post-industrial spaces. Changing notions of modernity in factory design become readily apparent when we turn to the images conveyed in *Industrial Development's* regular "Million Dollar Plants" column.³² Typically, the editors showcased single storied light manufacturing facilities pictured behind beautifully landscaped lawns. While photographic images may have been the ideal medium of corporate self-representation at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was not particularly well suited to record the "beauty" of the new generation of post-industrial factories. As a result, many companies turned, instead, towards architectural site renderings.

These architectural sketches often situated pale industrial buildings amidst rows

³⁰ Advertisement. "A 'Custom-Made' Industrial Site?," *Industrial Canada* (April 1969), 69.

³¹ "See how they grow: A survey of industrial park development trends," *Industrial Development* (July/August 1978), 13.

³² Similar visual images of this post-industrial aesthetic can be seen in corporate annual reports, the *Newsletter* of the Metropolitan Toronto Industrial Commission and the photographic archives of Windsor's Industrial Commission. Windsor Municipal Archives. MS 42. Windsor-Essex County Development Commission Records.

of trees and bushes, and behind immaculate lawns.³³ Graphic artists usually located these factories and mills in summer's splendour and, whenever possible, invoked "Southernness" (signifying "high tech" and "low wages" simultaneously) by the kind of vegetation shown.³⁴ As well, the horizontal lines of the factory flowed into the natural landscape around it.³⁵ No other industrial buildings were ever in view; to do so would be to risk negative associations with other industrial landscapes. Architects proved so successful in their efforts to distance "plants" from past associations with "dark satanic mills" that it is virtually impossible to decipher whether the buildings depicted were actually designed for industrial use. Their large windows and design made them indistinguishable from office complexes. Thus, the boundaries between "factory" and "office" became blurred as the post-industrial aesthetic relocated the factory from an urban industrial landscape to a rural natural one.³⁶

Another distinguishing feature of the post-industrial factory depicted in architectural drawings was the absence of human activity. A stillness pervades the hundreds of drawings surveyed in *Industrial Development*. Apparently, a post-

³³ See, for example, the architectural drawing of the Applied Devices Corporation plant in Orlando, Florida in *Industrial Development* (March/April 1976), 27.

³⁴ See the drawing of the Westinghouse Electric Corporation plant in Coral Springs in *Industrial Development* (May/June 1978), 25.

³⁵ *Industrial Development* (March/April 1970), 29.

³⁶ Historian Bryan Palmer wryly observed that the proposed Goodyear Tire plant for Napanee, Ontario was depicted as a kind of resort. Landscaped lawns and trees made the atmosphere "deceptively congenial." Bryan D. Palmer, *Capitalism Comes to the Backcountry: The Goodyear Invasion of Napanee* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1994), 147.

industrial manufacturing firm no longer needed employees as nearly empty parking lots signalled "automation."³⁷ Even though a drawing of a \$7.2 million food processing plant in Vineland, New Jersey included space for dozens of cars, we only see six automobiles in the employees parking lot and three others in executive spaces near the front door. The proportion of cars owned by managers was hardly surprising as these were commissioned sketches. For obvious reasons, it proved harder to reconfigure an assembly plant or a steel mill as an office complex. Yet the natural bearing of these industrial developments did not prevent imaginative graphic artists from trying. Caterpillar's 585,000 square foot Mount Joly, Illinois plant, for example, was cloaked in tree-lined avenues and landscaped lawns.

A similar story played out on the cover of the March 1975 issue of *Industrial Development* dedicated to industrial parks. In the campus-like setting of the industrial park, industrial buildings were camouflaged by a tree lined avenue with attractive street lights at the centre of the drawing. Again, the absence of workers is striking. Other sketches of industrial parks, appearing in subsequent issues, such as the one depicting Lusk Industrial/Business park in Newport Beach, California showed orderly rows of square one-story buildings with tree lined streets and a handful of cars.³⁸ Hence, industrial parks appear more like a natural landscape than an industrial one. Viewed from a bird's perspective, the Orange County California airport-industrial park evoked the image of prairie homesteads, with trees circling each building.³⁹ Conversely, the

³⁷ *Industrial Development* (March/April 1971), 30.

³⁸ *Industrial Development* (January/February 1975), 30.

³⁹ *Industrial Development* (January/February 1974), 26.

proposed "Airpark" at Dallas/Fort Worth appeared almost stately with its tree lined avenues and impressive buildings. In all of these cases, industrial land was being reinvented, at least in the imaginative realm.

Photographers chose a similar approach. Billowing smokestacks were nowhere to be seen. In a rare exception, a photograph of International Paper's new Ticonderoga, New York pulp and paper mill exiled the plant to a fraction of the upper left corner behind green pasture land, trees and a long winding river.⁴⁰ Images like that no longer focused on the size of the plants but, instead, boasted that 'here is a plant living in harmony with nature.' Only a few photographs took a ground-level view. Rather than increasing the stature (verticality) of the buildings, they accentuated the horizontal lines of land and building. In sum, unlike an early generation of mills and factories, these plants did not dominate their surroundings.⁴¹

Nonetheless, there is an "internal dialogue" of images and text in *Industrial Development* that researchers such as David Nye have failed to consider in their own studies of "image worlds." A close reading of the text that accompanied architectural sketches and photographs reveals a very different world view. Much like the booster rhetoric of the 1910s, the written descriptions of the modern "Million Dollar Plants" stressed their physical grandeur (the bigger the better) and the size of investment (the more the mightier). For example, the following descriptions accompanied typical architectural sketches:

⁴⁰ *Industrial Development* (November/December 1971). For the new, stackless factory, see *Industrial Development* (May/June 1971), 28.

⁴¹ See, for example, *Industrial Development* (March/April 1970), 28. Many of the factories were pictured beside highways, ports, and airports (but not near railways) to communicate their advantageous location and modernity.

New modular housing production facility at Gulfport, Miss., for Stirling Homex Corp., will have world's largest capacity, producing 100 units daily.

Progresso Foods has a \$7.2 million food processing plant under construction in Vineland, New Jersey.

Union Bottling Works of Houston recently opened a 197,000-sq. Ft. Plant on a 20-acre tract for bottling Pepsi-Cola products. The \$3.8 million facility, largest soft drink bottling plant in the world, will turn out 1.7 million soft drinks per day.

How do we reconcile the very different messages being produced? Unmistakeably, the meanings conveyed in image and text diverged dramatically. While the images conveyed the notion that factories had broken with the negative associations of the past such as human and environmental degradation, the texts continued to emphasize the size of investments. In other words, the philosophy of growth remained intact behind the visual facade of the post-industrial factory.

The inter-connectedness of the post-industrial facade of plant design with the inclination to locate plants in suburban areas, small towns or rural areas grew out of changes in corporate thinking since World War II. This trend emerged as early as 1958 when the magazine *Factory Management and Maintenance* singled out ten plants for special praise, all of which were located in the countryside.⁴² Corporate executives readily conceded that the search for "pleasant surroundings" and "cheap labour" tended to be one and the same. Pete J. Barber, head of Honeywell's real estate department, noted that real estate was "a means to an end, that end being specifically sales and profit. Real

⁴² James M. Moore, *Plant Layout and Design* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1962), 37.

estate is only a tool to arrive at those ends."⁴³ Similarly, his counterpart at Rockwell International, Robert Kevin Brown, focused on company profits -- rather than the charm of the countryside -- when he described in great detail how he managed \$520 million worth of real estate "assets": 180 plants; 350 warehouses and service centres; 30,000 acres of vacant land across twenty-eight states and thirty-four other countries.⁴⁴ Del Morgano, finally, manager of facility planning at UARCO, a medium sized manufacturer of business forms with nine factories, chose Brockville, Ontario when searching for a new plant location.⁴⁵ UARCO had a corporate policy to locate its production facilities in towns with populations ranging from 5,000 to 10,000. While corporate leaders pointed to socially acceptable reasons for not locating in the inner city -- vandalism, crime, traffic congestion and complaints about noise or smell, Del Morgano, by contrast, was unusually blunt: Brockville's major asset, he asserted, was the area's low unionization rate.⁴⁶

Seeking to maximize profit, many companies set out to redefine their public

⁴³ Pete J. Barber (Honeywell executive responsible for site selection), "The Site Selection Process at Honeywell," *Industrial Development* (November/December 1982), 9.

⁴⁴ Robert Kevin Brown, "Corporate Asset Management," *Industrial Development* (July/August 1974), 2-4.

⁴⁵ Del Morgano, "Organizing for Facility Planning and Real Estate Management, part 1, The One Man Operation," *Industrial Development* (March/April 1979), 18-19.

⁴⁶ The National Industrial Zoning Committee defined an industrial park as "a tract of land, the control and administration of which are vested in a single body, suitable for industrial use because of location, topography, proper zoning, availability of utilities and accessibility to transportation." *Industrial Development* (March/April 1970), 14.

image. In doing so, they soon discovered that the local still mattered in a global age. Eager to reforge its industrial image, the Steel Company of Canada (Stelco), for instance, began to promote a "dynamic," "progressive," and "vital" corporate image in the pages of its 1969 Annual Report.⁴⁷ Eight years later, to further placate critics of industrial pollution, Stelco paid tribute to "corporate social responsibility." Companies such as Chrysler, as well, used their annual reports to showcase financial contributions to local charities and community groups, thus pointing to their "public responsibilities in communities."⁴⁸ Local traditions were particularly persistent in Cranston, Rhode Island, where the Acme Cleveland Corporation relocated production from nearby Providence in 1978. In a press statement, released in June of that year, corporate managers initially christened the new 33,600 square foot manufacturing facility the "Providence Plant." Yet eventually, corporate executive Harry Leckler, succumbed to the idea that the plant should be named after the new locality, that -- in his words -- presented "a vital link to the community that will provide us with services and political cooperation."⁴⁹ Thus, the adoption of local names for individual facilities became part of the facade of the global factory.

In order to win public acceptance for industrial and technological change, Goodyear- Jackson (Michigan) kept open houses that featured "attractive working conditions, efficient production and painstaking devotion to the excellence of the

⁴⁷ Steel Company of Canada. *Annual Report* (1969), 8.

⁴⁸ Chrysler Canada. *Annual Report* (1972), 5.

⁴⁹ Western Reserve Historical Society Archives (WRHS), Cleveland, Ohio. Acme Cleveland Corp (1669-1982). Container 5, Folder 76, Minesinger to H.H. Leckler and Leckler to Minesinger. 6 September 1978.

product."⁵⁰ In 1962, the company celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary with a wildly successful open house. Invitations were issued on 14 May and employees acted as "neighborhood town criers" to spread the word among relatives and friends. In anticipation, the plant was re-painted, cleaned and tidied-up. To "ingratiate" employees, public relations manager James P. Banks ensured that their work performance was lauded in articles reviewing the plant's history. Afterwards, the dinner held at the Jackson Country Club expressed the company's appreciation for 230 employees with twenty-five or more years service by handing-out company rings. The factory tour ended in a garage temporarily converted into an exhibition centre comprised of fifteen product and institutional displays including aerial photographs of Goodyear plants worldwide and 16x20 inch blow ups of Jackson employees. In the end, more than fifteen thousand area residents toured the plant, 6,000 more than had been anticipated by plant management. For much of the day, the queue stretched longer than a city block. While touring the plant, visitors had been exposed to the business philosophy of company president Russell DeYoung who called the Jackson plant an "important part of Goodyear world-wide."

While it would be easy to dismiss rhetorical tributes to local pride as mere lip-service, many senior executives did, indeed, have strong local ties. Born in Birmingham, Alabama in 1934, W. Lawrence Weeks, for one, worked his way up the corporate ladder over the course of a thirty-one year career at Republic Steel to become Vice President of Operations. As head of the company's operations in the Mahoning Valley

⁵⁰ University of Akron Archives. Goodyear Tire Collection. Goodyear-Properties-Plant. Box 3, File: Jackson Anniversary-1962. James P. Banks to T.J. Allison. 22 June 1962. Goodyear Tire's property records include the promotional photographs of its many tire factories around the world. Typically, they were photographed from above. For a minority, the plant took the form a model on a large table in company headquarters with smiling corporate executives looking down.

from 1978 to 1981, Weeks understood that aging machinery and “geographical constraints” would eventually result in the Youngstown Works being closed. He arrived at this painful realization in 1977 when he toured the closed strip mill at Youngstown Sheet and Tube’s Campbell Works:

I went into the stripmill of Sheet and Tube shortly after it was shutdown looking at purchasing some equipment, and they had shutdown a mill that was much better than the one I was trying to operate. That’s scary. But it was, as any steel person will tell you, it was the passing of an era that I did not enjoy or feel comfortable to see it happen.⁵¹

When Weeks had to close the steel mill in Buffalo, New York in the early 1980s, he admitted that it was “not a pleasant feeling...You get to know the people....they’re no longer just numbers, they’re faces and they’re faces with families and histories and with their own particular needs in this world and the closer you know them the more difficult it is.” Disillusioned with the upper echelons of the company that increasingly consisted of “legal-minded” or “numbers-minded” individuals rather than persons with steel-making experience, Weeks came to use the label “steel men” to differentiate himself from the new breed of “top managers” with no operating experience.

Another corporate “steelman” interviewed by Donna DeBlasio, Mahoning Valley native Tom Cleary, Vice President of Operations, also failed in stopping those “money-men” who acquired Youngstown Sheet and Tube in 1969, from closing two steel mills in the valley. Although Cleary championed the modernization of the mills, in the end, he alone opposed the 1977 closing of the company’s Campbell Works at the Board of Directors meeting:

Any major decision goes to the Board of Directors....The theory behind it was that Indiana Harbor had more modern facilities and was more in the heart of the steel

⁵¹ W. Lawrence Weeks interviewed by Donna DeBlasio on 29 April 1991. The videotape is held at the YHCIL.

market, whereas the profitability was such that they had to reduce the total product costs and the decision came to shutdown the Campbell flatrolling area. That's how it was arrived at. If you don't modernize, as I said earlier, you have problems. That was very traumatic, particularly for those of us who had been around there for a long time. Worked there. Needless to say those were very trying times for everybody.⁵²

Clearly, Tom Cleary had become attached to the Mahoning Valley mills. Much like Lawrence Weeks, his operating experience tied him to both place and workers.

Yet Weeks and Cleary were outsiders in the corporate boardrooms that increasingly pitted the global against the local. Their oral narratives confirm historian Alfred Chandler's contention that top managers' lack of experience with technological processes like steel-making contributed to a "breakdown in communication" between head office and the operating divisions of conglomerates.⁵³ Scholar Sharon Zukin similarly found that the removal or side-lining of "steel men" such as Weeks and Cleary from the upper echelons of the big American steel companies and their replacement by "finance men" cleared the way for radical restructuring and the diversification out of steel.⁵⁴ Shareholders wanted a bigger return on their investment than traditional steel men could deliver. As a result, Zukin further asserted, the origins of industrial decline lay in the long-term processes of "abstraction" and "internationalization."⁵⁵

Now, increasingly, social scientists and historians have problematized what is

⁵² Tom Cleary interviewed by Donna DeBlasio on 20 September 1991. The videotape is held at the YHCIL.

⁵³ Alfred Chandler, *Scale and Scope: The Dynamics of Industrial Capitalism* (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990), 622-623.

⁵⁴ Sharon Zukin. *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 74.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 256.

meant by "globalization." For his part, Anthony Giddens' explains how social relations are being transformed by global interconnectedness as the "grip of local circumstances" over people's lives has diminished, disembedded through the process of social "distanciation."⁵⁶ In the second place, geographer David Harvey and historian Stephen Kern have examined how the sweeping changes in technology and culture have resulted in time-space compression, creating in the process "distinctive modes of thinking about and experiencing time and space."⁵⁷ Thus, the accelerating pace of change and the expanding scope of social relations continued to transform how we see the world around us. But as British geographer Doreen Massey rightly points out, globalization affects people in unique ways. Even though the world may have become a smaller place for corporate executives used to instant communication and jet setting, those on the factory floor in North America were in no position to benefit from the changes occurring around them.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990), 16-19. According to Giddens, the development of "empty space" is linked "above all to two sets of factors: those allowing for the representation of space without reference to a privileged locale which forms a distinct vantage-point; and those making possible the substitutability of different spatial units." Also, see: Anthony McGrew, "A Global Society?", in Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert and Kenneth Thompson. *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 471.

⁵⁷ Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), 2-3. David Harvey, "On the history and present condition of geography: an historical geography manifesto," *Professional Geographer* 36 (1984), 1-11.

⁵⁸ Doreen Massey, "A Global Sense of Place," *Marxism Today* (June 1991), 25-26. The "power geometry" of globalization ensures that a few movers and shakers can turn globalization to their advantage, while many others are "effectively imprisoned by it." Also see Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," in Hall et al. *Modernity*, 624.

Part of the incomprehension, derived from the language of neo-classical economics increasingly spoken by corporate executives on either side of the Canada-United States border. It has detached the language of business and technological development from the material world, distancing a new generation of corporate leaders with financial backgrounds from the people they employ. The high level of abstraction implicit in neo-classical economics rests on two basic building blocks: first, the economy is an analytically separate realm and, second, individuals act rationally to maximize their gains.⁵⁹ Applying cognitive linguistics to the language of economics appearing in the *Economist* and the *Financial Times* during the early 1990s, Frank Boers and Murielle Demecheleer identify three recurring metaphors: path (forward progress), health (firm as the patient) and war (sacrifices are needed).⁶⁰ Typically, the internal logic of each metaphor establishes the good of the firm as paramount. For example, only constant forward motion (growth) is acceptable. Its vocabulary of "inputs," "outputs," "control" originated with computer science at a time when the computer was being introduced into mills and factories.⁶¹ Thus, the lack of factory floor experience of the new generation of corporate managers became constituted through language.

It is clear that by the 1970s, the social divide and physical distance between

⁵⁹ Fred Block, *Post-Industrial Possibilities: A Critique of Economic Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 21.

⁶⁰ Frank Boers and Murielle Demecheleer, "A Few Metaphorical Models in (Western) Economic Discourse," in Wolf-Andreas Liebert, Gisela Redeker and Linda Waugh, eds. *Discourse and Perspectives in Cognitive Linguistics* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 1997), 126.

⁶¹ "The Canadian Plant of the '70s No. 1-Plant Engineering" *Industrial Canada* (Feb 1970).

corporate executives and hourly paid workers grew as social relations became more distant. Business historian Alfred Chandler demonstrates that the development of industrial capitalism cut the ties that corporations had with place as managers expanded to new markets and into new product lines, making the single-unit manufacturer an oddity in most industries.⁶² Both physically and psychologically, corporate executives had distanced themselves from sites of production. Corporate cultures and managerial identities thus “exerted a powerful force that structured the possibilities for change.”⁶³

Noting that corporate leaders remain, for the most part, remote and anonymous, Ralph Nader and William Taylor set out to write biographical essays of some of the most powerful men in America. The result is a fascinating study of the “Big Boys” in Corporate America.⁶⁴ Indeed, the new generation of steel company executives such as Howard Love at National Steel, Donald Trautlein at Bethlehem Steel and David Roderick at US Steel -- none of whom ever worked in a steel mill -- provide fascinating glimpses on

⁶² Alfred D. Chandler, *Scale and Scope*, 607. Also, see Organization of European Cooperation and Development (OECD). *Globalisation of Industry* (Paris: OECD, 1996), 9. The authors of the OECD report write: “Globalisation of industry refers to an evolving pattern of cross-border activities of firms involving international investment, trade and collaboration for purposes of product development, production and sourcing, and marketing.”

⁶³ Erica Schoenberger. *The Cultural Crisis of the Firm* (Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 6. The corporation is conceived by Shoenberger as both a collection of individuals and a “self-reproducing institution whose identity is linked with, but not the same as, those of the people who work in it. Specific individuals come and go, but the corporation remains.” Corporate cultures thus determine what strategies were undertaken.

⁶⁴ Ralph Nader and William Taylor, *The Big Boys: Power and Position in American Business* (New York, 1986).

the changing nature of industrial firms.⁶⁵ While all three men subsequently led their companies out of the business of steelmaking, the portrait of David Roderick who became chairman of US Steel on 24 April 1979 after rising through the ranks of the company's financial bureaucracy, is particularly revealing.

Interviewed in his spacious office on the sixty-first floor of the US Steel building in Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle, David Roderick freely admitted that he did not consider himself to be a "steelman." Instead, he perceived himself to be in the business of making money. Roderick's distance from the factory floor surfaced repeatedly in the interview. No, he did not speak to steelworkers when he visited steel mills because that would not be "productive." Yes, he received letters from laid-off employees or their wives but not very many. Only numbers seemed to impress:

'I don't know how many letters we received,' Roderick said. 'We never tried to tally them. But I think it would be reasonable to say, on the total closings [in 1979 and 1985], a couple of hundred. They [usually] write and say they feel bad about this or they feel bad about that. A lot of them are concerned that their husband was discriminated against. You know, 'Charlie was kept on, but my Harry was terminated. I think he was mistreated. He's loyal, he's dedicated! I would process those over to our personnel department and say look into this.'⁶⁶

When closing steel mills and terminating tens of thousands of employees, Roderick took into account neither employees' loyalty nor their personal attachments to the company. When asked about steelworkers who had claimed the company should have used the money on modernization, Roderick insisted that the interest of "the steelworker" took a back seat to that of "the shareholder": " 'He's not looking at it from the standpoint of management, which has to manage assets in the best interests of the shareholders, but

⁶⁵ Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, 74-75.

⁶⁶ Nader and Taylor, *The Big Boys*, 13.

with total sensitivity to employees. To, in effect, sell them and reinvest them in a business that is earning four percent when I can take them and put them in a business that is earning twelve percent....I mean, why would I do that? I don't get paid to do that. That's not what shareholders expect."⁶⁷ Roderick's faith in the "invisible hand" of the market and his belief that the truly worthy would come out on top relieved him of responsibility for his actions. In so doing, corporate leaders such as David Roderick detached themselves from those affected by their decisions, making it easier to "radically" break with the past. By 1984, US Steel derived only thirty-four per cent of its revenues from steel as compared to eighty per cent, six years previously.⁶⁸

Corporate managers frequently embraced new technologies and new trends in an effort to demonstrate their entrepreneurial zeal and maintain their status among their cohort. Historian David F. Noble, for his part, has observed that many corporate managers cultivated a mystique around their work that gave the impression that "business itself" was abstract and therefore beyond anybody else's control. In so doing, economics has increasingly become an objective "inevitable force in our lives rather than merely a mad scramble of greedy and familiar people."⁶⁹ Central to this development was the manager's need to stay in control. We can see, for example, that "high-technology" and "post-industrialism" captured the fancy of many corporate

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 514-515. When exposed to shop-floor realities, corporate managers sometimes re-considered deeply engrained convictions. A director of Armco Steel, for example, vowed after touring a coal mine for the first time never again to claim miners made too much money.

⁶⁹ David F. Noble, *Progress Without People: New Technology, Unemployment, and the Message of Resistance* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1995), 89.

executives. The founding president of a robotics firm, who candidly admitted that the enthusiasms of his corporate customers and their "preoccupation with such intangibles as social status" allowed him to sell his high-tech product.⁷⁰

Mary Cunningham's autobiography provides a prime example of a manager who revelled in control and high technology. In *Power Play*, she offers us a rare glimpse inside the corporate boardroom during her short but controversial career as Vice President of Corporate and Public Affairs of Bendix Automotive -- a multinational producer of auto parts -- in the early 1980s, at a time when William Agee, the company's unconventional President, steered Bendix into the high technology field. With the backdrop of economic crisis in the automotive industry, Mary Cunningham describes how the company re-invented itself as a "high-technology" firm. According to Cunningham, "Bendix is your typical corporate ice palace: a modern glass-and-chrome building with enough hanging plants to assure a visitor life can survive in there."⁷¹ In the air conditioned serenity of Bendix headquarters, Agee suspected for a long time that American automotive-brake manufacturing plants were losing market share to foreign competitors. According to Cunningham,

He suspected the automotive division needed a major restructuring-not expansion-in order to become healthy again. He made it known that it was not too soon to begin examining alternatives that involved moving production facilities to lower-cost regions and cutting back on unprofitable product lines.⁷²

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 94. Also see Stephen S. Cohen and John Zysman. *Manufacturing Matters: The Myth of the Post-Industrial Economy* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 259; Gary P. Ferraro, *The Cultural Dimension of International Business* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 6.

⁷¹ Mary Cunningham, *Power Play: What Really Happened at Bendix* (New York: Linden Press, 1984), 37, 43.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 102.

At the same time, Bill Panny, longtime head of the automotive group within Bendix, wanted to expand the company's automotive holdings by buying Chrysler's brake plants for fire-sale prices. Bendix began its corporate life making automotive brakes when founder Vincent Bendix invented the first reliable four-wheel brake system. Thus, to recommend massive cutbacks in this area was "tantamount to committing sacrilege." Agee by-passed Panny and the "pro-automotive" faction within management by asking Cunningham to conduct a "more objective" study of the company's auto parts plants. Knowing nothing about brakes, Cunningham claimed she had two months to become an expert in the "complex esoterica" of the technology. Not surprisingly, when Cunningham and her assistants visited the company's massive South Bend, Indiana complex, they received a cool reception. There seemed to be a widespread suspicion in Bendix that the study's conclusions had been pre-ordained.

In the Spring of 1980, Mary Cunningham presented her five inch thick report to a "decidedly tense" meeting of company executives. In it, she concluded that the brakes division was no longer profitable. William Agee pushed the report through. He then restructured Bendix operations through mass layoffs, plant closings and the acquisition of non-automotive operations. As layoffs mounted, employees in the modern glass-chrome home office also began to receive their pink slips. As Cunningham dryly observed: "it was one thing to hear about people being laid off in South Bend or at any of the other Bendix plant sites; it was quite another to start talking about cutbacks at home headquarters."⁷³ From her vantage point, then, the displacement of thousands of workers like Ed Lawrenson in Windsor, Ontario meant nothing compared to laying off associates in her office. No longer dimmed by distance, layoffs only became real in

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 120.

Cunningham's autobiography when she had a personal connection with them.

Instead of promoting promising employees from within, the Boards of Directors of many large corporations like Chrysler contributed to this aloofness by increasingly looking elsewhere for top executives. Accordingly, executives jumped from one opportunity to the next in search of more money, responsibility and status. Writing about the new generation of corporate managers like Abraham M. Sonnabend at Studebaker, historian Donald T. Critchlow noted that short-term earnings and their own careers motivated them.⁷⁴ In 1963, Studebaker's Board of Directors decided to discontinue making automobiles in the United States (continuing to operate a small Hamilton, Ontario plant in order to avoid law suits from dealers) abandoning its South Bend, Indiana workforce, many of whom were left with little or no pension. Unlike an earlier generation of managers who had come out of the company's automotive operations, the new leadership jettisoned the idea that the company was in the business of making cars and so diversified instead into more profitable areas.

If the social distance between US Steel's Mahoning Valley salaried workers and US Steel CEO David Roderick far surpassed the eighty-five physical kilometres between them, one can imagine the social distance separating local management working in other countries from head-offices located in the United States. A 1986 US Office of Technology Assessment study on plant shutdowns compared how three American-controlled multinational forestry companies operating in Canada and the United States dealt with layoffs. While the un-named executives of the Canadian subsidiaries believed they had a moral obligation above-and-beyond the statutory minimum to their employees, top managers at the headquarters of the American parent companies expressed their

⁷⁴ Donald T. Critchlow. *Studebaker: The Life and Death of an American Corporation* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1996), 169

opposition to all constraints on management's right to terminate employees at-will.⁷⁵ In fact, two of the US-parent companies reportedly dismissed employees without any advance notification. As a result, the authors of the report were struck by the fundamental philosophical differences between managers within the same corporation. Despite "globalization," national context and divisional structure mattered in the business world.

Yet the decision to open or close branch plants in Canada was usually made by Americans. At Frigidaire Canada, a division of General Motors, manager E. H. Card frankly acknowledged that the Canadian board of directors for General Motors served only a ceremonial function within the corporation.⁷⁶ According to Card, Canadian directors had little power, "the meetings are all cut and dried, there's no decisions there. It's just a confirmation meeting." While GM Canada controlled day-to-day operations, all GM plants had identical accounting and financial structures: "the same account numbers, the same description, the same type of control, the same audit procedures, the same system, everything." In effect, whether a plant was located in Windsor, Ontario or Detroit, Michigan mattered little in the eyes of top management.

At several points in the 1974 interview, Card turned the conversation towards the company's 1969 decision to close the Frigidaire plant in Scarborough. He felt the

⁷⁵ United States. Office of Technology Assessment, *Plant Closings: Advance Notice and Rapid Response, Special Report* (Washington, 1986), 37-38. Also see Conference Board of Canada, *Retrenchment and Beyond: The Acid Test of Resource Management* (Ottawa: Conference Board of Canada, 1982). The Conference Board of Canada had found a "developing consensus" among Canadian corporate executives in favour of severance pay, advance notice, extended health care and out-placement.

⁷⁶ McMaster University Archives. Peter C. Newman Papers. General Research Files, Box 1, File General Motors Corporation--Notes and Correspondence. Interview and Transcript, E.H. Card.

plant no longer had a chance once GM named American E. D. Rippengille to head Frigidaire Canada. According to Card, "the first thing he told the executive committee was that he was going to pull the flag down. In other words, he was going to put them out of business. And it only took him a few years to do it." Not only did Card question GM's decision to terminate Frigidaire operations in Canada, he also implied that this decision would not have been taken had Canadians been in control. To his mind, pulling down of the "flag" revealed, first, the detachment of imported managers like Rippengille and secondly, suggested that American managers acted against Canada's national interest. Yet despite the differing world-views of Canadian and American corporate executives, Canadian managers proved powerless to stop plant closures planned in the USA.

In 1980, public consternation over plant shutdowns, combined with nationalist misgivings about US multinational corporations, resulted in the creation of an Ontario Select Committee on Plant Shutdowns and Employee Adjustments. Here, top managers of several American-owned companies had to justify their decisions to close plants in the province. The ensuing dialogue with corporate leaders rattled elected members from all three political parties. Again and again politicians plaintively reminded their guests who had made major (dis)investment decisions that there was "a little thing like a border."⁷⁷ Yet while Canadian politicians had considerable difficulty comprehending just how irrelevant the Canada-United States border had become in the age of globalization, US managers did not hesitate to remind the committee that their companies treated "all our plants the same, Sir, regardless of where they are located." It was a clash of two worlds: Canadian politicians pointed to "jobs," "national interest," and "community," whereas corporate managers responded in terms of "profits," "productivity" and

⁷⁷ Archives of Ontario (AO), RG 49-173, Box C-294, Transcript of Committee Hearings 9 December 1980.

"demand." When the committee meetings ended both sides left exasperated, having come no closer to comprehending one another.

In examining the "collective mentality" of corporate executives in North America, we find that the twentieth century shift from civic capitalism to national (or global) capitalism has profoundly influenced their world-view.⁷⁸ A number of historians including Donald F. Davis, John Ingham, Philip Scranton and John Cumbler examined an era when business was rooted in the local community and looked for status, honour, and brides from that community.⁷⁹ While these locally derived and intensely personal relationships did not prevent conflict "they bounded and channelled it, humanized it, and obstructed that abstraction and generalization from experience that

⁷⁸ The history of mentalities has been greatly influenced by two French historians: Lucien Febvre, *The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century: The Religion of Rabelais*. Translated by Beatrice Gottlieb (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), 1; Marc Bloch, *The Royal Touch: The Sacred Touch and Scrofula in England and France* (London: Routledge, 1973). Other important books in the history of mentalities include: Carlos Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980); and Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and other episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984).

⁷⁹ Donald Finlay Davis, *Conspicuous Production: Automobiles and Elites in Detroit, 1899-1933* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), x; John N. Ingham, *The Iron Barons: A Social Analysis of an American Urban Elite, 1874-1965* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1977), xviii; Philip Scranton, "Large Firms and Industrial Restructuring: The Philadelphia Region, 1900-1980," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* CXVI, 4 (October 1992), 419, 461-62. In Philadelphia, Scranton found a double transition: "evident by the 1920s and far advanced by the 1950s: first, the displacement of hallmark batch production firms in sectors from heavy equipment through textiles by enterprises devoted to novel technologies and, with a few exceptions, continuous flow or mass production; second, the shift at the top from locally rooted operations to Philadelphia's role as one among many locales within the internationalizing web of 'managerial capitalism.'"

could constitute class consciousness."⁸⁰ "Civic capitalism" was moribund by the 1960s as C. Wright Mills first discovered.⁸¹ This shift in the locus of ownership proved disastrous for many industrial cities like Trenton, New Jersey. Historian John T. Cumbler shows us that an earlier era of the entrepreneurial owner fell away in Trenton as absentee capitalists acquired locally owned companies or "pushed them under."⁸² One by one the Trentons of the world lost control over their economies.⁸³

By the 1970s, corporate North America had built a post-industrial facade for the new global factory. Visual images published by industrial firms presented mill and factory as part of the natural landscape. To distance themselves further from past negative associations with pollution, and thwart unionization, the new generation of post-industrial factories were located in rural or suburban areas and designed to look like low lying office buildings. To ensure the transmutation of "industrial land" into "park land," managers of so-called "industrial parks" adopted strict environmental regulations, requiring that these areas look like suburban landscapes and not industrial ones. Yet this post-industrial aesthetic often accompanied text that continued to emphasize the size of the factory, the size of the investment, and the return on investments. Hence, behind the post-industrial facade, the growth ideology maintained

⁸⁰ Philip Scranton, *Proprietary Capitalism* (New York, 1983), 418.

⁸¹ C. Wright Mills. *White Collar: The American Middle Class* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956 [c. 1951]).

⁸² John T. Cumbler, *A Social History of Economic Decline: Business, Politics and Work in Trenton* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 7.

⁸³ See, for example, Peter E. Marchetti, "Runaways and Takeovers: Their Effect on Milwaukee's Economy," *Urbanism: Past and Present* 5, 2 (Summer 1980), 1.

its hold on a new generation of corporate managers who had little loyalty to people, place or product. Their business was to make as much money as fast as possible rather than providing places of identification and association for industrial workers. For many of these executives, particularly those associated with large multinational corporations, there were only a handful of places of economic relevance including New York City and Los Angeles. Everywhere else represented empty space, to be flown over when travelling from one control centre of the global economy to the next.

SECTION III: DISPLACEMENT

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DE-INDUSTRIALIZING HEARTLAND: "RUNAWAY PLANTS" AND "OBSCOLESCENCE"

In examining plant closures across the industrial heartland, scholars have resorted to two main models. There are those who argue that capitalists shifted their investment to increase returns, either through producing the same product in a low wage area or diversifying into a more profitable sector of the economy, and those who suggest that plant closings signalled "creative destruction," an integral part of a healthy capitalist economy.¹ One of the most influential, early explanations was Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison's *The Deindustrialization of America*, an economic overview indicating that capital shifted from older areas to newer ones in order to escape unionization and high taxes.² Since then, the search for signs of deindustrialization has spanned the globe and reached further into the past.³ Referring to Schumpeterian gales of

¹ Scott D. Camp. *Worker Response to Plant Closings: Steelworkers in Johnstown and Youngstown* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1995), 6-7.

² Bluestone and Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America*, 6-7.

³ To date, America, Canada, Chile, Spain, Great Britain, the Languedoc region of France and innumerable cities such as Sheffield, England, Homestead, Pennsylvania, and Toronto, Ontario have all been said to have experienced "deindustrialization." As the great British historian Eric Hobsbaum has stated recently in *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991*. New York: Vintage Books, 1996 [1994]. there are many 'rust belts' across the globe. Also see Christopher H. Johnson, *The Life and Death of Industrial Languedoc, 1700-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Daniel Drache, *The Deindustrialization of Canada and its Implications for Labour* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 1989); Lydia Morris, "Redundant Populations: Deindustrialisation in a North-East English Town," in Raymond M. Lee, ed. *Redundancy, Layoffs and Plant Closures: Their Character, Causes and Consequences* (London: Croom Helm, 1987); and Geoffrey Tweedale. *Steel City: Entrepreneurship,*

"creative destruction" reshaping the business landscape in the 1980s, Erica Schoenberger, for one, suggested that many companies failed to act in their own self-interest until top managers looked into the abyss of failure. This behaviour, she elaborated, can be explained by the existence of bureaucratic impediments to change in many industrial firms as well as the inertia of fixed capital investments built-up over time.⁴

This chapter reconsiders the sharp distinction sometimes drawn between "plant closings" and their "relocation." While the so-called "runaway plant" -- a term referring to a company that moved production from one location to another in order to escape unionization -- garnered considerable media attention in North America, "planned obsolescence" quietly claimed many other mills and factories, displacing millions.⁵ These two major catalysts for plant shutdowns in Canada and the United States between 1969 and 1984 were, as will be demonstrated, two sides of the same coin.⁶ In

Strategy, and Technology in Sheffield, 1743-1993 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

⁴ Schoenberger, *The Cultural Crisis of the Firm*, 88.

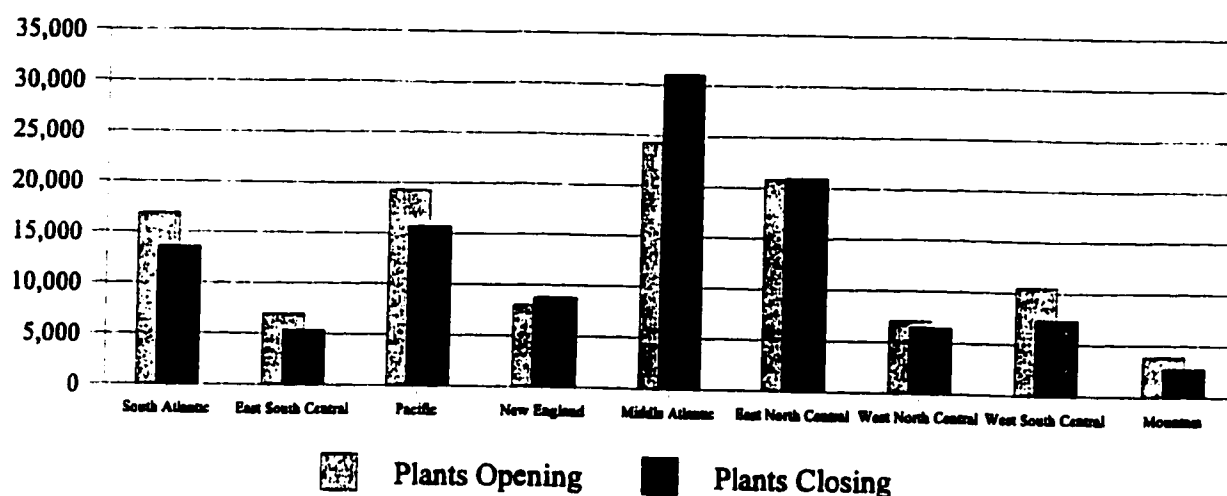
⁵ American trade unionists coined the phrase "runaway plants" in the 1950s to describe the anti-union animus leading many firms in the textile, clothing, auto parts, electrical and electronic industries to relocate to right-to-work states.

⁶ Mills and factories closed for any number of specific reasons: technological change, declining product demand, poor management, new environmental regulations, consolidation, divestment, high labour costs, the inauguration of the interstate/400 highway systems, the advancing age of facilities, and so on. In fact, plants usually closed for a combination of factors. See, for example, Cooper and Lybrand, *Closing Plants: Planning and Implementing Strategies* (Financial Executives Research Foundation, 1987), 1. The OECD fingered rapid technological change, the restructuring of markets, two energy crises and a recession as the major macro-economic forces promoting industrial restructuring. OECD, *Policies for Promoting Industrial Adaptation* (Paris, 1976), 8-9.

the face of growing global competition, corporate executives implemented a strategy of diversification into areas with a higher rate of return and divestment in order to lower labour costs either through immediate relocation or through a more gradual strategy of planned obsolescence.

In analyzing the make-up of plant shutdowns and the resulting patterns of job loss on either side of the Canada-United States border, it could be reasonably assumed that national frontiers did not mean much in light of trade liberalization and global economic integration. Yet the border did matter. On the one hand the geographic concentration of people and industry in the Montreal-Windsor corridor worked against companies 'running away' to low wage areas in other political jurisdictions within Canada. On the other hand the earlier development of the industrial Midwest meant more mills and factories there reached obsolescence between 1969 and 1984. In analyzing their strategies, this chapter will first discuss the "runaway plant" in the automotive parts sector before moving to the "obsolete plant" in the auto assembly, rubber and steel industries.⁷

⁷ All of these industries were concentrated in North America's industrial heartland. Other fading sectors such as textiles and clothing, leather goods, and the electrical industry were either concentrated in the Northeastern United States and Quebec or dispersed across the continent.

Table 1: Manufacturing Plants Opening and Closing in the United States, 1963-1985 ⁸

Plant shutdowns and job loss were not exclusive to the hard-hit industrial heartland of North America. Older industrial cities such as Birmingham, Alabama; Los Angeles, California; Sydney, Nova Scotia; Sheffield, England; and Dortmund, Germany also saw the erosion of their industrial bases. Simply put, this was a crisis afflicting much of the industrial world. The global roll-call of troubled industries included textiles, clothing, leather and footwear, iron and steel, shipbuilding and electronics.⁹ At the same time, the automotive and rubber industries were also undergoing dramatic restructuring. In the process, a staggering number of industrial workers lost their jobs. Almost one million Canadians, for instance, were unemployed at any one time between

⁸ United States. Secretary of Labor. *Economic Adjustment and Worker Dislocation in a Competitive Society: Report to the Secretary of Labor's Task Force on Economic Adjustment and Worker Dislocation* (Washington, DC: December 1986), 19-20.

⁹ Many of these so-called "sunset industries" shifted production from older industrialized areas to low wage regions or Third World countries. See, for example, Robert Plant. *Industries in Trouble* (Geneva: International Labour Organization, 1981), 51.

1981 and 1984. In thirty-six percent of these cases, job loss owed to plant closures or relocations.¹⁰ In the United States, industrial workers were displaced in every census district: 1,359,600 on the West Coast, 2,093,300 in East North Central, 2,427,900 in the Middle Atlantic, and another 1,270,100 manufacturing workers in the South Atlantic census district.¹¹ In the San Francisco area alone, 303 industrial plants closed between 1980 and 1983 leaving 33,898 workers unemployed.¹² As it became obvious by the early 1980s, the emergence of Japan as a world economic superpower meant that three in five television tubes were being produced there.¹³ These broad shifts in the nature of global economic activity, signalling an end to the post Second World War economic hegemony of North America, fundamentally realigned the international division of labour.¹⁴

¹⁰ Garnett Picot and Ted Wannell. *Job Loss and Labour Market Adjustment in the Canadian Economy* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1987), 3. According to Doreen Massey and Richard Meegan, there are three ways to restructure: the intensification of production, the rationalization of production and new investments in technology. Doreen Massey and Richard Meegan, *The Anatomy of Job Loss* (London: Methuen, 1982), 9.

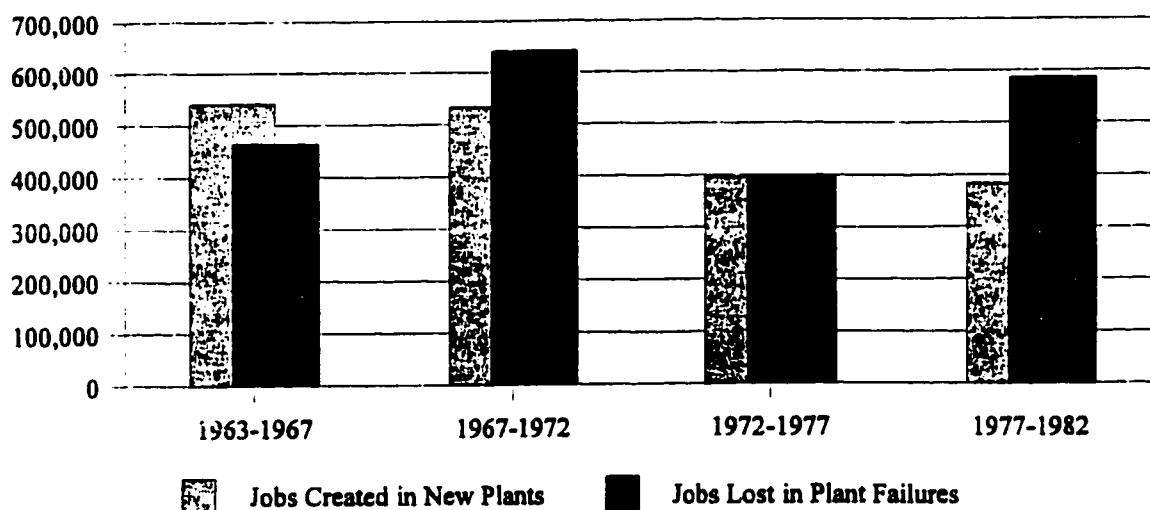
¹¹ US. Secretary of Labor. *Economic Adjustment and Worker Dislocation*, 19-20. The census districts included New England (ME, NH, VT, MA, CT, RI), Middle Atlantic (NY, NJ, PA), East North Central (OH, IN, IL, MI, WI), West North Central (MN, IA, MO, KS, NE, SD, ND), South Atlantic (DE, MD, VA, WV, NC, SC, GA, FL), East North Central (KY, TN, AL, MS), West South Central (OK, AR, LA, TX), Mountain (MT, ID, WY, CO, UT, NV, NM, AZ), and Pacific (CA, WA, OR, HI, AK).

¹² Annie Nakao, "Middle Class America may be 'disappearing,'" *San Francisco Examiner* 22 July 1984.

¹³ OECD. *Job Losses in Major Industries* (Paris, 1983), 21.

¹⁴ See, for example, W. Rand Smith, *The Left's Dirty Job: The Politics of Industrial Restructuring in France and Spain* (University of Pittsburgh and the University of Toronto, 1998), 5; and Bert van der Knaap and Richard Le Heron, eds.

Table 2: Change in Manufacturing Employment in the East North Central
Census District 15



Over one in five industrial workers displaced by plant closings in the United States called the Industrial Midwest home. The East North Central census district encompassed the industrial states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin. As illustrated in the line graph above, overall job losses in this district peaked between 1967 and 1972 and again between 1977 and 1982. In total, over one hundred thousand manufacturing plants (each employing more than nineteen workers) closed their doors between 1963 and 1982 (see table one). In the East North Central census district, alone, fully 20,955 manufacturing establishments closed their doors permanently.¹⁶ Unfortunately, this source of statistical data does not tell us about the size of the plants opening and closing nor does it reveal how many workers lost their jobs in each instance.

Human Resources and Industrial Spaces: A Perspective on Globalization and Localization (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1995), 4.

¹⁵ US. Secretary of Labor. *Economic Adjustment and Worker Dislocation*, 19-20

¹⁶ However, readers may be surprised to learn that the largest gap between plants opening and closing did not occur during the recession of the early 1980s when the steel and auto industries were in crisis, but between 1967 and 1972.

Thus, even though the plant openings almost equalled the number of plant closings in the East North Central census district, the overall number of manufacturing jobs declined sharply as indicated in table two. A second problem of evidence relates to its long time frame. By looking at a twenty-year period that includes the boom years of the mid-1960s, the job losses of the recession years appears in a softer light. At the same time that layoffs and plant closures took their toll of well paying (union) jobs, the number of jobs being created by new establishments in the region declined sharply, as seen in table two, providing further evidence that companies avoided locating new mills and factories in the industrial heartland. By contrast, the locus of new job creation in the manufacturing sector was most notable in the Southern Atlantic census district which gained 512,900 manufacturing jobs between 1963 and 1982.¹⁷

More specific statistical data relating to plant closings are essentially non-existent. Typically, the sources available to state governments in the United States consisted of newspaper accounts and the reports of government field agents. So limited was the research capacity of state governments, Connecticut's Department of Commerce relied on a citizens group, the Committee of Concern for Connecticut Jobs, to provide it with advance warning of plant closings. Union researchers like Sheldon Friedman of the UAW admitted that they had no adequate means of ascertaining the scale and scope of job loss: "Although few would deny the magnitude and seriousness of this problem, no one knows the exact number of workers unemployed or underemployed as a result of plant

¹⁷ The changing number of manufacturing establishments by region does not tell us how many men and women were losing their jobs or whether a region was "deindustrializing." Moreover, these statistics count a plant relocating within a census district as both the opening of a new plant and the closing of an old one. As a result, the census record tells us nothing about those plants relocating out of the inner cities to "greenfield" sites on the suburban fringe or to rural areas nearby.

closings and other economic displacements."¹⁸

Measuring job loss is difficult in Canada, much like in the United States. The three following main sources are available : aggregate unemployment statistics including percentages of "job losers" (since 1975), the case files of Canada Manpower Services dealing with selected plant shutdowns since 1963, and the record of mass terminations compiled since 1971 by the Ontario Ministry of Labour.¹⁹ The dearth of "hard" statistical data, combined with changes in how the data was collected, make it next-to-impossible to ascertain how many Canadian workers underwent plant closings between 1969-1984. There was not even an arrangement to share statistical data between the federal and provincial governments as late as 1984. What we do know is that plant closings and the resulting displacement caused Canada's unemployment rate to rise dramatically during the 1970s and early 1980s. From a low of 4.4 per cent in 1969, the country's unemployment rate climbed to 8.3 per cent by 1978, and reached the double digits after 1982.²⁰ Unlike the situation existent in the United States, as the

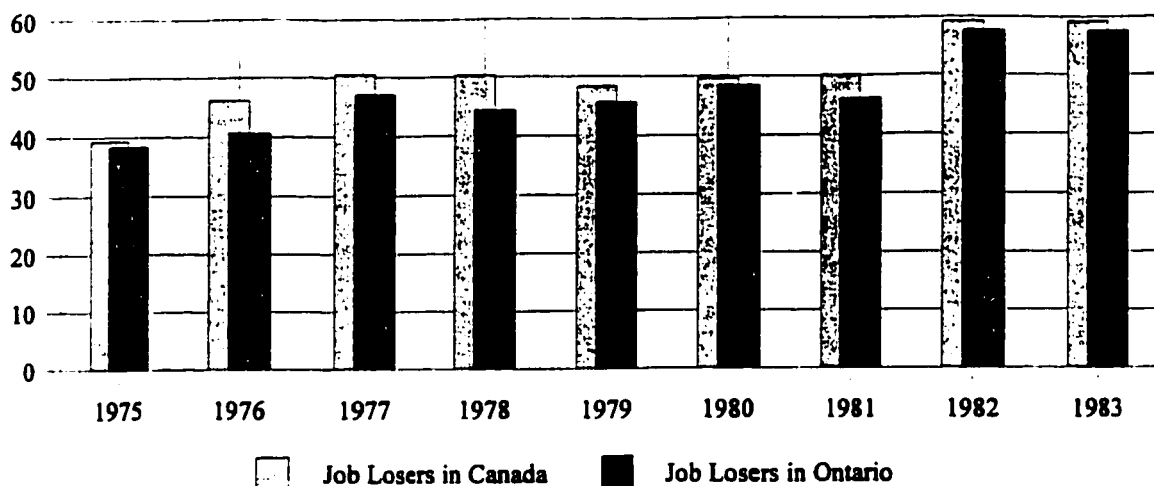
¹⁸ See: Walter Reuther Library (WRL). Wayne State University. United Auto Worker (UAW) Collection, Research Branch, Box 33-14, Sheldon Friedman, Director of Research Department to the Honorable William D. Ford (Congressman), March 13, 1984. The displaced-worker surveys of the 1980s conducted by the Bureau of Labour Statistics have improved the situation but in the absence of routinely generated government information many researchers have turned to the data base of the credit agency Dun and Bradstreet which tracked closings. Most researchers agree, however, that this source of information, while valuable, is only partial.

¹⁹ Morley Gunderson, *Permanent Layoffs, Dismissals and Plant Closings: The Role of the Labour Market, Collective Bargaining and Legislation* (A Report to the McDonald Commission on the Economic Union, June 1984), 21.

²⁰ Stephen McBride, *Not Working: State, Unemployment, and New-Conservatism in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 5. Also see Robert Campbell, *The Full-Employment Objective in Canada, 1945-1985: Historical, Conceptual, and Comparative Perspectives* (Ottawa: Economic Council of Canada, 1991),

accompanying graph indicates, the rate of unemployment in Canada's industrial heartland remained consistently lower than the national average. More specifically, we also know that the number of "job losers," those unemployed Canadians who had involuntarily been laid-off or fired from their jobs, climbed steadily as a proportion of the overall number of Canadians unemployed.

Table 3: "Job Losers" as Percentage of Unemployed, 1975-1983 ²¹



By contrast, albeit only partially effective, the CSM case files and those of the Ontario Ministry of Labour reveal an ability (and a desire) to track job loss by closing establishment which far surpassed the more limited capabilities of the federal and state

22.

²¹ Statistics Canada. *Labour Force. Annual Averages, 1975-1983*, (February 1984), 71 and 529.

governments in the United States.²² The resulting record of job loss remains useful for capturing trends and because it influenced policy makers of the day. The Ontario Ministry of Labour's record of permanent and indefinite layoffs, for example, accounted for 210,726 jobs lost between 1974 and 1983. By the 1970s, many mills and factories not only faced competition from cheap imports and new "greenfield" sites but also suffered from declining demand in times of recession. The overall picture of job loss appeared to be very bleak and remarkably similar in both countries. However, there were significant differences with regard to the economic situations in Canada and the United States. One important distinction involved job loss resulting from the "runaway plant."

The "Runaway Plant," 1950s-1970s

Nothing raised the ire of trade unionists in Canada and the United States quite as much as the spectre of the "runaway plant" (see illustration 2), a term they used to describe footloose multinationals employing cheap labour (usually women and minorities) who relocated work to avoid unionization. In both countries, this phenomenon was most apparent in the auto parts and electrical industries even though, in the United States, the textile industry had been the first industry to move en masse to

²² Government researcher F. Siddiqui suggested that the Ontario Ministry of labour's plant shutdown data should be restricted as it was "impossible to know how many permanent lay-offs occurred or the characteristics of these layoffs." AO. Ontario Ministry of Labour. RG 7-67, Box 3, File 2: Termination/Severance Pay Legislation Review, 1972-1974. F. Siddiqui, "Review of Mass Lay-Offs Covered by Termination of Employment Legislation During 1972," December 1973, page 1. For an examination of four plant closings see: Ian Robertson MacLachlan, "Industrial Plant Closure and Competitive Strategy in Ontario, 1981-1986," PhD: University of Toronto, 1990.

the low-wage South, abandoning its historical ties to New England and the Northeast.²³ Given the concentration of industrial production in Ontario, its potential market, and its geographic size, companies in search of cheap labour relocated to small towns within the province or moved south of the border. Despite a handful of companies which relocated to Quebec and Atlantic Canada with federal government assistance, there did not exist an equivalent bidding war to the one that raged between political jurisdictions in the United States. In sum, plant closings in such labour intensive industries as automotive parts, textiles and electrical during the 1960s and 1970s owed, in large part, to employers' desires to escape a high-wage, unionized workforce.

Unionized workers enjoyed significantly better wages and benefits but, in some industries at least, they eventually paid for this improved standard of living with their jobs. To be sure, those firms predisposed to shifting production often moved again and again. Indeed, in the course of my archival research, I encountered numerous cases of companies relocating production in the 1950s and again twenty or thirty years later. As a result, workers displaced in these industries rarely had the opportunity to accrue sufficient seniority to retire with a private pension. By the late 1970s, their achievements at the bargaining table had pushed the wage gap between union and non-union workers up to thirty percent from nineteen percent a decade earlier. We can see, then, that trade unions were, in part, victims of their own success.²⁴

Many states actively promoted the promise of being union-free in order to

²³ John E. Ullman, *The Anatomy of Industrial Decline: Productivity, Investment, and Location in US Manufacturing* (New York: Quorum Books, 1988), 129.

²⁴ I feel confident in this assertion as the record of "defunct" or "cancelled" local unions kept by the United Steelworkers of America, District 6 (Canada) and the United Auto Workers included a large number of locals which had only negotiated one or two collective agreements before the company closed the plant.

Illustration 2: "Stop runaway shops." Fred Wright, nd.



Source: University of Pittsburgh Archives. UE Archives.
Fred Wright Cartoon Collection.

attract footloose employers located in the heavily unionized industrial heartland. They often placed advertisements in the *New York Times* to entice manufacturers to relocate production to their state. In a typical advertisement featuring a white family arranged around an old jalopy, the government of Virginia signalled to readers that the state had poor white folk willing to work hard for next to nothing. The caption read: "Working is a privilege. Not a backache. That may be kind of an obvious thing to say. But, what with riots and strikes and all, I wonder about people sometimes. I mean, I've worked in Virginia ever since Anne and I got married. And I've never been involved in anything like a strike...."²⁵ The message was black and white: if you moved your mill or factory to Virginia you would have a cheap and docile white workforce and leave behind the race "riots" and "strikes" associated with Northern cities in the United States.

In fact, twenty states concentrated in the South, in the Plains Midwest and in the Southwest had "right-to-work" legislation on the books.²⁶ None of these states had significant industrial activity prior to the Second World War. Taking advantage of the

²⁵ University of Pittsburgh Archives (UPA). United Electrical Workers Archives. Research Box 1805, File: New Plant, the South, 1960-62. Clipping of a paid advertisement in the *New York Times*, nd.

²⁶ Right to work states included: Alabama, 1953; Arizona, 1947; Nevada, 1951; North Carolina, 1947; Texas, 1947; Wyoming, 1963; Florida, 1944; Georgia, 1944; Iowa, 1947; North Dakota, 1947; South Carolina, 1954; Utah, 1955; Kansas, 1958; Mississippi, 1954; Nebraska, 1947; South Dakota, 1947; Tennessee, 1947; and Virginia, 1947. Other states adopted Right-to-Work laws and then repealed them: Delaware (1947-1949), Indiana (1957-1965), Louisiana (-1956), Maine (1947-48), and New Hampshire (1947-49). Also, attempts to institute right to work were defeated by referendum in California, Colorado, Idaho, Maine, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Washington. Penn State University Archives (PSUA). College Park, Pennsylvania. United Steelworkers of America Archives, Legislative Department, Box 61, File 15, Office Files-Runaway Plants under 14 (b) [Right to Work]-District Inquiries. D31 American Can Co. Rockdale Illinois and USWA. Penn State U. Leg Box 79, File 54, General Right to Work (1980)--June 1980 list.

Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, these states did, in fact, over-ride federal statutes and outlaw compulsory union membership or closed shops.²⁷ For companies wishing to reduce their labour costs, there appeared to be a right-to-work paradise just around the corner (see illustration 3).

Auto parts production, historically concentrated in Southeastern Michigan, was among the first industries to shift production southward.²⁸ In 1950, Borg Warner, a pioneer among large auto parts manufacturers, had twenty-four production facilities in the United States, mostly in the Midwest, as well as two plants located in Windsor, Ontario. Twenty-five years later, all of Borg Warner's fifty-five US plants were located in the South. The restructuring of corporate operations had begun in 1957 when Borg Warner's Long Manufacturing Division closed two Detroit plants. The following year, the company's Morse Chain Co. subsidiary closed its Detroit plant. Next, the company moved its refrigeration production from Muskegon, Michigan to Fort Smith, Arkansas. Finally, the Atkins Saw division shifted production from Indianapolis to Greenville, Mississippi. Simultaneously, the two plants in Windsor were relocated to smaller towns in Southern Ontario. The rationale for these moves was only too apparent. As the *Detroit News* reported, unskilled wages at Fort Smith were forty percent lower than those at the Muskegon factory.

One auto-parts supplier after another followed suit. In the 1970s, auto-parts giant Rockwell International restructured its operations, closing many factories across

²⁷ Bluestone and Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America*, 136.

²⁸ WRL. UAW Collection. Research Branch. Box 87-18 Borg Warner, 1965-1976. Borg Warner Corporate document dated 30 May 1974. Also see WRL. UAW Collection. Research Branch. Box 93-16, Caterpillar, 1970-1977. Leon Potok to Richard Prosten, Research Director. 26 May 1977.

North America. Of its 138,000 employees in 1974, the company shed thirty-eight thousand by 1982.²⁹ In the meantime, the Eaton Corporation terminated one-third of its 60,000 employees by ending production at eighteen sites in 1981, followed by the closing of its truck axle plant in Cleveland, a transmission plant in Kalamazoo, Michigan and a valve-manufacturing plant in Battle Creek, Michigan.³⁰ Only six truck parts plants -- located mainly in the South and built in the 1970s -- were spared relocation. As auto parts suppliers such as Dana Corporation, Eaton, Clark Equipment and TRW shifted production southward, the Midwest's share of auto parts production fell dramatically from seventy-four per cent in 1972 to sixty-five per cent in 1982.³¹ At the same time, auto-related jobs in North Carolina jumped seventy-two per cent to 22,000 from 1975 to 1980.

²⁹ North American Rockwell. *Annual Reports, 1970-1984*. "Displacement" was prolonged for years for many employees as the company's national agreement with the United Auto Workers allowed employees preferred hiring rights at other unionized shops. For example, when workers lost their jobs at Detroit Transmission, Axle and Forge plants in June 1973, they were given the option of going to Oshkosh, Wisconsin; Newark, Ohio; Marysville, Ohio; Ashtabula, Ohio; or Winchester, Kentucky. National Archives of Canada (NAC). MG 28, 1119, Canadian Auto Workers, Volume 36, File 14, Rockwell International. W.E. St. Clair, Plant Manager. Rockwell Standard Division to all hourly employees. November 7, 1972.

³⁰ Montieth M. Illingworth, "Eaton's Drive to Cut Costs Begins to Pay Off," *Barron's* (15 August 1983). Jeffrey J. Zygmunt, "A Slimmer Eaton Poised for Future Growth," *Ward's* (3 October 1983). The closing of its Battle Creek transmission plant resulted in the layoff of 1800 employees reported James V. Higgins, "Eaton to Close Michigan Plant in Cutback," *Detroit News* (Thursday 27 January 1983).

³¹ James Rubenstein, *The Changing US Auto Industry: A Geographical Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 132. "Parts Makers Resist UAW," *New York Times* (4 August 1981). The Auto parts sector was dominated by a dozen big multinational companies including: Federal Mogul, Duplate, Gulf & Western, Kelsey-Hayes, Bendix, Budd, Champion Spark Plugs, Dana, Eaton, Eltra, Ex-Cell-O, Essex, Bundy, Eltra and Borg Warner.

In spite of the transplantation of many auto parts companies to the Southern United States, company executives began looking further afield in the early 1980s to escape the clutch of the United Auto Workers. The list of companies shifting production to Mexico, Southeast Asia and Europe from Canada and the United States grew to include many of the big names in the auto parts and machinery business. Allis-Chalmers, for one, relocated its farm equipment operations out of Milwaukee in order to escape the United Auto Workers (UAW). Company CEO David Scott told the annual meeting of Allis Chalmers in 1980 that " 'We've either got to get away from the UAW...or get out of the business.'"³² Yet no major relocation surprised the UAW as much as that of Caterpillar, known throughout the world for its earth-moving equipment. As a matter of fact, until the big 205 day strike over the winter of 1982-83, Caterpillar management had prided itself on its paternalistic image. Yet the strike, precipitated by the company's demands for wage-and-benefit concessions, convinced Caterpillar to "get tough" by shifting production out of the United States.³³ Near the end of the strike, the company informed its 1,700 employees at the Mentor, Ohio plant that their jobs were being exported to Korea. Soon thereafter, Caterpillar closed four other plants. By 1985, the *Financial Times* reported that Caterpillar had shifted "considerable production" to its three European plants. The low Canadian dollar and socialized medicine also convinced some American companies like the Eaton Corporation to relocate production from the

³² Jack Norman, "Why do companies leave?" *Milwaukee Journal* (4 May 1982). According to leaked documents, the corporation favoured Topeka, Kansas for seven reasons, six of which related to labour: "competitive labor advantage," "better labor climate," "right-to-work state," "skilled workers," "lower labor cost community," and "break inflexible UAW position."

³³ WRL. UAW Collection. Research Branch. Box 93-21. Caterpillar Clippings, 1982. Clipping of the *Wall Street Journal* (Friday 10 June 1983), 27.

industrial Midwest to Southern Ontario.³⁴

As was so often the case, the situation across the border in Canada differed. Instead of calling the relocation of mills and factories "runaway plants," Canadian trade unionists labelled them "plant movements" or "plant migration." This distinction may have originated from the fact that plant relocations in Canada rarely crossed provincial boundaries. Indeed, no Canadian jurisdiction had comparable "right-to-work" legislation, making it difficult to escape unionization. As a result, companies either moved to less-unionized small towns or moved out of the country. Another contributing factor to the different understanding of the problem of plant relocations in Canada stemmed from the fact that trade union concerns about plant migration originated with the Ford Motor Company's decision in the early 1950s to shift its assembly operations to Oakville from Windsor. As the new plant would be covered by the existing collective agreement with the UAW, there was no indication that the company wished to rid itself of the union.³⁵ A decade later, trade union concerns about plant closings in the auto parts sector was blamed on dislocation caused by the Auto Pact, signed between Canada and the United States in 1965, and not corporate animosity towards unionized workers.³⁶

³⁴ WRL. UAW. Research. Box 107, File 21: Eaton Corporation, 1975-1983. Sheldon Friedman, Director of Research to Howard Young, "Regarding the Impact of US-Canadian Exchange Rate Fluctuation on Supplier plant." 19 January 1979.

³⁵ *Windsor Daily Star* (7 April 1954).

³⁶ NAC. Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce. RG 20 Accession 1983-84/228 Volume 162, File 8001-260/A4-1 pt 2. April 17, 1972. W.J. Patrick to D.P.W. Wood, A/Director Mechanical Transport Branch; and NAC. RG 20 Accession. 1983-84/228 Volume 166, File 8001-260/J1 pt 1. Industrial Development-Iron Foundry Industry, 1965-66. 14 December 1966 D.N. Mott, Iron and Steel Division to W. B. Horovitz, Materials Branch.

Instead, companies leaving Windsor cited the city's geographic position and high labor rates for their decision to relocate elsewhere in Southern Ontario.³⁷ Unable to see an anti-union animus behind most shutdown decisions, Windsor trade unionists focused on the negative social consequences of plant relocations:

[UAW] Local 195, which is comprised of feeder plants, has been plagued by callous relocations over the years. In spite of the union's protests, companies have moved out, sometimes with the aid of government subsidies, leaving long-time employees to fend for themselves. And who can forget the magnitude of the blow to this community when Ford moved its assembly operation to Oakville?³⁸

While Windsor's reputation as a militant "union town" contributed to company decisions to relocate elsewhere, they did so with little hope of casting-off the union altogether.

One of the major economic policy developments of the 1970s proved to be the proliferation of "regional development" initiatives taken by Canadian politicians to assist poor provinces and regions, attract industry and employment. The federal government supplied million of dollars to companies willing to build plants in Atlantic Canada or relocate production from existing facilities in Central Canada. The story of Aerovox Canada, an American multinational that received \$236,000 of taxpayer dollars to relocate from Hamilton, Ontario to Amherst, Nova Scotia, reveals the uncertain

³⁷ *Windsor Daily Star* (27 April 1949). Essex Wire complained to Windsor's mayor that the wage rate of \$1.62 for female employees far surpassed that of its competition which was said to range from .93 to 1.25. The former was the starting wage at Dunnville. As a result, the company shifted production. However, thirty years later, faced with union demands for better wages and benefits, Essex Wire abandoned its Dunnville workers as well.

³⁸ John McArthur, "The Chrysler Truck Plant," *The Guardian* 19, 3 (March 1978).

benefits of "regional development" schemes prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s.³⁹ Those Hamilton workers displaced in the move found that there were relatively few factory jobs available for women in the area. As well, their "higher than average age" and their above-average salaries at Aerovox made them even more difficult to place into other jobs. Other companies such as York Lambton, a holding company that had acquired Admiral's appliance manufacturing plants from Rockwell International in 1979, used a Quebec government grant to close down the Beach Foundry in Ottawa and move stove-making to Montmorency, Quebec. Likewise, the Ontario government joined in the effort, declaring Eastern and Northern Ontario development zones, and making firms that located mills and factories into those regions eligible for financial assistance.

In consequence, auto parts plants in Canada closed as a result of lower prevailing wage rates elsewhere. A confidential report filed by the Greater Windsor Industrial Commission, dated October 1961, blamed high wage labour rates for the economic crisis looming over the city.⁴⁰ The report cited the case of Canadian Motor Lamp which opened a new facility in Bracebridge in rural Ontario and "slowly transferred several operations from Windsor." Even though both plants were organized by the United Auto Workers, the wage gap proved significant, especially for women: male production workers at Bracebridge earned \$1.15 to \$1.25 compared to the higher \$1.98 in Windsor, whereas women working in the smaller centre received only \$.95 to \$1.05 for work paid \$1.78 in Windsor. As to be expected, newly unionized workplaces often took decades to match

³⁹ AO. RG 7-91, Interim Box 28, File: Aerovox-Hamilton; National Archives of Canada. RG 118, Volume 2, File 3837-1/A18 Technological and Economic Change Adjustment Assistance-Aerovox Canada Ltd. Report of the Joint Manpower Planning Committee, 28 July 1972. R. D. Fraser, Chairman.

⁴⁰ Windsor Municipal Archives (WMA). MS 42 II/3, Windsor-Essex County Development Commission, Confidential Files, "A Confidential Report," October 1961.

the wages and benefits negotiated in Windsor.

What was the relationship between economic restructuring and the sexual division of labour? At first glance, men did worst: they experienced manufacturing job loss in greater numbers than women in both Canada and the United States. However, women were more likely to lose their jobs (especially in Southern Ontario). Two practices conspired to put women at a distinct disadvantage to their male co-workers. First, separate seniority lists restricted female job mobility within the plant by institutionalizing separate "male" and "female" spheres. Secondly, sex-labelling of jobs prevented women from bidding for jobs traditionally considered "men's work." Most women worked in small and medium sized establishments on the margins of industry, whereas men were concentrated in the largest industrial plants. Confined by a rigid sexual division of labour to segments of the auto parts industry (as well as other industries like the textile and clothing industries), women were particularly at risk in times of industrial restructuring and disproportionately affected by runaway plants.⁴¹

In consequence, when International Harvester terminated several operations in Hamilton, Ontario in 1969-1970, the sex-labelling of jobs and separate seniority lists made it virtually impossible for women to transfer to other parts of the plant. Despite the modernization of the twine mill in the mid-1960s, International Harvester had

⁴¹ Issues of workplace inequality between men and women have usually been considered in terms of wage differentials and discriminatory hiring practices by employers, yet rarely in terms of differential job security. Canadian sociologist Pat Armstrong, for example, responded to the question-- "Who suffers during an economic crisis?"--by arguing that men bore the brunt of the recession in the early 1980s as they were concentrated in declining sectors of the economy. Pat Armstrong, *Labour Pains: Women's Work in Crisis* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1984), 97. While the sex-labelling of employment began to break-down during the 1970s, Bonnie J. Fox and John Fox have indicated that sexual segregation continued to be the norm in Canada. See: Bonnie J. Fox and John Fox. *Occupational Gender Segregation of the Canadian Labour Force, 1931-1981* (Toronto: York University Institute for Social Research, 1987), 1.

gradually reduced its mill workforce from 300 to just thirty-seven employees. No man would lose his seniority after the company agreed to consider transferring "all of the male employees." By contrast, female employees had to look for work elsewhere. The gender assumptions in the report that International Representative William F. Scandlon sent to his superiors are telling:

Our big problem would seem to be with the female employees. There are very few female jobs at Hamilton Works. We have several females with long service (15-23 years) laid-off and they, of course, will have preference. The chances of re-employment are poor for [Local]2868 laid off females and for Twine mill females even worse. In checking the background of experience of these Twine Mill females it would seem very unlikely that any of them could be retrained for simple or routine office type work--but we will explore every possibility.⁴²

In March, Scanlon reported that only three of the displaced women required full-time employment as the "others are not the sole breadwinners and are in a position to draw UIC for a while and look around for work, either full time or part time."⁴³ Scandlon's report vividly illustrates how deeply the "breadwinner" ideology was ingrained in the mind-set of both company officials and union representatives.⁴⁴ As a result, partial closure of a large establishment like International Harvester's put women at a distinct

⁴² McMaster University Archives MUA). United Steelworkers of America, District 6 Records. Box 101a, File: Hamilton folder 3, letter from William F. Scanlon to M. Fenwick dated 22 January, 1970.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 10 March 1970, Scanlon to Gordon Milling.

⁴⁴ Yet Bill Scanlon went out of his way -- Dorothy Routenberg recalled -- to assist married women like herself find jobs elsewhere. To be sure, Bill wanted to transfer women like Dorothy to other parts of the plant. However, he was every bit as much bound by the rules of the collective agreement as those who lost their jobs. Dorothy Routenberg interviewed by Steven High at her Hamilton home in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the MUA. Bill Scandlon interviewed by Steven High at the Ontario Workers Arts and Heritage Centre in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the MUA.

disadvantage vis-à-vis their male co-workers.⁴⁵

Annual Manufacturers' Directories allow us to identify the sex of all employees, union and non-union, of each Windsor establishment on the eve of its closure. Thus, we can with some degree of assurance measure the displacement of men and women after plant shutdowns. The table below identifies the sex of those workers displaced in each shutdown. Windsor was in many ways the quintessential "Motor City." It was, with Oshawa, Canada's first major centre of automotive assembly and parts manufacturing. In 1970, there was not a single female employee among the 4,500 UAW members at the Ford engine plant and only forty women among the 9,625 workers at Chrysler in the city.⁴⁶ Women were therefore concentrated in a handful of auto parts factories, many of which closed during the time-frame of this study. "Woman's work" in the automotive sector was by-and-large an extension of the textile industry where dexterity and patience were construed as feminine qualities. Sewing-machine operators were needed for automotive trim, seats and some accessories or other female employees assembled

⁴⁵ In St Catharines, the inflexibility of the sexual division of labour resulted in the indefinite layoff of high-seniority women at McKinnon Industries at the same time as men were being hired off the street. The Royal Commission on the Status of Women heard a brief from twelve women at McKinnon who claimed that the sex labelling of job classifications, determined by union men in consultation with the company, led to women bearing the brunt of industrial restructuring. It appears that production lines with women wage earners were being transferred elsewhere (ie. ignition, distribution, shock horns, spark plugs and bearings), while those areas designated for men were expanding. Sharon Jarvis, "Woman Predicts End of Women on McKinnon Production Lines," St. Catharines Standard (6 June 1968). For the union response to this newspaper article see: NAC. MG 28 I 119. Canadian Auto Workers . Volume 165, File 16: Local 199, St Catharines, Ontario. Correspondence, 1968-1970. James Connell, President of Local 199 to Douglas Hamilton, Secretary-Treasurer of the Ontario Federation of Labour. 10 June 1968.

⁴⁶ Labour Canada survey returns from Windsor union locals filed in 1970 found in NAC. RG 27, Accession 1988-89/007.

small parts such as wire assembly, brakes and car radios. As a whole, we see that women, though representing only eight percent of union members in Windsor in 1970, constituted a far great proportion of those displaced.

Table 4: Plant Shutdowns and Displacement in Windsor, 1970-1983

Name of Company (Year of Closure)	Male Workers		Female Workers		Total
	N	%	N	%	
Auto Specialities (1971)	300	100.0	0	0.0	300
Elco Woods (1971)	30	90.0	3	9.1	33
Essco Stamping (1971)	12	70.6	5	29.4	17
Fleetwood Metal (1971)	7	35.0	13	65.0	20
General Fire Extinguisher (1971)	52	74.3	18	25.7	70
Duplate of Canada (1972)	198	97.5	5	2.5	203
Daal Plastics (1974)	17	25.4	50	74.6	67
Daal Specialties (1974)	110	26.2	310	73.8	420
Sun Tool and Stamping (1974)	175	73.5	63	26.5	238
Dominion Twist Drill (1974-75)	22	84.6	4	15.4	26
MGM Brakes (1974-75)	38	44.7	47	55.3	85
Rockwell International (1977)	179	81.7	40	18.3	219
Bendix Eclipse (1980)	594	74.0	209	26.0	803
Wheatley Manufacturing (1981)	65	92.9	5	7.1	70

Windsor Packing (1982)	120	64.9	65	35.1	185
Dominion Auto Accessories (1983)	25	19.2	105	80.8	130
Great Lakes Forgings (1983)	125	98.4	2	1.6	127
Wheel Trueing Tool (1983)	12	48.0	13	52.0	25
McKinnis Equipment (1983)	150	88.8	19	11.2	169

Source: NAC. RG 27. Accession 1988-89/007.

To conclude this section, the capital shift model proves particularly useful in looking at light industries such as textiles and auto parts that relied on the low wages paid to women and minorities for competitive advantage. Here, growing international competition brought on by the dismantling of trade barriers by GATT forced many peripheral employers to find cheaper sources of labour than generally available in older industrial areas. The geographic shift in the textile and clothing industries greatly affected historic production centres in New York and New England. In Canada, job loss in the textile and clothing industries was greatest in the Montreal area as Quebec's share of manufacturing employment in the country fell from 33.8 per cent in 1961 to 30.6 per cent in 1976.⁴⁷ The shifting location of the auto parts industry, in turn, caused job loss primarily in Southern Ontario, Michigan, and Ohio. Although plant migration proved to be a key component of job loss in both countries, industrial firms operating in Canada could not escape unionization by running away unless they were prepared to leave the

⁴⁷ OECD. *Regional Policies in Canada* (Paris, 1980), 15.

country altogether.

The Obsolete Mill, 1970s-1980s

The second -- albeit related -- catalyst triggering waves of plant closings across North America's industrial heartland can be located in the failure to modernize as technological change rendered long-established processes obsolete. In some industries, such as, for instance, auto parts, high wages and obsolescence acted as a one-two punch. In others, huge capital investments made employers unable to relocate overnight. In the accompanying table, we see that the divestment strategies, though similar, differed on the two sides of the Canada-United States border. Most notably, those industries experiencing the signs of old age in Canada did not include the basic steel and auto assembly industries.

On the face of it, the rash of mill and factory closings that struck the automotive assembly, rubber and steel industries in the late 1970s and early 1980s constituted death by natural causes. In most cases, these were old and obsolete plants that had become unprofitable over the course of time. Yet the closing of an "obsolete mill" was often the direct result of management's failure to modernize or their active decision to invest somewhere else. As we saw in the previous chapter, plant shape and look had changed too dramatically for an old tire plant in Akron, Ohio or Kitchener, Ontario to endure. In consequence, in the 1960s and 1970s, the US rubber producers embarked on a long-termed strategy of opening new tire factories in non-union areas of the South, letting older unionized plants in Ohio and other Great Lakes states die on the vine.⁴⁸

As to the general aging of the "industrial heartland," my discussion will be

⁴⁸ Martin Kenney and Richard Florida. *Beyond Mass Production: The Japanese System and Its Transfer to the US* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 200.

limited to obsolescence in the automotive assembly, rubber and steel industries. Generally considered to be the “big three” employers in the region, economic change in these industries meant trouble for many of the cities of the region dependent on these large plants employing thousands of workers. The shutdown of a single mill or factory had the potential to alter the identity of a place and to uproot entire communities.

Table 5: Divestment Strategies in the Industrial Heartland, 1969-1984

Type of Industry	Runaways		Obsolescence	
Auto Parts	USA	Canada	USA	Canada
Electrical	USA	Canada	USA	Canada
Textile & Clothing	USA		USA	Canada
Rubber			USA	Canada
Agricultural Impl.			USA	Canada
Tool & Die Makers			USA	Canada
Foundries			USA	Canada
Leather Goods			USA	Canada
Auto Assembly			USA	
Integrated Steel			USA	

In adopting a strategy of planned obsolescence, companies shifted the blame for job loss onto aging equipment, “unproductive” workers, and the apparent “unprofitability” of the plant. According to one Ohio government study, the “number one problem of most industries in Ohio [was] the age of the physical plant.” The steel industry, for instance, used obsolete equipment in old buildings located on inadequate

parcels of land in urban areas.⁴⁹ Similarly, glass manufacturers were becoming “marginal producers” and the early development of the rubber industry had begun to work against Ohio. In spite of modernization, the working lives of mills and factories proved to be finite.

For their part, economists Wilford L'Esperance and Arthur E. King claimed that corporate relocation decisions often depended on the age of their existing plants and equipment. They identified two forms of obsolescence: economic and technological. Accordingly,

If, for example, the rubber industry in Akron finds that new technologies dictate the use of more capital equipment per worker, arrayed horizontally over large areas in single-story factories, then the existing multiple-story factories located in downtown areas with high land prices and property taxes quickly become obsolete. The time dimension or the age distribution of existing plant and equipment can be regarded as a proxy measure of such obsolescence.⁵⁰

As a result, obsolescence represented a “dynamic phenomenon, having a distinct time dimension.” Installed over time, equipment rarely became obsolete all at once. As the modernization of plants and equipment was an ongoing process and not a “one-shot” deal, the decision not to invest in a plant eventually entailed its closing. Hence, the abandonment of millions of American workers in the 1970s and 1980s originated in the investment decisions of the 1950s and 1960s.

By comparison, American industrial capital proved to be significantly older than in Canada. Industrialization in Canada occurred at a later date and many American

⁴⁹ Ohio Historical Society. Columbus, Ohio MSS 1857. Box 30, File 3, Statistics-Plants Leaving, 1976. Richard E. Zeller, Research Associate. The Steel, Glass, and Rubber and Plastics Industries in Ohio (on request from Director's Office-nd).

⁵⁰ Ohio Historical Society. Columbus, Ohio. MSS 1857. Box 30, File 3, Wilford L'Esperance and Arthur E. King, “Bulletin,” 1.

corporations only entered the Canadian market after World War II. In consequence, economic obsolescence did not claim as many mills and factories in Canada between 1969-1984. Those plants that did close were comparatively small. Moreover, politicians intervened to save larger industrial complexes at risk of closing such as Cape Breton's steel mill and Canada's aeronautics industry.⁵¹ Ironically, those sectors of the Canadian economy, such as textiles, that developed indigenously proved far more likely to be reaching obsolescence by the 1970s. According to a 11 March 1970 confidential memo to the federal cabinet, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce reported that the textile industry faced "major problems of adaptation to rapid changes in technology, world production and market demands."⁵² Meanwhile, a lack of scale "inhibited" the electrical and electronics industries. There was widespread agreement that the "traditional mission and mandate" of Canadian manufacturing subsidiaries had become redundant in an era of global markets. Thus, the transformation of the international division of labour forced companies to revise their strategies radically, thereby making an older generation of purpose-built branch plants effectively obsolete. Typically, Canadian companies in the textile and electrical industries either went through massive restructuring or went bankrupt. Thus, planned obsolescence became, in varying degrees, an integral part of corporate investment strategies in Canada and the United States.

⁵¹ Douglas F. Campbell and John I. Nicholson, "The Sydney Steelworkers' Adjustments to Economic Insecurity," Paper to the 1969 Meeting of Atlantic Provinces Sociologists and Anthropologists. Also see Robert W. Sexty. *Public Enterprise and Employment in Canada* (Canada, 1981), 5 and 11,

⁵² NAC. Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce. RG 20, Volume 103, File 25/500-2 pt 1. 11 March 1970, Confidential Report Memo to Cabinet on Industrial Growth Opportunities by Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, 5.

The Big 3: Automotive Assembly

It is difficult to over-emphasize the economic importance of the North American auto industry, consolidated and rationalized in the wake of the two global oil crises of the 1970s. Among the largest ten industrial firms operating in the United States, the "Big 3" auto makers -- General Motors, Ford and Chrysler -- and parts producers employed 971,000 people in 1978.⁵³ In the following year, the North American auto industry fell victim to a second oil crisis sparked by the Iranian Revolution. Until then, the Big 3 automakers had bitterly fought the introduction of new fuel efficiency requirements in the United States, preferring to produce large, extremely profitable, cars for the North American market. Hence, they were ill-prepared for the sudden shift in consumer demands for small, fuel-efficient cars. As it took a minimum of two years to re-tool assembly lines, the Big 3 found themselves unable to meet small-car demand until 1981. Faced with waiting lists of six months for the few small-car makes produced by the Big 3, North Americans bought Japanese automobiles instead.⁵⁴ Foreign automakers' share of the US market rose steadily from 17.7 per cent in 1978, to 26.4 per cent in 1980, producing the indefinite layoff of 239,000 American autoworkers, concentrated

⁵³ Jimmy Carter Presidential Library. Atlanta, Georgia. Bernick, Box 3, File Auto Studies, Lawrence J. White. "Regulation and Policy Issues Involving the Motor Vehicle Industry in the 1980s" for the US Regulatory Council. February 1980 (draft), 3.

⁵⁴ *Time Magazine* (8 January 1979) 39; and *Time Magazine* (7 January 1980), 88-89.

in Michigan, Ohio, Missouri and Indiana.⁵⁵ In the meantime, Chrysler teetered on bankruptcy, saved only by two government bailouts, major concessions from employees and the leadership of Lee Iacocca. Throughout the crisis, the American media mercilessly lampooned the company. One memorable cartoon appeared in *Time Magazine*, showing two placard-waving protesters in front of the White House, one read "Save the Whales," while the other -- featuring a drawing of a dinosaur -- exclaimed "Save the Chrysler Management."⁵⁶

The restructuring of the Big 3 automakers resulted in radical shifts in the spatial location of auto assembly plants in North America. Historically, auto assembly operations had been strategically located near major markets. Thus, Ford's Canadian subsidiary, for example, had created a decentralized network of assembly plants in Windsor, Toronto (established in 1916), Montreal (1916), Winnipeg (1916), Saint John (1917) and Vancouver/Burnaby (1935/1938).⁵⁷ In 1932, "changing conditions" dictated the closing of the company's Montreal plant. The remaining assembly operations outside of Ontario closed by 1951. Consolidation proceeded with the move of Ford's Windsor assembly operations to Oakville, Ontario in 1953.⁵⁸ Ford of

⁵⁵ Jimmy Carter Presidential Library. Atlanta, GA. White House. Office of the Counsel to the President. Box 53, Automobile Industry--7-11/80. Memo to President from G. William Miller on 1 July 1980. If auto parts suppliers were brought into the equation the total number of workers laid-off indefinitely by June 1980 included another 450 000 men and women.

⁵⁶ *Time Magazine* (20 August 1979).

⁵⁷ Windsor Public Library. Historical Pamphlet #89, "History of Ford of Canada" nd. Ford Public Relations document.

⁵⁸ *Windsor Daily Star* (31 October 1951). Also see WRL. UAW Collection. Region 7, Box 32, File 3.

Canada president R. M. Sale told the *Windsor Daily Star* that Ford transferred its assembly operation for six reasons: (1) only three per cent of cars built in Windsor were purchased in Windsor, (2) thirty-six percent of all cars sold in Canada were within a 200 mile radius of Toronto, (3) another twenty-five per cent of cars sold were in Quebec or Atlantic Canada, (4) Oakville was between Toronto and Hamilton, (5) and would therefore be 200 miles closer to sixty per cent of auto buyers and, finally (6) assembly plants had to be as close to markets as possible. In 1951, the Ford Motor Company employed 12,000 in Windsor, Ontario. Ten years later, the production workforce in the city had dropped to 4,000.⁵⁹ Ford's Canadian assembly operations had, therefore, gone through the painful process of consolidation long before it began in the United States. As a result of these early adaptations, Canadian plants had newer equipment and fewer workers than the average American producer.⁶⁰

The big wave of auto assembly plant closings did not strike the United States until the early 1980s. In April 1980, President Jimmy Carter's Cabinet Economic Policy Group received a memo from executive director K.C. Kau identifying those auto assembly plants deemed at-risk due to "outdated production methods" and "changing

⁵⁹ WRL. UAW Collection. Region 7. Box 32, File 7, Brief Presented to the City Council of Windsor, Ontario on Industrial Location by UAW Area Plant Movement Committee. 16 May 1962.

⁶⁰ Even though the "Big 3" tentatively began to terminate US-based operations in the 1950s, the consolidation process lagged behind their efforts in the smaller Canadian market: Ford terminated its operations in Buffalo, New York; Long Beach, California; Memphis, Tennessee; Somerville, Massachusetts; and Chester, Pennsylvania; while Chrysler shuttered plants in San Leandro, California and Evansville, Indiana. However, the 1960s and 1970s saw few additional closures. Between 1962 and 1978, General Motors closed an assembly plant in Oakland, California; Chrysler closed its Los Angeles plant; Ford its Dallas, Texas operation and Studebaker on its way out of the auto making business, closed its South Bend, Indiana and Hamilton, Ontario plants.

auto technologies.”⁶¹ Kau identified twenty-four of the “most vulnerable” Ford plants, employing eighty-nine per cent of Ford’s Cleveland metropolitan employees and twenty-three per cent of Ford’s metropolitan Detroit workforce. In addition, he listed seventeen Chrysler plants, comprising thirty-eight per cent of Chrysler’s Detroit area workforce. With the exception of six regional assembly operations, all of the Ford plants listed operated in Ohio (seven), Michigan (five) or Ontario (four). At Chrysler, those plants considered the most “sensitive to change” by the Carter Administration were clustered in the Detroit-Windsor area.⁶² As it turned out, only eighteen of forty-six auto assembly plants operating in 1980, continued to do so ten years later. During the 1980s, Ford closed plants in Mahwah, New Jersey; Los Angeles, and San Jose, California. Meanwhile, General Motors “deactivated” plants in Atlanta, Georgia; Framington, Massachusetts; St. Louis, Missouri; and Los Angeles. At the same time, Chrysler closed two Detroit assembly plants, a St. Louis operation as well as a newly acquired AMC plant in Kenosha, Wisconsin.⁶³

African Americans bore the brunt of restructuring. As of January 1980, twenty-two of Chrysler’s thirty-eight plants were located in the Detroit area. Their payroll to 25,000 African Americans approximated \$800 million annually. Three years later, twelve of these Detroit plants had closed. As the following table indicates,

⁶¹ Jimmy Carter Presidential Library. Atlanta, GA. George C. Eads, Box 2, File Autos-Background, Cabinet Economic Policy Group, K. C. Kau, executive director to executive committee. 18 April 1980.

⁶² Closed Chrysler plants included an assembly plant in St Louis, two forging plants in Illinois, another in Ohio, eight parts plants, one engine and two assembly operations in Michigan, and one engine plant in Windsor.

⁶³ Rubenstein, *The Changing US Auto Industry*, 98. Also see Nancy Abner, “After day of rumors bad news comes,” *Detroit News* (Tuesday 4 January 1972).

African-Americans bore a disproportionate share of job losses between 1977 and 1981 as their percentage of Chrysler's overall workforce declined sharply. Similarly, across the Big 3, the "whitening" of the workforce was one by-product of industrial restructuring, undermining the gains made by affirmative action over a twenty year period and "threatening to restore the workforce to its previous, all-white, all-male condition."⁶⁴ According to historical sociologist Gregory D. Squires, "When corporations seek out greener pastures they tend to seek out whiter ones as well."⁶⁵

Table 6: African Americans as a percentage of Chrysler's US Workforce⁶⁶

Year	Total (%)
1977	26.5
1978	25.9
1979	22.1
1980	22.9
1981	21.1

Widely considered to have the "worst" minority hiring record in the auto

⁶⁴ Ben Bedell, "Black Jobless at all-time high level," *Guardian* (15 September 1982).

⁶⁵ Gregory D. Squires, *Capital and Communities in Black and White: The Intersections of Race, Class and Uneven Development* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 3.

⁶⁶ Jane Slaughter and Bill Parker, "Black Workers, Detroit Lose out in Chrysler Restructuring," *Labor Notes* (24 February 1983).

industry, General Motors saw its proportion of minorities drop from 22.4 per cent of its workforce in 1979 to 18.9 per cent in 1982. Dislocation on a massive scale thus erased past gains.⁶⁷ At the same time, racial considerations complicated plant relocations and employee mobility. UAW Vice President, Marc Stepp, for one, noted that even though 400 Oakland, California employees of General Motors had been offered jobs at the new facility in Sparks, Nevada, non-white workers proved to be apprehensive about leaving a "bi-cultural city" for one with "virtually no minority population."⁶⁸ In addition, racial minorities frequently proved less able to move with the departing plant to its new location. This immobility proved critical as companies increasingly located new plants outside traditional industrial zones in the inner cities, where a majority of African-Americans lived. Detroit lost a stunning 180,000 manufacturing jobs between 1978 and 1984. Most of these jobs had been located in the central city. In 1982, nearly one in five Detroit residents in the labour force had no work. In nearby Flint, that number surpassed one in four the same year.

Changing corporate strategies were vividly illuminated by the location of new auto assembly plants. Ninety-six per cent of new plants built by the Big 3 between 1945 and 1960 were in the interior of the United States, mostly in the states located between north-south Interstates 75 and 65, the geographic heart of the country. However, auto plant location had shifted from Southeastern Michigan southward.

⁶⁷ Plant closings rolled back one significant achievement of the 1970s -- the dismantling of barriers such as departmental seniority lists that kept African Americans and women ghettoized in the poorest job categories in mills and factories across the nation. Penn State University Archives. College Park, PA. USWA Records. Secretary-Treasurers Records. Box 34, File 11: Bethlehem-Lackawanna, Letter to Anthony Barbieri International Representative from attorney Michael Gottesman. 29 June 1971.

⁶⁸ WRL. UAW Archival Collection, Box 114-1, Remarks of Marc Stepp at a Public Hearing on Plant Closings in Philadelphia. 16 February 1980.

According to geographer James M. Rubenstein, the number of assembly plants located outside this strip of land fell from thirty-one in 1979 to fifteen in the early 1990s.⁶⁹ Still, companies did not replace old plants to keep existing workforces employed. In almost every instance, as in General Motors' decision to build a new plant in Detroit's Poletown, generous government subsidies played a determining factor.⁷⁰ Obsolescence was therefore rooted in past corporate decisions to locate new plants outside traditional industrial areas. As a result, corporate investment strategies in the decades after World War II led to a gradual aging of plants in industrial cities such as Detroit and Flint. This quiet aging process became dramatically apparent in the 1970s and 1980s when a wave of old "obsolete" auto assembly plants closed, displacing tens of thousands.

By comparison, auto industry layoffs and plant closings in the mid-1970s were not as destructive north of the border. According to a report by Sam Ginden, the director of research for the Canadian Region of the United Auto Workers (UAW), unemployment figures in Canada were significantly lower than in the United States: only fifteen per cent of the Canadian Chrysler workers were on layoff in November 1974 versus sixty-four per cent of their US union counterparts. The corresponding figures for Ford were fourteen percent unemployed workers in Canada and thirty per cent in the USA. At General Motors, finally, 2.5 per cent of the Canadian workforce was unemployed at the

⁶⁹ Rubenstein, *The Changing US Auto Industry*. Among the Big 3, General Motors replaced obsolete plants four times and Chrysler once.

⁷⁰ The Poletown experiment proved to be a highly contentious one as mainly white neighbourhood activists and consumer advocates like Ralph Nader were pitted against mainly black trade unionists and powerful local politicians such as Mayor Coleman Young. While the former pointed to the demolition of a mainly Polish neighbourhood to make way for a huge GM assembly plant, the latter argued this was the only way to ensure Detroit remained the "Motor City." The record of investment decisions made by the Big 3 largely sustains Mayor Coleman Young's position.

end of 1974, compared with twenty per cent in the United States.⁷¹ At the height of auto industry layoffs in June 1980, General Motors laid off a far larger proportion of its US workforce.⁷² Even more importantly, the twenty-five thousand Canadian autoworkers on indefinite layoff had plants to return to as no auto assembly plant closed north of the border during the 1970s or early 1980s.

The tendency to consolidate assembly plant operations in the Midwest and the Appalachian states of Tennessee and Kentucky and in Southern Ontario reconfigured the industrial geography of automaking in North America. Long-established "motor cities" in the United States such as Detroit and Flint saw their share of auto assembly jobs plummet during the 1970s and 1980s as "obsolete" plants closed after newer plants had been built elsewhere. In Canada, this geographic shift had been effected much earlier. Geographer James M. Rubenstein credits this change in industrial location to the fragmentation of the auto market.⁷³ A growing number of car models, combined with a reduced share of the domestic and international markets, meant that only one or two plants assembled any one model. As a result there was no benefit in locating assembly plants near regional population centres. Hence, branch plants located outside the Great Lakes region closed between 1979 and 1984 as the "Big 3" consolidated their assembly operations along the two major north-south interstates in the interior of the country, as

⁷¹ NAC. MG 28 I 119. Canadian Auto Workers. Box 316, File 3, Layoffs in Auto Industry. Correspondence, memoranda, reports (1), 1974-78. Sam Ginden to all service representatives, Canadian Region. 26 November 1974.

⁷² NAC. Canadian Auto Workers. Volume 316, File 5. Layoff in Automotive Industry. M.R., Clippings, 1979-81. Sam Ginden, District Research Director to Robert White, UAW-Canada Director. 13 June 1980 .

⁷³ Rubenstein, *The Changing US Auto Industry*, 135.

did older plants located in the inner cities of the industrial heartland.⁷⁴ A similar story played itself out in the rubber industry.

The Rubber Industry

In the next few pages, we see the geographic concentration of North America's tire plants in the American Midwest and in Southern Ontario. Ohio alone, the heart of the American rubber industry, had eleven plants, including five in Akron, its symbolic capital. Eight of the fourteen Canadian tire plants, were located in Southern Ontario. In the years that followed, the spatial location of the tire industry underwent dramatic changes with the advent of the radial tire.⁷⁵ Its year-round utility, contributed to fuel efficiency in an era of high gasoline prices. Not surprisingly, by 1976, radials represented sixty-one per cent of tires being sold in North America. The new tire plants -- constructed since 1970 for the production of radials -- were no longer situated in Akron, formerly the "Rubber Capital of the World." Instead, three were located in South Carolina, two in Oklahoma, and one each in Texas, Indiana, Tennessee and North Carolina.⁷⁶ As a result, Akron grew "old" as technological change in the industry had

⁷⁴ In the Detroit area, for example, Chrysler's Jefferson Street plant had been built in 1907 and the Dodge brothers opened Dodge Main in 1914. Auto bodies in the Kenosha AMC-Chrysler facility were, likewise, welded and painted in a five-storey former mattress factory built in the 1890s and moved by truck to the main plant constructed in 1902.

⁷⁵ The invention of the radial tire revolutionized tire making. Most notably, radial tires wore out after 40,000 miles, whereas bias-belted tires needed to be replaced after 23,000 miles. University of Akron Archives. Goodyear Tire Collection. Property Box 2, Textile in Tires (nd).

⁷⁶ "South appeals financially to businesses, study shows," *Rubber and Plastics News*, (13 April 1981).

rendered obsolete its capital claims.

By comparison, the American rubber companies operating in Southern Ontario were challenged by the arrival of French-owned Michelin Tire in the mid-1970s. Michelin built three plants in Nova Scotia and managed to keep them non-union despite repeated organizing drives. Yet the rest of Canada's rubber industry nonetheless remained in Southern Ontario. A few plants closed -- such as Dunlop Tire's Toronto plant -- but many of the more wrenching changes did not occur until the early 1990s. This section therefore focuses primarily on the migration of the rubber industry out of the industrial Midwest.

By 1980, economic dislocation in the tire industry resulted in the closure of five of the six plants located in California, and seven of the ten plants in Ohio. Plants also closed in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Alabama, Arkansas and Colorado.⁷⁷ In fact, thirty tire plants closed in North America between 1973 and 1984 displacing almost half of the workers in the industry. Between 1973 and 1987, the number of Americans employed in the tire industry dropped from over 88,000 to just 52,000.⁷⁸ Job loss was particularly dramatic during the latter half of the 1970s, when the tire companies slashed tens of thousands of employees from their payrolls.

Akron, Ohio was hardest hit.⁷⁹ J. W. Reynolds, Director of Industrial Relations

⁷⁷ Jimmy Carter Presidential Library. Atlanta, GA. George C. Eads, Box 2, File Autos-Background. Cabinet Economic Policy Group Memorandum from Randall K. C. Kau, executive director to executive committee et al. 18 April 1980.

⁷⁸ Michael J. French. *The US Tire Industry: A History* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 104.

⁷⁹ Just a few minutes drive south of Akron is Barberton, Ohio. Once popularly known as the "Magic City," as the city grew like magic, and home to the Seiberling Tire Company (a division of Firestone), Barberton had lost its magic by the beginning of the

for BF Goodrich claimed in a May 1971 letter to the union representative on a joint Labor-Management Committee for Jobs that Akron plants were "not competitive." It cost more to build a tire in Akron than in competitors' plants located outside the state. He blamed onerous work rules for the low productivity of Akron rubber plants, not the aging equipment:

Much has been said to the effect that multi-story buildings and obsolete equipment are among the reasons for Akron's non-competitive standing. The fact is that many millions of dollars have been invested to modernize certain Akron facilities. The status of building and equipment are the result of being non-competitive more than they are the cause for it. The labor cost per unit of product is the vital determinant of whether work can be continued in Akron.⁸⁰

Tire production in the city ended in early 1982 when General Tire closed its sixty-seven year old, four-story tire plant, in the process displacing 1,300 workers.⁸¹ *Newsweek* reporters Richard Manning and John McCormack explored the downward mobility of the town's blue collar workers:

They were the backbone of the blue-collar middle class. Their proudest

1980s. Anthropologist Greg Pappas has documented the effect of its closing in March 1980 leaving nearly a thousand people out-of-work. As he observed, one event "can be a landmark in measuring a local economy." After sending out three hundred questionnaires with the assistance of the United Rubber Workers union, Pappas found that twenty per cent of those displaced found comparable jobs elsewhere, forty per cent found jobs that paid less and forty per cent remained unemployed over two years after the plant closed. Gregory Pappas, *Magic City*, 7. Also see Richard Ellers, "Barberton lost its Magic when it lost its factories," *Cleveland Plain Dealer* (Saturday 17 May 1986).

⁸⁰ University of Akron Archives. URW. Research Box 2. File: Plant Closings or Permanent Curtailments, 1971-1978. Letter from J.W. Reynolds, Director of Industrial Relations for BF Goodrich to George Cunningham, President of URW Local 5.

⁸¹ Allan Gerlat, "General Tire Plans to Close Akron Plant, Ending City's Tire Era," *Rubber and Plastic News* (8 March 1982). The closure represented a broken promise by the company after it wrung concessions amounting to thirty-six cents per hour in 1979 in exchange for the promise of a new facility in Akron.

possession was a mortgage, and their savings allowed millions of other Americans to buy new homes as well. They packed the ballparks on summer Sundays and the softball diamonds after work. Above all, they dreamed of security and better lives for their children. A job at the factory could fulfil that promise for workers in blue-collar towns like Akron. But no longer....Today the factory facades along South Main Street are an aging monument to past prosperity.⁸²

The loss of these "aging monuments" has cost the Akron area an estimated \$2.65 billion dollars in lost income in the ten year period following 1974.⁸³ These local losses had, of course, been caused by corporate decisions taken with the changing global situation in mind.

Perhaps, a closer look at the Firestone Tire Company will demonstrate the enormity of the changes sweeping the rubber industry. Faced with quarterly losses, the Board of Directors was primed for dramatic action by 1979.⁸⁴ Firestone's decision to restructure its global operations came shortly after it welcomed John J. Nevin into the company. Formerly with Zenith, where he shifted -- albeit reluctantly -- production offshore, Nevin had few qualms over closing fourteen of the company's nineteen North American plants. As one director commented, nobody from within the company could have made such difficult decisions. The company announced the first wave of six plant

⁸² Richard Manning and John McCormack, "The Blue Collar Blues," *Newsweek* (4 June 1984).

⁸³ Richard Manning and John McCormack, "The Blue-Collar Blues," *Newsweek* (4 June 1984). The effect of plant shutdowns on local schooling has been examined in two recent dissertations completed at the University of Akron: Donald Richard Castle, "The Response of the Mansfield City Schools to Local Deindustrialization, 1968-84," Phd: University of Akron, 1990; and, Donald Paul Spayd, "The Economic Impact of Deindustrialization on Financial Decisions of the Warren City Schools, 1975-89" Phd: University of Akron, 1991.

⁸⁴ Martin Kenney and Richard Florida, eds. *Beyond Mass Production: The Japanese System and Its Transfer to the US* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 194.

shutdowns in March 1980: production ended that fall in Dayton and Barberton, Ohio; Los Angeles and Salinas, California; Pottstown, Pennsylvania; and in the synthetic plant in Akron.⁸⁵ These plants employed five thousand hourly and two thousand salaried workers as well as an additional 1,500 already on indefinite layoff. Two weeks later, Firestone Canada, a subsidiary, announced that it, too, would close a plant in Whitby, Ontario on 18 July leaving 650 additional workers unemployed.⁸⁶ Next, Firestone announced that two "unprofitable" Welsh plants would cease production -- a move that illustrated the growing irrelevance of national frontiers in corporate decision-making. By 1985, Firestone's workforce of 107,000 (1979) had been cut in half.⁸⁷ Nevin explained that the " 'only way to have kept all those people employed would have been to outlaw radial tires. And if those 52,000 hadn't been cut, there wouldn't be any jobs remaining for anybody else.' "

Considering the age of some of these facilities and consumer demand for the radial tire, it would be easy to blame technological change and obsolescence for these plant closings. However, as early as the 1960s, Firestone and other rubber companies had embarked on a divestment strategy designed to avoid the United Rubber Workers. First, the bias-ply truck facility in Akron closed up shop, then the factory in Noblesville, Indiana. Notably, the company transferred the work to its Arkansas plants. And, for the first time in Firestone's history, it ceased to make tires in Akron. On the face of it, the

⁸⁵ "Many benefits will continue after closing," *Firestone Non-Skid* 65, 6 (27 March 1980), 1.

⁸⁶ "Firestone Canada Plant Closes July 18 in Whitby" *Firestone Non-Skid* 65, 7 (10 April 1980), 1.

⁸⁷ Paul G. Engel, "Going Flat: US Tire Plant Closings Continue," *Industry Week* (28 April 1986).

plants died of "old age": Akron Plant #1 had come into production on 8 June 1911 and the Noblesville plant five years later in 1916. By the early 1980s, the United Rubber Workers could not ignore the long-term consequences of not replacing Ohio's old multi-storied plants:

District #1 has the highest number of people affected. This is probably due to the fact the area, encompassing the 'Rubber Capital,' most likely has older plants which have been organized for a longer period of time (or the average) than the other districts. Much of the effect in District 1 is the result of the gradual curtailment of production among Goodyear, Goodrich and Firestone in Akron itself. The production left because it could be done more cheaply in modern one-story structures which were not organized, especially in the South and Southwest. This process has been going on for many years.⁸⁸

Even though the strategy of union-avoidance failed -- the new plants became unionized - all but one of the seventeen tire plants constructed between 1967 and 1984 were located in the South, thus foreshadowing economic dislocation in Ohio.⁸⁹

It is important to note that the apparent obsolescence of Ohio plants deflected criticism from the public by providing a convenient justification for plant closing decisions. In public debates over the future of the industry, Ohio's rubber factories were regularly dismissed as "archaic" or "ancient."⁹⁰ The comments in the *Akron Beacon Journal* upon the closing of the multi-storied red brick Mohawk Tire factory in Akron, built in 1913 proved typical: "The wonder of the Mohawk story is that the company was able to continue operations here as long as it did. Its dirty, tired-looking turn-of-the-century building on Second Avenue placed both management and workers alike at a

⁸⁸ University of Akron Archives. URW. Research Box 2. Plant Closing or Permanent Curtailment Report (nd.).

⁸⁹ Also see Kenney and Florida, *Beyond Mass Production*, 200.

⁹⁰ "Trouble In Rubber City: Akron about to lose its image?" *Modern Tire Dealer* (February 1978).

disadvantage in their attempt to stay competitive."⁹¹ Playing on this public perception, company President and CEO Henry M. Fawcett called the plant the "Achilles heel of the company."⁹² Tellingly, nobody raised the question why Mohawk and other rubber companies did not provide for its employees when closing "obsolete" plants.⁹³ Failing rubber companies, such as Firestone, just as surely abandoned its unionized employees as any ruthless "runaway" in the auto parts or textile sectors. While some workers were bound to be let go in light of technological change, job loss was inevitable only in-so-far as Firestone and other tire companies decided to build their newest plants elsewhere. Hence, it was not a "natural aging process" of plants that ultimately caused unemployment for longtime unionized workers but, rather, corporate decisions to abandon unionized employees in the spatial restructuring of the rubber industry.

The Steel Industry

Unlike the belated modernization of the auto and rubber industries, the American steel industry failed to modernize anywhere after sinking large sums of money into soon-to-be obsolete steel-making processes during the 1950s. Indeed, throughout the 1950s, US steelmakers made large scale investments in processes, such as open hearth

⁹¹ Editorial, "Not a Very Good Year," *Akron Beacon Journal* (14 November 1978).

⁹² John Leo Kosher, "Mohawk Closing in Akron will idle 318," *Cleveland Plain Dealer* (14 November 1978).

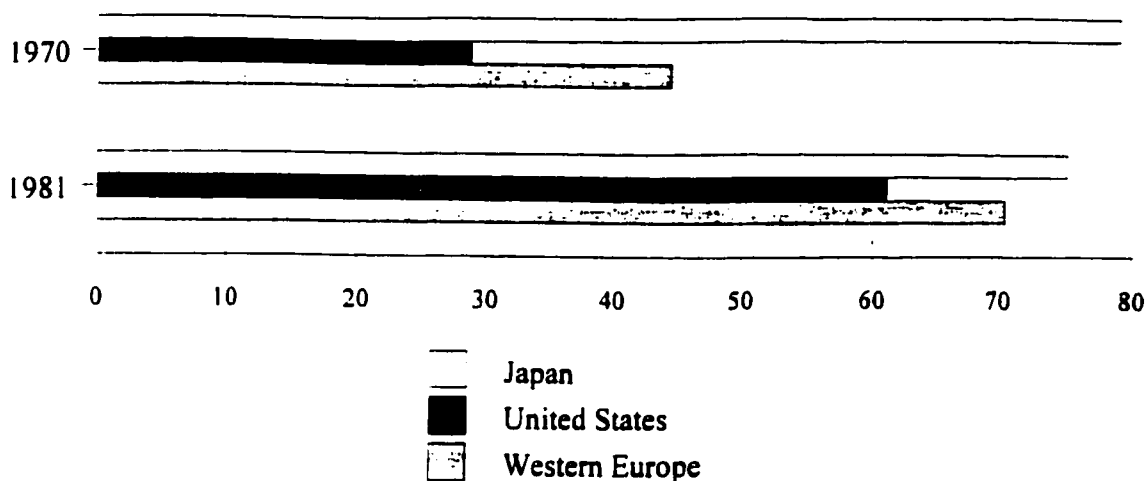
⁹³ "More Losses force Mansfield to shut Oh plant," *Rubber and Plastic News* (21 August 1978).

furnaces, that soon became obsolete.⁹⁴ As it turned out, the basic oxygen furnace (BOF) proved to be faster and cheaper. The United States, trailed their Japanese and Western European competitors in adopting this new technology.⁹⁵ North American steel companies also lagged in the adoption of continuous casting, a technological innovation that reduced the number of stages in the steel-making process.⁹⁶ By 1978, the global comparison was stark as is vividly illustrated in the graph below. Here, we see that the United States trailed Western Europe and especially Japan in the adoption of BOF technology.

⁹⁴ W. P. Anderson, "The changing competitive position of the Hamilton steel industry," in M.J. Dear, J.J. Drake and L.G. Reeds, eds. *Steel City: Hamilton and Region* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 204.

⁹⁵ Peter Dicken, *Global Shift: Industrial Change in a Turbulent World* (London: Harper and Row, 1986), 271.

⁹⁶ Irwin M. Marcus, "The Deindustrialization of America: Homestead, A Case Study, 1959-1984," *Pennsylvania History* 52, 3 (1985), 162. In addition, the steel industry has received attention from: David Brody, "On the Decline of American Steel," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 113, 4 (1989), 627-633.; Peter Michael Dodson, "Import Challenge, Sectoral Response and the Decline of American Integrated Steelmaking, 1959 to 1982," (PhD: University of Virginia, 1985); Douglas Arnold Schuler, "Corporate Political Involvement for Managing Industrial Decline: The Case of the US Steel Industry and Steel Policy," (PhD: University of Minnesota, 1992).

Table 7: Percentage of BOF Technology in National Steel Production⁹⁷

In consequence, the Carter White House rejected the contention from the steel makers that their problems originated from cheap imports.⁹⁸ Instead, Presidential advisers Stu Eizenstat and Bob Ginsburg pointed to large increases in wages and other costs, low productivity and "outmoded" plants.⁹⁹ They cited the recent closure of the Youngstown Sheet and Tube plant as evidence that America's steel industry had failed to modernize. In his comprehensive review of the industry, Anthony M. Solomon reported to the President that:

In the steel industry, the variance in plant age and efficiency is sizable, with many facilities only approaching a break even point even at high operating rates.

⁹⁷ Dicken, *Global Shift*, 271.

⁹⁸ See, for example, Paul A. Tiffany, *The Decline of American Steel: How Management, Labor and Government Went Wrong* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), viii; and John P. Hoerr, *And the Wolf Finally Came: The Decline of the American Steel Industry* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988).

⁹⁹ Jimmy Carter Presidential Library. Atlanta, GA. Box 284, File Steel, [O/A 6343]. Stu Eizenstadt and Bob Ginsburg to the President. 12 October 1977.

Not all of these plants can be modernized economically because of their location and existing facilities....The domestic market for steel has shifted from the East to the Midwest, and new technologies have not been easily adapted to some Eastern plants which face problems of crowding, small-scale blast furnaces, out of balance finishing facilities, and environmental constraints.¹⁰⁰

Two years later, economist Alfred E. Kahn noted: "It appears that the steel industry is in the process of improving its efficiency, not so much by capital investment and modernization as by the elimination of relatively inefficient plants."¹⁰¹ Charles Bradford, Research Vice President for Merrill Lynch, put it more bluntly: "Junking older steel mills is one way they stay competitive."¹⁰²

Other steel companies stayed competitive by getting out of the steel-making business altogether. For its part, US Steel diversified into more profitable sectors of the economy. In its annual report for 1979, company management regretted the necessity of closing "marginal" plants and promised to work with affected communities.¹⁰³ The following year, the company told shareholders that these tough decisions had enabled US Steel to channel available capital "into activities generating a competitive return." The nature of this so-called "re-deployment" became apparent in 1982 when US Steel acquired Marathon Oil for 5.2 billion dollars.

¹⁰⁰ Jimmy Carter Presidential Library. Atlanta, GA. White House Office of Counsel to the President. Box 46. F. Steel Policy (1977), 11/77-1/78. Anthony M. Solomon. Report to the President: A Comprehensive Program for the Steel Industry.

¹⁰¹ Jimmy Carter Presidential Library. Atlanta, GA. Eizenstat, Box 283, File Steel (CF O/A 731), 2. Alfred E. Kahn paper "Government Policies Toward the Steel Industry" dated 5 December 1979.

¹⁰² Charles Bradford was quoted in Daniel Rosenheim and James Warren, "Why South Works declined," *Chicago Sun Times* (30 October 1983).

¹⁰³ US Steel, *Annual Report* (1979).

In sharp contrast to the situation in the United States, Canada's steel industry was in solid shape.¹⁰⁴ Industrial geographer W. P. Anderson credited generous tax incentives, including accelerated depreciation schedules, for keeping Canadian steel mills relatively modern.¹⁰⁵ Governments interceded in the national interest whenever steel makers got into trouble. The overall slow or moderate growth of the industry in Canada may also have contributed to the health of the industry. Ultimately, the structure of Canada's steel industry, which consisted of four single-site steelmakers (Stelco and Dofasco in Hamilton, Ontario, Algoma Steel in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, and Sysco in Sydney, Nova Scotia), prevented the "milking" of profits by conglomerates thirsty for higher returns on investment.

The population of the steeltown of Hamilton continued to grow during the 1970s, albeit at only two-thirds of the rate of population growth in Ontario.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, the number of production workers in the city actually expanded by 12.4 per cent during the 1970s, as plant shutdowns were confined to small- and medium-sized plants employing fewer than 500 workers, most having less than one hundred. However, in the early 1980s, one in four manufacturing jobs disappeared, pushing the Hamilton

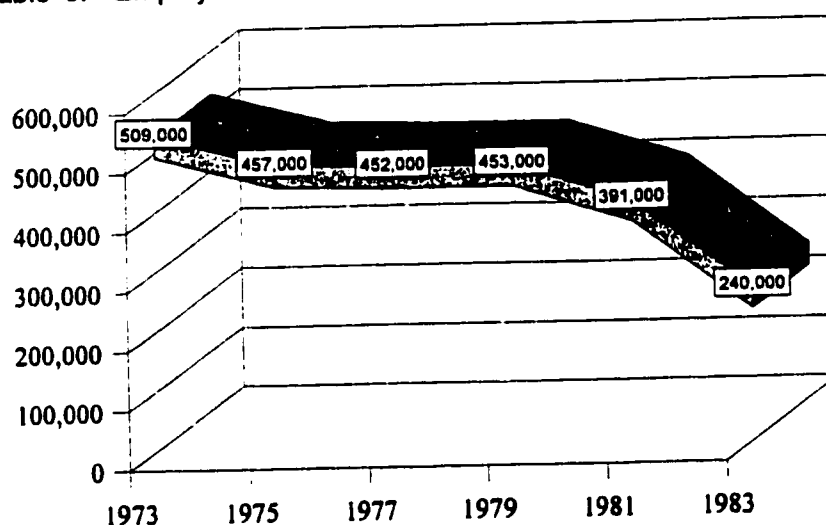
¹⁰⁴ K. J. Rea, *The Prosperous Years: The Economic History of Ontario, 1939-1975* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 210.

¹⁰⁵ W.P. Anderson in Dear, Drake and Reeds, eds. *Steel City*, 209. Also see NAC. RG 20, Volume 89, File 8730-TB-120 pt 3. 29 May 1969. Note to File by W.J.H. Purcell, International Commodities and Special Projects Division.

¹⁰⁶ M. J. Webber, "Regional Production and the Production of Regions: The Case of Steeltown," in Allen J. Scott and Michael Storper, eds. *Production, Work, Territory: The Geographical Anatomy of Industrial Capitalism* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1986), 197.

unemployment rate briefly up to 16.7 per cent.¹⁰⁷ Although growing uncertainty in the steel industry led Stelco to phase out its aging Canada Works finishing mill in 1984, employees transferred elsewhere in the company's vast Hamilton operations. A study of plant shutdowns in the steeltown of Hamilton must therefore turn to plant closings in the textile, electrical and auto parts sectors to find mass terminations. Consequently, Canada's steel industry does not appear on my earlier listing of industries experiencing "obsolescence" between 1969-1984.

Table 8: Employment in the American Steel Industry, 1973-1983 ¹⁰⁸



Meanwhile, back in the United States, "an intergenerational way of life that

¹⁰⁷ Michael Webber and Ruth Fincher, "Urban Policy in Hamilton in the 1980s," in M.J. Dear, J.J. Drake and L.G. Reeds, eds. *Steel City: Hamilton and Region* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 238. In 1971, fully thirty-eight per cent of the city's industrial employees worked in the steel industry followed by fourteen per cent in metal products industries, six per cent in textile mills and nine per cent in the electrical industry. NAC. RG 127 Volume 106, File 2101-D1 pt 2. External Research. Robert E. Drass and Norman Shulman. Final Report. August 1975.

¹⁰⁸ Daniel Rosenheim and James Warren, "Why South Works declined," *Chicago Sun Times* (30 October 1983).

provided a sense of continuity, security, family cohesion, and communality" was swept away with the demise of dozens of integrated steel mills.¹⁰⁹ Over a decade, 269,000 American steelworkers lost their well-paid unionized jobs. Plant closings displaced 40,000 steelworkers in 1977 alone.¹¹⁰ Many of these plants were located in the Monongahela and the Mahoning valleys. In Western Pennsylvania, one integrated steel mill after another fell silent: US Steel closed Donora (1966), Rankin (1982), Duquesne (1984), Clairton (1984), Homestead (1986), and McKeesport (1987) works. Jones & Laughlin (now LTV Steel) closed its South Side (1985), Hazelwood (1985), and Aliquippa (1985) works. In 1986, Wheeling-Pittsburgh closed the Monessen West mill.

For many media commentators, Youngstown -- where the Sheet and Tube's Campbell Works had closed in 1977 -- became a microcosm of the problems plaguing older industrial towns and cities. Observers pointed to the gradual westward movement of steel production from Youngstown to the Chicago area. Thus, long before the steamship conglomerate Lykes acquired Youngstown Sheet and Tube in 1969, the company was shifting its investment out of the valley. By the 1970s, few questioned that Youngstown steel mills had become antiquated: their blast furnaces were small, all of them used the obsolete open-hearth method, and ancient steam engines continued to run steelmaking operations¹¹¹ Even though the new Lykes-Youngstown Corporation promised to

¹⁰⁹ Roy Lubove. *Twentieth Century Pittsburgh: The Post Steel Era*, Volume II (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), 7.

¹¹⁰ Jimmy Carter Presidential Library. Atlanta, GA. Box 63, File American Iron and Steel Institute. Domestic Steel Industry: Spot Statistics (nd).

¹¹¹ John Logue, "When they close the Factory gates: How Big Steel Scrapped a Community," *The Progressive* (August 1980).

modernize the Campbell Works by building a new BOF facility, the company admitted the project had "lower corporate priority" than others.¹¹² While the company promised that construction would begin once "internally generated or other funds are available to support the project," those funds never became available.¹¹³

"Smart management" in the steel industry operated marginal mills until they were no longer profitable and then closed them down. For Youngstown State University economist J. J. Koss, the Lykes corporation acted just as it should:

They didn't reinvest back in that facility. When it was about ready to collapse they shut it down.... if LTV did milk that facility dry, that's exactly what an intelligent management should have done. What do you do when you have various facilities and one of them is almost marginal? You work it as long as you can, and make the repairs that you need in order to keep it going. Since you know you're not going to reinvest there, you are reinvesting somewhere else. They were reinvesting out in Indiana Harbor in a plant where they had more economic advantages. When it is just about ready to collapse, you shut it down.¹¹⁴

Yet there was nothing inevitable about the aging process. This apparent death by natural causes resulted from a conscious decision on the part of corporate managers to use up older facilities. In so doing, management actively abandoned workers in the former industrial heartland, laying to waste the "steel valley" in the process.

¹¹² Lykes-Youngstown Corporation, *Annual Report* (1975).

¹¹³ Looking at the company's annual reports today, it certainly appears that it was never serious about modernizing its Youngstown facilities. Indeed, the reports showcased the modern steelmaking operations at Indiana Harbor. Rarely did stockholders see the company's two old, and increasingly unprofitable, Mahoning Valley integrated steel mills. A year before closing the Campbell Works, the company dropped "Youngstown" from its name, and "deferred" its BOF plan indefinitely, thus disassociating itself from the Mahoning Valley. Lykes-Youngstown Corporation, *Annual Reports* (1969-1980).

¹¹⁴ J. J. Koss interviewed by Philip Bracy in November 1981 for the Youngstown State University Shutdown Project. The transcript of the interview is held at the library of Youngstown State University.

Generally speaking, industrial firms operated older auto, rubber and steel facilities in the United States until they were no longer needed. This management strategy of planned obsolescence led the Youngstown Sheet & Tube Company to abandon its namesake in favour of modernizing a more centrally located mill at Indiana Harbor, near Chicago. Similarly, the big American rubber companies turned their backs on Akron, the signature city for that industry. Detroit may have been saved a similar fate by the willingness of local political leaders to subsidize the construction of two new assembly operations in the city. Yet the toll of job loss can plainly be seen in the scarred and pockmarked urban landscape of Detroit and in the faces of the city's poor. Corporate strategies to prevent the unionization of new plants paved the way for the mass dislocation of industrial workers. Only rarely did unions succeed in convincing companies to build anew in close proximity to soon-to-be-closed factories or mills. By comparison, this section has been on the whole "silent" about developments in Canada as obsolescence did not claim a single auto assembly plant or integrated steel mill during the time frame of this study. Similarly, the handful of rubber factories that closed did not constitute the wholesale abandonment of Canada's heavily unionized industrial heartland. Thus, the investment decisions made by corporations during the 1950s and 1960s, seen in the location of new mills and factories, led inextricably to the mass closings of older American plants almost exclusively in the late 1970s and early 1980s.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Besides being burdened with aging equipment, older mills and factories usually had aging (high seniority) workforces and unions. While academic studies have established that the effects of job loss were hardest on older workers and that the age of those displaced in a plant closing tended to be older, the evidence suggests that aging workforces may very well have contributed to the closing of well established mills and factories. Undoubtedly, these additional "costs" put many plants into the "red" in intra-corporate assessments. Almost all statistical studies of displacement, and most of the qualitative ones as well, point to age as the single most important determinant in how

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how dramatic locational shifts in production have contributed to the "turbulent world" we live in.¹¹⁶ Primed by their physical and psychological detachment from the factory floor and their disengagement with the products being produced, corporate executives wanting to reduce labour costs executed a strategy of union avoidance that left millions unemployed. Some companies, concentrated in the textile and auto parts sectors, did so in dramatic fashion by relocating production from one site to another in a blink of an eye. These "runaway plants" attracted the attention of trade unionists and symbolized the apparent social irresponsibility of some employers. However, other companies, concentrated in the rubber and auto assembly industries, chose to divest themselves of high-cost workers in the Midwest quietly over two decades. These industries located new plants far from their historic heartland. Unburdened by any emotional attachment to employees, corporate executives judged individual plants "against cost-profiles of rival American regions and international sites and against technological and market opportunities."¹¹⁷ When obsolescence made the operation of older plants unprofitable, the transplantation of production had been

workers fared after layoff. According to Robert Dennis Hiscott. "Plant Closures and Employee Displacement: A Case Study of the Beach Appliance Plant Closure," MA: Queen's University, 1982 (sociology), displaced older workers were also more likely to earn less at their new jobs. Also see Myron Kramar, *The Impact of Plant Closures on Older Workers, Consolidated Bathurst: A Case Study* (Hamilton: The Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton and District, 1984), 24-25.

¹¹⁶ Peter Dicken. *Global Shift*, 1.

¹¹⁷ Philip Scranton, "Large Firms and Industrial Restructuring: The Philadelphia Region, 1900-1980," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 116, 4 (October 1992), 454.

completed. Runaway plants and obsolete mills were two sides of the same coin.

What chiefly distinguished the pattern of plant closings in the United States from that of Canada was the obsolescence of towering steel mills and sprawling auto assembly plants. While dozens of these mills and factories closed in the United States, displacing hundreds of thousands of American workers, not one integrated steel mill or auto assembly plant closed in Canada between 1969 and 1984. The continued vitality of steel making and auto assembly in Canada, thanks in part to the generous financial assistance of the Canadian government, and newer technology, ensured that residents of Southern Ontario did not wake up one morning to find an era had passed. Even so, Canada's branch plant economy put it at risk to industrial restructuring as a new international division of labour took hold with fewer barriers to trade and investment.¹¹⁸ In the end, the deindustrialization of parts of the industrial heartland, in general, and American inner cities in particular, came about through corporate strategies to "runaway" from high wages and rigid work practices and to phase out older, less profitable facilities, employing costly older (unionized) workforces.

¹¹⁸ J. Paul Grayson, *Plant Closures and De-Skilling: Three Case Studies* (Ottawa: Science Council of Canada, 1986), 7.

CHAPTER FIVE

“I-75 GYPSIES,” “FLAT ROCKERS,” AND OTHER DISPLACED PERSONS

The narrative paths blazed by 137 workers in Canada and the United States who experienced job loss first-hand in the 1970s and 1980s will be followed in this chapter in order to interrogate the meaning of job loss. In the course of examining the meaning of job loss from the worker's point(s) of view, readers will be taken on a journey of the chronology of job loss: first rumours at a fever pitch; then workers looking for signs of re-assurance; the news brutally revealed; the shock of displacement and its aftermath. While displaced workers agreed that “you lose money” when plants closed, they always moved the conversation in the direction of more intangible losses such as self-esteem, identity and family life. Interviewees referred to the loss of their jobs as though they lost “something internal,” a “part” of themselves:

I lost part of me. Me as a person who said ‘I have a goal.’ ‘I have a dream.’...To come home and say ‘I no longer have a job.’ The wife looks at you. You're looking at this baby. You're looking at this house and you're realizing that something is missing and its a part of me. I don't so much feel that I was missing GM but I was missing a part of me. Something internal. Its hard to explain because its an emotion. Its a feeling. Because it took all those years to build this emotion and this feeling and then its not there. So you end up with a blank in your life.

• Gabriel Solano, Detroit ¹

You lose pride. You're no longer out there in the workforce supporting your family. Now you got to find a job and that's not always easy especially then. The economy was not good then.

• Marilyn McCormack, Detroit ²

¹ Gabriel Solano interviewed by Steven High at his Southwest Detroit home in February 1998. The videotape will be deposited at the MUA.

² Marilyn McCormack interviewed by Steven High at UAW Local 417's hall in Troy, Michigan in February 1998. The videotape will be deposited at the WRL.

As we saw in Chapter two, factory and mill work meant much more to industrial workers than a pay cheque. It provided workers like Gabriel and Marilyn with a sense of their place in the world. Stunned by the suddenness of job loss American workers had "[t]heir very self-concept... shaken and stolen from them."³ As tool-and-die maker Jim McHale explained: "Its like a world. You're in a little world. Then you leave that world."⁴

As their sense of security began to erode, workers sought signs of job security in their physical surroundings. Yet the physical evidence did not always tell the whole story. Displaced workers repeatedly said that they were caught off-guard by a plant's closing in part because their employer had recently invested in the plant. We also find that the oral narratives of displaced workers in Canada and the United States did not diverge significantly until the telling of the aftermath of plant closings. Thereafter, we find important differences. The narratives that emerge from both letters and interviews in the United States indicate that class, in particular, was re-defined in distinctive ways. This chapter suggests that the transplantation going on was more extreme and persisted longer in the plant shutdown stories told by American workers. So much so, in fact, that many of these Americans began to think of themselves as "gypsies" moving across an abandoned industrial landscape of rusting monoliths and empty spaces.

Recently, several scholars have expressed incredulity that displaced workers

³ University of Akron Archives. URW. Research Box 2. Testimony of Reverend Charles Gordon, Pastor, East Market Street, United Church of Christ, Akron.

⁴ Jim McHale interviewed by Steven High at the Walter Reuther Library (WRL) in Detroit, Michigan in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WRL. This feeling of being caught betwixt and between was a "pervasive experience" during the 1980s. See: Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, 28-29.

failed to foresee the closure of their plants.⁵ As will be shown below, many workers, particularly in the United States, had not been notified of impending plant closures. They simply went to work one morning to find the gates chained shut, the doors locked, a notice tacked on the bulletin board or orally given in a brief meeting with management. In the absence of any legal requirement for American employers to notify workers in advance of mass layoffs, workers relied on their ability to "read" their surroundings for signs of either an impending plant shutdown or continued job security.

Not being privy to the intentions of top management, workers on both sides of the Canada-US border attempted to anticipate job loss. On the job, workers weighed and considered rumours of mill or factory closings by reading the writing on the walls and equipment: a new piece of expensive equipment or an addition to the factory building was assumed to provide concrete evidence that the company intended to continue operating the plant for the foreseeable future. But if the company failed to modernize, something quite common in the aging industrial heartland, workers worried that the rumours might be true. As Windsor tool-and-die maker Peter Wirth indicated, every worker understood when production drops "there is a reason for it."⁶ Workers also found significance in trends in overtime and new-hires on the one hand and the frequency and duration of layoffs on the other. With an eye on their work and the other on their surroundings,

⁵ See, for example, Scott D. Camp, *Workers Respond to Plant Closings: Steelworkers in Johnstown and Youngstown* (New York: Garland Publications, 1995), 14.

⁶ Peter Wirth interviewed by Steven High at his Windsor, Ontario home in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WMA.

workers tried to divine the intentions of management.⁷

Yet in the dark days of the 1970s and early 1980s, physical signs of job security, sufficient to notify workers of trouble in good times, often failed them. As a result, many workers drew the wrong conclusion from new equipment and machinery, not anticipating how much financial incentive existed for management to abandon older facilities and costly long-service employees. Nor, as becomes clear, could they know who in management was winning control over decisions. Conveying his surprise about the closing of his Hamilton, Ontario plant, Basil Adili remembered:

We couldn't believe it. How can that be? They just spent three-quarters of a million dollars on an overhead crane for the furnace that Spring, and February they were shutting down.... They thought : 'how can this be? We're busy. We're negotiating. How can this possibly be?' But some guys in the corporate office says 'The foundry has got to go.' Whether he was newly appointed...we don't know who the heck put the finger on the foundry division. There was no sign, 'For Sale,' they just crossed it. I don't understand the reason.⁸

Similarly, in Buffalo, New York, employees of Republic Steel pointed to a brand new basic oxygen furnace when recalling their disbelief that their plant would soon close. In part because job loss came as a surprise to many workers, used to reading the industrial landscape for signs of job insecurity, workers on both side of the Canada-US border were unprepared for the psychological costs of job loss.

⁷ See, for example, Herbert J. Gans, *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans* (New York: The Free Press, 1982 c. 1962), 330-342. Sociologist Herbert Gans found in his study of slum clearances in West Boston in 1958-59 that the mainly Italian-American residents did not believe that the city would demolish their neighbourhood to make way for luxury apartment complexes. Instead, they read the landscape around them for signs that the city would back-down from its declared intention. Hence, the paving of city streets and the installation of new gas meters were seen as "evidence" that supported what West Enders desperately wanted to believe.

⁸ Basil Adili interviewed by Steven High at his Hamilton home in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the MUA.

Rumours of plant closures reached a fever pitch by the mid-1970s, there being almost daily menaces to the fragile hold working people in the industrial heartland had on "middle-class" status. Ironically, longstanding rumours of layoffs and closures fostered a sense of invulnerability among long-service employees who had heard it all before. Yet workers were "shocked as hell" even at plants like Continental Can where they had "talked about" it for years.⁹ Apparently, the longer employees had worked in the plant, the less willing they became to entertain the idea of its closure. Even at the height of the wave of shutdowns that struck Southern Ontario, workers responded in disbelief. David Christopherson recalled that the closing of auto parts maker Allen Industries in Hamilton in 1983 "just blew us away" despite the signs around them:

Rumours floating around for the longest time, people trying to decipher what's in crates and invoices that are coming in; strange people walking through the plant looking very worried or very decisive or very analytical and they weren't just studying for the usual reasons....It was [all done] under a cloak of secrecy. The rumour mill was churning.¹⁰

Stephen W. Rushen, a salaried employee at US Steel's Ohio Works, maintained that, "There was always that rumour going on at that time: 'Oh they're going to shut this place down.' Of course you never thought of that. In fact, the first time I went into the mill to work at US Steel [I heard], 'this is an old mill, they're going to shut it down.' And that was going on the length of time I was there, for thirty-two years before they really did

⁹ Bill Fuller interviewed by Steven High at the Ontario Workers Arts and Heritage Centre in Hamilton, Ontario in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the MUA.

¹⁰ David Christopherson interviewed by Steven High at his Hamilton East constituency office in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the MUA.

close it."¹¹ Disbelief was general. As in the fairy tale about the boy who cried wolf, nobody quite believed the calamity would actually happen.

Unionization could make hitherto idle threats appallingly real. The danger, lurking at Al-Craft Manufacturing, for instance, came to the attention of Ruby Kendrick when the company president threatened to close the Detroit area plant after employees voted in 1967 to unionize. Although the owner cited "economic reasons" for his decision to relocate production to Hialeah, Florida in 1970, his former employee Ruby Kendrick remains convinced that he had it in for the union: "I didn't believe it. I didn't believe it. And as things progressed, I didn't think that was going to happen because after...but after two years, three years, I thought he was full of baloney. But he did do it. And when he did it, he told us: 'It took a little bit longer but I did it.'"¹² Many companies closed plants because they wanted to rid themselves of unionized employees. In the case of Allen Industries' factory in Troy, Michigan, the short road to closure can be followed in the union minutebook.¹³ As the minutes revealed, UAW Local 417 was locked in high-stakes collective bargaining with the employer. Consequent to the loss of a valuable contract

¹¹ Stephen W. Rushen interviewed by Donna DeBlasio on 30 July 1991. The videotape is held at the YHCIL.

¹² Ruby Kendrick interviewed by Steven High in her Southpark, Michigan home. In addition, the UAW research branch discovered that the company was a marginally profitable one. WRL. UAW. Local 417, Box 4, Folder 22, 14 June 1971 Musick to Harry Kujawski, International Rep, Region 1B.

¹³ WRL. UAW. Local 417. Box 4, Folder 4-17. June 28, 1973. Jerry C. Jermanus Personnel Manager for Allen Industries Inc to Dean Spooner, President of Local 417. The union seniority list at the time of the shutdown included the names of seventy-one men and 132 women. The latter were older with longer service with the company. Also see: WRL. UAW. Local 417. Minutebook. Allen Industries.

supplying foam interior accessories to General Motors, Allen Industries informed employees on 14 June 1973 that its "financial situation, loss of certain contracts, and their hope of conditions improving in the future" required a one year extension of the existing contract with provision for a small wage increase. Company managers threatened to close the plant if the membership rejected the proposal. Wanting a greater wage increase in this inflationary era, the union's negotiating team refused to endorse the proposal and members voted overwhelmingly against it. The plant closed on 9 August 1973 at 11:00 am.

Through tactics of disinformation, companies fed the rumour mill. In public, they tended vehemently to deny plant shutdowns. In the plant itself, by contrast, they kept threatening to shut down. When Great White Electric suddenly announced the closing of its Detroit factory on 15 May 1987, the employees initially dismissed this announcement as yet another company threat. According to electrical worker Bernice Adams, "you [heard] it every three years [so] you think 'well let them go.' But, then, it changes when they actually are going."¹⁴ Denial was well-nigh universal in Youngstown, Ohio. Despite the ominous signs in the mid-1970s that the steel mills of the Mahoning Valley were going down, most hourly workers continued to suppose otherwise. As an hourly employee at the mammoth Campbell Works, Johnny Holmes noted rumours had circulated for twenty years, "ever since I'd been in the mills." In practice, Holmes shared the attitudes of many of his co-workers: 'I'll believe it when I see it.'¹⁵ Their

¹⁴ Bernice Adams interviewed by Steven High at the office of UAW Local 417 in Troy, Michigan in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WRL.

¹⁵ Interview with Johnny Holmes on 25 February 1993 cited in Jane Sferra's excellent thesis entitled "A Way of Life Gone Forever: The Youngstown Steel Industry," (MA Thesis: Miami [Ohio] University, 1993), 10.

scepticism may partly be explained by the awesome size of steel mills, "deities of the Industrial Revolution," as well as by the mills' longevity, many having operated for as long as a century.¹⁶ Thus, when the open hearths at Republic's Youngstown Works closed, Robert Bruno Sr. could hardly believe these "monstrous things" could die.¹⁷

Youngstown steelworkers had no choice but to believe after "Black Monday," 19 September 1977, when seven thousand Sheet and Tube employees lost their jobs. To a Senate Committee, Juanita Cox recalled that: "Everyone thought it was a joke at first, but they soon realized that it was for real."¹⁸ Engineer Robert Galmish told a similar story:

I had the news on in the car. I thought, 'What the hell am I hearing?' Well, like I said, we had been told that there would be belt tightening so to speak. That's what I thought they meant, but that's not what they meant. I called the office. Everyone was in a state of shock.... I was shocked. I was appalled. I couldn't believe it. I really and truly couldn't believe what had happened. I just didn't think those things happened. We've read about them happening somewhere else in other countries, but I just really and truly didn't believe that could happen.¹⁹

This highly charged emotional experience bound workers together creating what almost everybody conceded was a "collective catastrophe." These perceptions came sharply into focus in the recurring metaphor of the flood that swept across their oral narratives,

¹⁶ Michael Williamson and Dale Maharidge, *Journey to Nowhere* (Garden City, New York: The Dial Press of Doubleday and Company, 1985), 11.

¹⁷ Robert Bruno Sr interviewed by Donna DeBlasio on 23 August 1993. The videotape is held at the YHCIL.

¹⁸ WRL. UAW. Region 1B, Box 313, File 313-42. Statement of Juanita Cox Before the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources Hearing on Plant Closings.

¹⁹ Robert Galmish interviewed by Mary Kay Schulz on 3 February 1981 for the Youngstown State University Shutdown Project. The transcript of the interview is held at the library of Youngstown State University.

displaying the enormity of the situation and its disastrous consequences. Most notably, Steelworker staffer, Marvin Weinstock recalled that:

It sort of makes me think of Bangladesh in the flood. It just felt like people were dying. All of their hopes were dying....Nobody really knew where to turn. They were looking for answers and nobody really could come up with an answer....It was a very traumatic experience and heart-rending. It hurt me not to be able to say there's a way we could do something.²⁰

Unfortunately this was not a real flood. Had it been, had the Mahoning River overflowed its banks, inundating the valley, disaster relief would have been rushed into the area. But there was no national rescue for those uprooted.

All the residents of the valley could hardly believe that the dam had burst. When company officials met with local politicians the morning of the announcement, John Palermo, a Mahoning County Commissioner, claimed that nobody at that meeting knew why they had been summoned: "Some had ideas, possibly, there may be a cutback announcement, possibly, of some standards, [Environmental Protection Agency] rules, regulations."²¹ The closing "stunned" those in attendance. "I don't think the impact was really felt until a few minutes later, until you really heard or digested what was said," Palermo explained. Michael Katula, a Campbell City councillor later recalled:

One trouble with those of us that live in this area, we have lived in a dream world, a dream world that the Sheet and Tube is always going to be there. We don't have to worry about anything. 'Those mills are never going to shut down.' Who could comprehend the shutdown of such a great complex? And if we were told two years ahead of time...There were--I never heard them myself, personally, from any official--but I heard it through rumor, through discussions of steelworkers and so on, a possibility of the mills shutting down in

²⁰ Marvin Weinstock interviewed by Donna DeBlasio on 7 May 1991. The videotape is held at the YHCIL.

²¹ John Palermo interviewed by Philip Bracy on 7 April 1981 for the Youngstown State University Shutdown Project. The transcript of the interview is held at the library of Youngstown State University.

the future, but as I said, who would have believed it anyway? Nobody would have taken steps to try to prevent it.²²

So powerful was the blow that almost everyone in the local community from school children to university professors can recall where they were when the trauma hit: John Thomas was scrubbing the bar in his tavern, the Bloom But Inn, which catered to Campbell Works employees, when he heard the news; John Smythe, a professor of economics at Youngstown State University, was preparing a lecture; Doug Evans, a stockbroker, was in his sixth story office in the Union National Bank Building when the news came over the ticker tape; Dorothy Briggs was watching television with her husband when their program was pre-empted by a news bulletin; Matthew Novosel, a senior at Wilson High School was in class when a teacher announced the news; Linda Fusco, a steelworker's wife, was doing the Monday wash.²³ Like the searing heat of the open hearth furnaces, "Black Monday" burned people's memories across the Mahoning Valley.

Following the closing of the Campbell works, the story of rumours, disbelief and, then, shock, repeated itself in the Brier Hill works in 1979, US Steel's Ohio and McDonald works in 1980 and, finally, Republic Steel's Youngstown facility in 1985. "Well I couldn't believe it," Brier Hill welder Augustine Izzo recalled. "Maybe I didn't want to believe it because I had heard it for so long that it was hard to believe. I never

²² Michael J. Katula interviewed by Philip Bracy on 28 December 1981 for the Youngstown State University Shutdown Project. The transcript of the interview is held at the library of Youngstown State University.

²³ Dennis LaRue, "How One Monday in September Changed our Lives," *Youngstown Vindicator* (25 September 1977), A-12.

would have thought that the place I worked at would shut down."²⁴ Disbelief proved to be widespread. *Warren Tribune's* Gregg Garland reported disbelief and anger in the steelworker bars on Steel Street when news of the closing of the Ohio and McDonald Works came down. "It's like finding out you're going to die on a certain date," one steelworker told him. "When that day comes, it doesn't make it easier to accept."²⁵

In theory, there should have been less surprise. The signs of obsolescence had been all around them. For one thing, aging equipment made it nearly impossible for Mahoning Valley mills to compete. It is hard to imagine a more tenuous situation than the one described by Frank Farizo who recalled that these old plants were kept together "with baling wire and masking tape."²⁶ Mechanical breakdowns had become commonplace. The stress of it all made George Richardson sick with worry:

Well right off you could see that they were not maintaining the mill, they were not maintaining the machinery... they were not maintaining the cranes. At that time, I was scheduling the operation of twelve open hearths.... I would break my neck every day I put on a big schedule for the twelve furnaces what I wanted... And I would break my neck, to make my next heat up and I'd come out the next morning. Well, 'we have a breakdown in the bloom mill, they couldn't roll the steel.' They were down for eight hours; maybe a pit crane was down for four hours and that slowed up production. And here's my schedule all up in the air. I had to do it all over again. And that went on day-after-day-after-day. That's what forced me out--I retired at 60....It got so bad I spent more time going up and

²⁴ Augustine Izzo interviewed by Donna DeBlasio in 1991. The videotape of the interview is held at the YHCIL.

²⁵ Ohio Historical Society. Columbus, Ohio. Ohio AFL-CIO Papers. Box 95, File 3: Plant Closings. Save Jobs Committee. "Shutdowns: This is our story. The Steelworkers and their Families of Youngstown." Youngstown steelworkers could be forgiven for being surprised when US Steel announced the closing of its Youngstown and McDonald Works, *Fortune Magazine* had only the week before run a feature article entitled "Youngstown Bounces Back."

²⁶ Frank Farizo interviewed by Donna DeBlasio on 19 September 1991. The videotape of the interview is held at the YHCIL.

down stairs to the 'John' everyday with an upset stomach. Just trying to make things work and everything was broken down. If you got one mill satisfied for their steel for the next week's rolling, it would break down. It got so bad that finally I said to my wife 'I got cancer, there's something wrong with me, I think I got cancer in my stomach.'²⁷

George Richardson's feverish attempts to keep the mill alive reflected the high personal stakes "invested" in the mill, and makes the deep shock workers experienced in the wave of plant shutdowns all the more comprehensible. As industrial workers tried to divine the intentions of top management by "reading" their surroundings, all the signs in Youngstown, at least, pointed towards an end to steel-making in the Mahoning Valley.

All too often, the suddenness of job loss stunned workers. Long-service employees with decades in the plant found themselves "displaced" in a matter of minutes, hours or days. In consequence, the suddenness with which companies disposed of employees sometimes verged on cruelty. Youngstown Sheet and Tube veteran, George Chornock, 62, heard on a Monday that his plant would close that Thursday.²⁸ As with many other cases, the Detroit Manufacturing Steel Supply Company abruptly ended operations after fifty years of continuous operation, by having the manager distribute "final" cheques an hour before quitting time.²⁹ In nearby Pontiac, Michigan, employees of Seamen Manufacturing arrived at work one day in February 1979 to find the gates

²⁷ George Richardson interviewed by Donna DeBlasio in 1991. The videotape recording of this interview is held at the YHCIL.

²⁸ Lawrence Quinn, "Stunned Workers Critical of 'No Warning' at S&T" *Youngstown Vindicator* (24 September 1977), 1.

²⁹ WRL. UAW. Region 1B Collection, Box 307-7 Plant Closings, 1980, 14 November 1980, Larry Smith's testimony at plant closing hearing by Rep. Perry Bullard at Northwest Activities Building in Detroit 11 May 1981. Two of those displaced were Ed Brosowski, 65, with 42 years seniority, and his wife, Rose, 60, with 25 years working in the plant. They were left with no pension, no medical coverage, no severance pay, "simply nothing."

padlocked and the equipment already en route down Interstate-75 to Indiana. Across the St. Clair River, in Windsor, Ed Lawrenson recalls that the end came dramatically at Bendix Automotive:

I thought: 'Oh man, there's something up here.' And sure as shootin' they says 'As of nine o'clock the people in the plant are being told that the plant is closing. They've got 15 minutes to clear their stuff out--any personal items--and the place is being closed. That's it. [Hand movement underlining the finality of the decision]....It was panicsville.³⁰

After decades in a plant, employees were curtly told to clear out their personal belongings. Workers resented the rapidity of it all, comparing it to the sneak attack at Pearl Harbor in 1941. Yet these workers at least heard the word in person. Others had to read it on a bulletin board.

Workers recall with dread the daily routine of checking out the bulletin board for layoff or plant closure notices. Would their name appear on the list of those laid-off this time? Would the notice say the whole plant was closed, effective immediately? American worker-poet, Sue Doro, knew about plant shutdowns firsthand: she lost her much-loved job as a machinist at the Milwaukee Railroad in the mid-1980s. In her "Hard Times in the Valley," Sue Doro captured the insecurity of industrial work that the bulletin board came to symbolize in the 1980s:

we deserve more than five days notice
on the bulletin board before
they yank us out of our boots
without lacing them ³¹

Quite often these written notices were short terse prose penned by lawyers worried

³⁰ Ed Lawrenson interviewed by Steven High at his home in St. Clair Shores in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WMA.

³¹ Sue Doro, "Hard Time in the Valley," in *Blue Collar Goodbyes* (Watsonville, California: Papier-Mache Press, 1992).

Illustration 4: Plant shutdown notice, Kaylee Textile in Hamilton

KAYLEE TEXTILES LTD.

134 MARY STREET N.
HAMILTON - ONTARIO

TELEPHONE
528-0064.

OCTOBER 19, 1972.

NOTICE TO ALL EMPLOYEES

THIS IS TO NOTIFY YOU THAT KAYLEE TEXTILES LTD.
IS CLOSING OUT ITS HAMILTON OPERATION DUE TO LACK
OF SALES FOR ITS PRODUCT.

WE APPRECIATE YOUR CO-OPERATION IN THE PAST AND
DEEPLY REGRET THESE CIRCUMSTANCES FAR BEYOND OUR
CONTROL.

INDIVIDUAL DEPARTMENTS WILL BE INFORMED WHEN THEIR
JOBS ARE TERMINATED.

ARNOLD KRAMER JR.
PRESIDENT

Source: AO. RG 7-49. Interim Box 28, File Kaylee Textile Ltd.

more about lawsuits and grievances than the feelings of employees. Illustration 4 provides a typical example. At the same time, workers at Prestolite, a factory in Guelph, resented being informed of the impending closing by mail. As Prestolite officials underestimated the cost of sending the letters, workers faced the added indignity of paying the postman in order to receive the bad news.³²

More confrontationally, firms informed their unionized employees of an imminent plant closing across the bargaining table during negotiations. Seeking to retire, the owner unexpectedly withdrew his investment from the small Detroit-area electrical plant where Bernice Adams worked. Notified at the bargaining table, Bernice had the unpleasant task of informing her co-workers that the plant would close 15 May 1987.³³ Caught in a similar situation, Bill Scandlon, a staff person for the United Steelworkers of America, saw his role as managing the closing announcement to smooth things over. He remembers:

When it was going to happen they let me know the decision was made in Chicago. They told me so I could prepare them. 'How do you want to handle this?,' they said. And I said: 'Well, I guess the only thing to do is to tell them right up front.' But, automatically they will be [saying] 'what about my pensions, benefits, so on and so forth.' So let's talk about that. They prepared something, a handout for me. I then brought the President in [who] was a very good guy....He understood. It was a sign of the times. He wasn't going to fold up and cry.³⁴

³² NAC. MG 28 I 264. IUE Papers. Box 49, File &: Local 508 The Prestolite Company of Canada Ltd. Sarnia, Ontario. General Correspondence, 1970-1975. Newsletter. "What is Going On?" 27 January 1971.

³³ Bernice Adams interviewed by Steven High at the office of UAW Local 417 in Troy, Michigan on February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WRL.

³⁴ Bill Scandlon interviewed by Steven High at the Ontario Workers Arts and Heritage Centre in Hamilton, Ontario in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the MUA.

In informing their employees of plant closings and job loss, many companies followed the pattern of Youngstown Sheet and Tube where union officials and community leaders were brought to corporate headquarters to hear a short statement from the company. Thus, Stelco, without a word of explanation, herded almost three hundred Hamilton steelworkers onto buses destined for an undisclosed location. Finding themselves at the botanical gardens, they were then told that the Canada Works would close.³⁵ Apparently, company officials hoped that the peaceful green surroundings would calm their employees. Instead, the stratagem just insulted them.

In part because of the treatment they received, displaced workers complained bitterly about the unfairness of the closing. Ralph Brubaker, for example, went through two plant closings: first at the Detroit Chrysler missile plant that relocated to the US South in the 1950s and then as an employee of Sahlin Engineering of Clawson, Michigan on 2 November 1972.³⁶ He recalled:

I always felt I did my best. I always felt I did a good job. Being put out is hard to take. Its like saying 'we used you, good bye.' 'You're nothing to us.' 'You don't mean nothing.' 'We're in business, we're not in the good guy stuff.' 'You're gone.' ... You feel you don't have to worry and all of a sudden it is taken away from you. I didn't treat them that way. I wasn't the kind of guy that took time off. I was the kind of guy who came to work on time. When I was there I did my job. In fact, I always felt I did a little extra.³⁷

Like many workers, Ralph felt that his loyalty to the company had not been reciprocated.

³⁵ AO. Ontario Ministry of Labour. RG 7. Interim Box 26. File: Stelco Inc. Canada Works, Hamilton. Transcript of TV 11 Newsroom story shown on CHCH-TV in Hamilton on 6 January 1984 at 6:00 pm.

³⁶ WRL. UAW Local 417, Box 8, File 25: Sahlin-Closing-1972. Harlan R. Cagle, President of Sahlin to Leonard Montford, Local 417. 7 August 1972.

³⁷ Ralph Brubaker interviewed by Steven High at his Clawson, Michigan home in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to WSU.

He clearly had expected more respect. A similar story unfolded at the Ford Motor Company when it moved the production of engine blocks across the St. Clair River to a much older facility in Windsor, Ontario, on 23 December 1981. Diane Garner recalled that everybody appeared to walk around in a daze, wondering: "What do I do? What do I do?"³⁸ Being a divorced single mother, Diane had to break the news to her three dependent children: "I always let my kids know how things were. I told them my plant was going to close and I would be laid off: 'There's certain things we can't do. Certain things you can't have because I won't have the money that I had before.' And they understood." Many interviewees recall moments of personal voice such as the day that Jim McHale, a tool and die maker for W. H. Chase in downtown Detroit, was asked to pick up his severance pay: "the lady that was the secretary called me up to get that big cheque and I actually said to her 'instead of this cheque I would rather have my job.' But I knew it was futile to say that, but I wanted to."³⁹

These small acts also included letter-writing. Personal letters mailed to Governor James Rhodes of Ohio and Governor Peter Milliken of Michigan during the 1970s provide an interesting counterpoint to the remembered experience of displacement recorded in oral history interviews.⁴⁰ In notes and letters ringing with

³⁸ Diane Garner interviewed by Steven High at her Detroit, Michigan home in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WRL.

³⁹ Jim McHale interviewed by Steven High at the Walter Reuther Library (WRL) in Detroit, Michigan in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WRL.

⁴⁰ These letters emanated from across the States of Ohio and Michigan. Indeed, most told the stories of displacement in small towns like Logan, Ohio. There, the relocation of Coffman Stain Co. to Virginia in 1977 resulted in the permanent layoff of 239 area residents. While the numbers being displaced paled next to the huge steel layoffs in the Mahoning Valley, they had a devastating impact nonetheless.

emotion, workers revealed their fears about the future: non-existent job prospects; troubles paying off the mortgage; mental depression; fear of having to uproot their families in search of work out-of-state. Older workers facing a plant closing found it particularly difficult to adjust. In their letters, they stressed their long service with the company and pointed to the difficulties in finding employment at their age. One exacerbad Detroit resident with over sixteen years service with the Huck Manufacturing Company wrote: "I am a very old man at 49, or so it seems."⁴¹ Faced with a similar situation, Raymond J. Boza, 55, of nearby Harper Woods, figured he was "too young to retire and too old to get another job."⁴² Indeed, many of the letters written by industrial workers at the time of displacement emphasized the unfairness of the plant-closing given their faithful service to the company and their belief that the plant continued to be profitable. As evidence of their loyalty and service, workers cited their company pins or medals given to them for long service with the company.⁴³ Speaking for many of these older workers, one displaced Michigan worker looked back on thirty-five years of service and said: "Now I have nothing."⁴⁴

⁴¹ State Archives of Michigan (SAM). RG 88-269, Box 256, File 3 Labor. Louis A. Hancotte (Garden City, MI) to Governor Milliken written on 21 May 1975.

⁴² SAM. RG 88-269, Box 124, File: Labor-D (1972). Raymond J. Boza (Harper Woods, MI) to Senator R. Griffin written 28 February 1972.

⁴³ Penn State University Archives (PSUA). USWA Archives. Legislative Department. Box 51, File 25: Pension Reform-Case Studies, Steve Jankovich to President of the USWA, 18 February 1973.

⁴⁴ SAM. RG 88-269, Box 292, File: Economic Expansion, M-P. Ramie E. Phillips (Detroit) to Governor Milliken written 25 March 1976. The writer, 54 years of age, worked at Whitman & Barnes in Plymouth, MI.

The wives of displaced male workers penned almost half of the letters to the governors. In heartbreaking letters, women revealed the devastating effect of job loss on their breadwinner husbands, and the disastrous effects on their families and communities as a whole:

Fraud on the working man.... I feel my husband has been cheated out of his pension. Words cannot explain the feeling I have to see [my] dear husband come from a meeting and say 'Plant Closing moving to Tenn[essee]. Briggs Manufacturing.' Had worked 32 years faithfully steady employe dedicated to his job. Could describe him man of the year. He has been everything a husband & father [should be]. Waited for the time when he will retire & now all dreams are gone.⁴⁵

In writing this, she was telling both her husband and the governor that job loss was not her beloved's fault. Indeed, her conviction that both her husband and her family had been betrayed was shared by many. One woman, for instance, told the governor of Ohio that her 56-year-old husband, married son and twin daughters all now faced unemployment. Others drew the connection between the poor treatment of an older generation of workers and the rebelliousness of a younger generation of Americans:

These men are all in their late 40's & 50's. Too old to even think of getting another job....No wonder the young people of today have no pride in doing a good job for any business or company, when they see what is happening to their fathers and mothers after they have worked faithfully and with pride for so many years for one company....⁴⁶

In all of these cases, women wrote on behalf of their families. Repeating a familiar (and accepted) gendered response to bad-times, women looked for "relief" when men were without "jobs." In adopting this feminine voice, the wives of displaced male workers

⁴⁵ SAM. RG 88-269, Box 160, File: Labor K-L. Mrs. Bernice Kordynski to Governor William Milliken, written in April 1973. Her husband worked for Briggs Manufacturing in Detroit, Michigan.

⁴⁶ SAM. RG 88-269, Box 246, file: OEC 1975. Laura L. Towne to Governor Milliken written 28 April 1975.

hoped to prompt the government to intervene. Yet in doing so they readied themselves to be disappointed:

I was told you will not answer my letter or even look at it, but I wrote anyway. Thanks a Million.⁴⁷

This is the first time I have wrote a letter to anyone that has anything to do with the government. I am not on a soap box or intend to carry this any further, my only hope is in the future we can keep our people of Michigan working.... If this letter gets to you, I would like to thank you for taking the time to let me express my feelings. Thank you.⁴⁸

You'll probably think this letter is unimportant, but to me and my family its very important.⁴⁹

In reading these letters, one can not help but be struck by how modest and personal these letters were and that it was, indeed, a political act to write a letter. Unfortunately, their misgivings were in large part realized.

Although the governors of Michigan and Ohio determined the "tone and content" of standard responses, they did not have the time to read incoming correspondence. In 1975, for example, nearly 68,000 citizens wrote to the Governor of Michigan.⁵⁰ In this pre-computer era, Michigan's correspondence unit was equipped with five automatic typewriters able to simultaneously rap out form letters that would, then, be fed into a signature machine to personalize them. To be sure, the governor received regular tallies

⁴⁷ SAM. RG 88-269, Box 118, File: Economic Expansion, wife of a Briggs Manufacturing employee. 15 May 1973.

⁴⁸ SAM. RG 88-269, Box 118, File Economic Expansion H. (1972). Robert Haynak to Governor Milliken, received 6 March 1972.

⁴⁹ SAM. RG 88-269, Box 208, File Labor A-B. Mrs. Mary Brady (Flint, Michigan) to Governor Milliken written on 22 November 1974.

⁵⁰ Pat McCarthy, "Dear Citizen: The Governor's Mailbag," *Detroit News* (Wednesday 2 April 1975).

of the number of letters received for or against specific issues. Given the huge volume of letters received and dutifully deposited in state archives, remarkably few dealt with plant shutdowns and displacement. In fact, a thorough search uncovered only fifty-nine letters; hardly enough to influence the direction of public policy. The responses they sent out in the governor's name were drawn up by professional letter writers who worded them in soothing tones designed not to ruffle feathers.

Was it any more useful to appeal to corporate management? Some workers hoped it might be. In Detroit, Michigan, the displaced employees of the Federal Mogul Corporation sent it a letter pleading with management:

Have either of you two gentlemen walked through the two plants and spoken to any of your employees? Why not take this walk and judge for yourselves, what your decision to close those two shops is doing to over 2000 of your fellow men. There are men with families who are in their 50's with over 20 years of seniority who stand to lose everything. They will receive not one cent of severance pay or Pension. Put yourself in their shoes. How would you feel?⁵¹

The anonymous authors of this letter framed their appeal for compassion by calling on managers to identify with the plight of hourly employees. The real problem, in their minds, was that managers did not know the lives of ordinary employees. However, none of the letters uncovered in the United States were as explicit as one letter sent by a long service employee with Wheel Trueing in Windsor, Ontario:

Mr Galvin [employer], having been an employee of Wheel Trueing Tool Co for the last thirty-three years my fellow co[mpany] workers and I cannot understand, the thinking of closing the Windsor plant. Here you have had workers that were proud to work for W.T.T. Co.. Most of us [have] 25 to 43 yrs service. We were not even asked to take concessions to better or save this plant. This to us shows you have no feeling for humanity, to the point, workers under you mean nothing. Just like Detroit you have put a lot of people, families & children through a lot of anxiety and misery through no fault of their own, only your ambition to make

⁵¹ SAM. RG 88-269, Box 159, File Labor A-B. Employees of Bower Division to Mr. Sam McArthur and Tom Russell received by Governor Milliken's office. 1 March 1973.

yourself look good in somebody else's eyes. I hope and pray these eyes will put you through the pain someday. The original men that started W.T.T. Co had in their minds to have good honest and sincere workers for a good living and retire in dignity. You have taken this away. Thanks for nothing.⁵²

In this letter, a new note of anger, largely missing so far in our discussion, is added. No longer is the tone of the letter patient, polite, and deferential. Instead, this letter conveys strong feelings of anger and aptly paints a vision of good ("good honest and sincere workers") and evil ("Those without a feeling of humanity").

In telling their experience of job loss, the oral and written narratives of the last shift lingered on silence and emptiness. Most alarming to them was the silencing of the familiar everyday clatter of the shop floor that had encased workers for much of their adult lives. Youngstown steelworker Francis McHugh recalled the blank expressions on everybody's face during the final shift:

It was devastating without a doubt. You were so close to the people, you just get engulfed in it and when it happened to Campbell, you thought it was down the road always. When you saw the last heat blow out and saw the last ingot roll and then you see the blank expression on these people's faces. Well, it happened, how the hell...It's like facing death. You know it's coming, you know it is going to happen, and when it happens, it is almost like a relief.⁵³

In what Dan McCarthy refers to as one of those "slow death closings," layoffs gradually reduced the workforce until nobody was left.⁵⁴ At Al-Craft Manufacturing in Detroit,

⁵²AO. Ontario Ministry of Labour. RG 7-11-0-54, Interim Box 26, File: Wheel Trueing Tool Co. of Canada Ltd., Windsor. Letter from a male worker to Mr. Galvin of the company. 17 October 1983.

⁵³ Francis McHugh interviewed by Mary Kay Schulz on 29 January 1981 for the YSU Shutdown Project. The transcript of the interview is held by the library of Youngstown State University.

⁵⁴ Dan McCarthy interviewed by Steven High at the union hall of UAW Local 417 in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WRL.

Ruby Kendrick recalled: "It was very depressing, very depressing" to see old friends leave one by one until the plant closed completely on 1 June 1970.⁵⁵ Across town, at W.H. Chase, Jim McHale looked up from his tool-and-die grinder one day to find he was alone: "It seemed it was like a ghost building." The mill and factory, once enlivened by co-workers at work and play, had become an empty space.

It is worth emphasizing that their post-layoff experiences ranged from Basil Adili's smooth transition into a new job weeks before the Canron foundry closed in Hamilton to years of uncertainty for Gabriel Solano and Diane Garner. In several instances, the union movement worked hard to place uprooted activists in other organized plants. Ruby Kendrick, Willy Eady and Basil Adili all got a helping hand. Those who had had full-time union positions, like the entire three-member executive of UAW Local 417 in Troy, Michigan, were left without "home" plants; unemployment awaited them as soon as their term in office ended. In turn, Jim McHale's skill as a tool-and-die maker allowed him to find employment with another local auto parts maker. His wife, Dolores, mused that being "Depression children" they knew how to save money in bad times: "It wasn't too bad.... I think we just cooked more beans."⁵⁶ Eventually, Dorothy Routenberg and John Livingstone in Hamilton and Ralph Brubaker in Detroit also found blue collar jobs in the public sector.

To this point in these oral history narratives, the Canada-United States border did not make a significant difference in the nature of the stories being told. However, in the aftermath of plant shutdowns, the stories told by Americans and Canadians diverged

⁵⁵ WRL. UAW Local 417, Box 4, File 22. Harry Kujawski to Ken Morris. 27 May 1971.

⁵⁶ Dolores and Jim McHale interviewed by Steven High at the Walter Ruether Library in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WRL.

dramatically. In the United States, familiar lines dissolved and old categories collapsed in the aftermath of major mill and factory closings. The disruption of those social boundaries that had long demarcated one's place in relation to class, gender and race suddenly left local residents disoriented. In one industrial town after another, "people who once stood at the centre of things now seem[ed] out of place."⁵⁷ Autoworkers in Kenosha, Wisconsin, found themselves displaced to the periphery as civic leaders helped transform the industrial city into a post-industrial playground of marinas and cappuccino bars. In the context of the accelerating shift in industrial production from the Snowbelt to the Sunbelt, and the emergence of the "Rust Belt" label, the metaphor of emptiness proved central to the self-conception of displaced workers in the United States.⁵⁸

In the ailing steel valley, the clean-up crews removing equipment from now silent buildings completed the transformation of the lively mill, once bustling with activity, to a dead one. John Barbero, one of twenty open-hearth workers asked to mothball and ship out tools from the Ohio Works, found that it was no longer the same place he had worked for so many years. With the usual intense heat of the furnaces gone, Barbero's team had to burn benches in order to keep warm: "The first day back after the last steel was tapped was a shock. Our normally clean locker washroom resembled a garbage landfill. Looters had come in over the weekend and had taken everything that was useful. Everything else...was strewn about in one hellish mess." The parallels in John's narrative between the emptying of the plant and the emptying of his own emotional ties

⁵⁷ Dudley, *The End of the Line*, 161.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Rolf Steinberg's *Dead Tech: A Guide to the Archaeology of Tomorrow* (Berlin: Sierra Club Books, 1982).

to that place were striking. Like the looters' who walked away with everything they considered useful, the company stripped the plant and took away their jobs. To John, both actions amounted to theft. The resulting physical "mess" thus had its emotional equivalent. Indeed, the record of their working lives in the mill was systematically erased, culminating in one final violation. On the last day, after having "picked clean" the skeletal ruins of the open hearths, a task that reminded him of his days in post-nuclear Hiroshima, John was asked to obliterate the last remnants of the record of work and labour in the mill by generations of Mahoning Valley steelworkers: "The last day I burned all the production records- '100,000,000 tons by 1970'- and the attendance and work records of the thousands of people who worked here for over 70 years. We have become non-persons."⁵⁹

Stripped of their identities, displaced steelworkers like John Barbero feared they were about to become "the gypsies of the next ten years."⁶⁰ In effect, the "displaced workers" of Youngstown had become "displaced persons" as well.⁶¹ While "displaced workers" describes the separation of individuals like steelworker John Barbero from their work, "displaced persons" alludes to the changed relationship they

⁵⁹ OHS. AFL-CIO Box 104, File 3: Plant Closings. Save Jobs Committee. "Shutdowns: This is our story. The Steelworkers and their families of Youngstown."

⁶⁰ John Barbero, "Hundreds of Thousands of Steelworker Jobs are on the line," *Brier Hill Unionist* (October-November 1977). He also called Youngstown a "leper colony." Others like Dave Snyder, who worked at Sieberling Tire in Barberton, Ohio until it closed in 1981, articulated this same sense of being both adrift and unwanted as "migrant worker[s]." See, for example, Steve Hoffman and Bill O'Connor, "Labor of Love lost and a new start," *Akron Beacon Journal* (Sunday 25 January 1981).

⁶¹ The term "displaced persons" emerged after World War II to describe the millions of refugees displaced by that war. As a result, "displaced persons" conjures up images of a stateless people or a people without a home.

had with the larger community. In this chapter, we are hearing from individuals not only displaced from work, but from their position as breadwinners, from their communities, and from their class position. The heartland had been reduced to "a region of thwarted dreams -- a place where plants shut down and business surrender to the economy's structural changes."⁶² This cultural crossing took a more tangible form when Youngstown Sheet and Tube workers tossed their hard hats into the Mahoning River as they left the plant for the last time. The fears and anxieties engendered by industrial decline became imaginatively tied to the industrial heartland turning it into rust and turning displaced workers into metaphorical "gypsies," as well as real-life "migrant workers."⁶³

Given the emotional attachment that working people -- especially those with long service -- had developed to their mill or factory, many of those interviewed kept mementoes of their lives working in the plant. Sam Donnorumo, for example, got permission to take a slagger shovel as a keep-sake of his work in the Brier Hill steel mill; Diane Garner kept her employee badge from the Ford Foundry in Flat Rock, Michigan in her bag for years afterward; and Willy Eady, has kept a crumpled newspaper clipping about the fire that destroyed Fabiricon Products in his wallet ever since.⁶⁴ One former Republic Steel employee in Lackawanna, New York had an impossible wish, to return to the demolished mill, like retirees used to do, to see his old

⁶² Michael Robinson, "Tough times are afloat downriver," *Detroit News* (Sunday 25 October 1981).

⁶³ Robert Beauregard, *Voices of Decline*, xi.

⁶⁴ Willy Eady interviewed by Steven High at the union hall of UAW Local 417 in February 1998. The videotaped interview will be donated to the WRL.

work station again. Yet today, a tomato greenhouse stands where the mill used to be. These individual stories, vividly illustrate that displaced workers clung to mementoes of their former lives as cherished possessions that would make the coming trials easier to take.

Keeping in touch with former co-workers presented another means of maintaining a tenuous connection with the past. A chance encounter in the mall, at church, or on the street momentarily reconnected workers with each other. It also reminded them that the plant shutdown had been a collective catastrophe, and not just a personal one. Former employees of Republic Steel maintained their bonds at the regular monthly meetings of their retirees club. In annual reunions, as well, workers reconnected with the past. Diane Garner noted the "Flat Rock people" reunited every year for ten years. "Its something they didn't want to let die," she said.⁶⁵ Similarly, Marilyn McCormack noted that twenty former employees of Northern Electric reunited in Troy, Michigan nearly fifteen years after that plant closed.⁶⁶ Speaking for many displaced workers, Youngstown steelworker Sam Donnorumo lamented: "I miss the guys, I miss the guys....I miss that place."⁶⁷

Despite these attempts to generate a sense of continuity and the familiar, American workers found their ties to place sundered. Being keenly aware of the old signs of the security and rootedness that work had denoted previously, they inverted them in

⁶⁵ Diane Garner interviewed by Steven High in her Detroit home in February 1998. The videotaped interview will be donated to the WRL.

⁶⁶ Marilyn McCormack interviewed at the union hall of UAW Local 417 in February 1998. The videotaped interview will be donated to the WRL.

⁶⁷ Sam Donnorumo interviewed by Donna DeBlasio in 1991. The videotape is held at the YHCIL.

their narratives in order to illustrate just how much life had changed. For a bricklayer at Republic Steel in Buffalo, the pain of job loss found its symbolic expression in a thirty-five year pin representing decades of loyal service to the company:

I heard about the closure on television on the six o'clock news. Then a couple of weeks later they phoned me up and said 'you got a thirty-five year pin that we have here. We'd like to give it to you.' I said ok. He said, 'meet us at the front gate.' You know everything was closed so the fellow, our superintendent at the time, he gave me the thirty-five year pin. You can picture a chain linked fence, he handed it to me through the fence. 'Here is your thirty-five year pin.'⁶⁸

The significance of having the pin passed through the chain linked fence was not lost on him: a chain linked fence now separated who he was from who he had become. As the ring passed through the fence its meaning underwent a transformation. Once a sign of loyalty and service, this retired steelworker re-described the pin to signify the unfairness of plant closings. By the 1980s, it was a world of balance sheets and returns on investment, not loyalty and service; a world where the old sense of security and rootedness had been uprooted.⁶⁹

The stages of disillusionment are, perhaps, most vividly depicted by Gabriel Solano who had worked at General Motors' Fisher Guide plant in Southwestern Detroit

⁶⁸ Anonymous worker (#4-bricklayer) interviewed during the "community interview" arranged by the Steelworkers' Organization of Active Retirees in Lackawanna, New York in April 1998.

⁶⁹ In part because of the large size of some of the mills and factories going down in the United States, many American workers interviewed felt trapped between an industry in decline and new forms of employment not yet in ascendancy. Anthropologist Victor Turner has called this transitional phase between separation and re-incorporation, "liminality." See: Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995 [1969]), 94. In other words, the state of being neither here nor there. Like the uprooted immigrants described by historian Oscar Handlin, workers found that "the older roots were sundered, before the new were established." In the interim, they existed in an "extreme situation." See: Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1951), 6.

for eight years when it closed in 1986: "I bought the GM product: the car, the truck, the house in the suburbs, the new baby, the new furniture and then the dream came crashing down." Within a year of losing his job, Gabriel lost his marriage. Eventually, Gabriel watched everything he worked for "fall away." For him, joblessness cast a long shadow:

If a letter came with a [GM]logo on you opened that letter just like you received the lottery....When the phone rang [shaking his head] 'Hello, hi'--it might have been a neighbor calling or a brother or sister. The weirdest thing was for the first year: 'I'm going back.' 'I'm going back.' 'I'm going somewhere.' 'I'm going somewhere.' 'They're going to call me back it is a big corporation.' Little did we realize at the time this was the start of the paring down.⁷⁰

In telling this story, Gabriel was, in effect, bearing witness to the disrespect visited upon employees by a corporate management far removed from their struggles. It proved to be a long and painful lay-off lasting seven years and eight months.

Meanwhile, the "pool" of displaced GM workers waiting to be re-hired grew steadily. When Gabriel first lost his job, five thousand people tried to stay afloat. Six months later, their number grew to twelve thousand; and twelve months after that the number in the pool swelled to twenty thousand. When General Motors finally called Gabriel back to work at another auto plant, it soon became apparent that only the officers and the captain had reserved seating on the life-boat. Rank-and-file workers such as Gabriel were expected to stay afloat on their own until the next big ship (factory) came along:

I want to relate this story. Its an interesting one. They shipped me over to the West Plant (which is Plant 5) two weeks before they're shutting it down. So I get there and the foreman gives me this 'you're here to do the job' and I mean he's gung-ho and I'm looking at him like 'I just got a free ticket on the Titanic.' Its already hit the iceberg, its three-quarters sunk and you're telling me 'strike up the band.' And I said 'can life get any worse and then I meet you.' So he read me his riot act about what we have to do for this plant and it is going to shut down in

⁷⁰ Gabriel Solano interviewed by Steven High at his home in Southwest Detroit on February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WRL.

two weeks. Mind you this is at Christmas time. I'm like 'is this real?' It is real. So, 'you're absolutely right, which way is the life boat?' At which point I said 'you have to have fun with this.' And I made it fun. I was around a bunch of workers who have never been to a plant closing. I had already closed two.

Q What was the second one you closed?

A It was a Livonia trim shop. I was there briefly. I think it was the Luisitania and then I got on the Titanic so one got torpedoed and the other hit the iceberg. I was rather enlightened because I had now become so calloused and I understood what was going on. To watch some of these other workers who would threaten to bring guns. The 'I hate everyone' mentality. It was understood I had seen it. I had felt it. I had done it. Been there. Well it was one hell of an irony because it was Christmas time and I can remember this day so vividly because I was taking notes because I wanted to feel this even further down the road....I can still remember so vividly: 'Attention. Attention.' Then, they put out flyers and posters: 'free hot dogs, pops, popcorn in the cafeteria. Please come down.' I said hey I'll look at the freebies. So I go down there and... You could see the anger. You could see the hurt. You could see the anxiety. And you could see most of all the fear. They started playing Christmas music over the PA. I think 'strike up the band the Titanic is going down!' So we get in line and the plant manager and all of his cronies are passing out hot dogs and pop. And they're so damn cheerful and they're taking pictures. So he hands me a hot dog so I dropped it on the floor. He says 'Here's another one.' So I throw it against the wall.⁷¹

While the company had tried to cushion the blow with a Christmas Party on the eve of the plant's closing, it did not create the desired effect. Instead, it invited indignation from hardened industrial workers. This story also reveals a sharp distinction between plant shutdown veterans like Gabriel and "home-planters" who were going through their first eviction. Gabriel had seen the folly in the widely-held belief among industrial workers that their plant was unsinkable. Like the Titanic, the Pontiac plant had hit its iceberg. These observations came sharply into focus in the sense of drowning which permeated Gabriel's narrative of job loss.

Changed by the experience of job loss, industrial workers like Gabriel Solano and Diane Garner developed a new identity as "trans-plants" amidst the turmoil in the

⁷¹ *Ibid.*.

automotive industry during the 1980s. Unlike the situation in the auto parts sector, those being laid-off by the Big 3 automakers (GM, Chrysler, Ford) had preferential hiring rights with their employer anywhere in the United States. Thus, when a plant went down, workers were tossed far and wide like flotsam in a November squall. Although they took their corporate seniority (pensions, benefits) with them, they had rookie status in the plant when it came to determining who worked what jobs and shifts, and who was going to be laid-off again in the future.

This distinction continued to differentiate "home-plant" workers from the so-called "trans-plants" who had experienced several plant shutdowns and came to be known as "I[nterstate]-75 Gypsies."⁷² Regularly "comparing notes" about how long they were laid off for and how many plants they had been shipped to, I-75 Gypsies presented a distinctly different breed, in the words of Gabriel:

We are the people who shut down plants up and down I-75. That's why we call ourselves the I-75 gypsies. We have no home plants. We are very hardened people. We are very thicked- skinned but we are also very good people because we've been at all the battles in the war called the automotive industry....There's like four or five hundred of us there and they stuck us all down near the same building. We're neat because everyone has a story. They're beautiful stories. They're stories of hurt, of fear, of anger, of loss, of gain. The whole roller-coaster... They gave us 1-7-85 plant seniority so a gentleman with corporate seniority of 25 years walks in with 1-7-85, January 7, 1985. He can't hold day shift because an in-plant person has more seniority...you're a UAW member but you're a lower class member. I think about that and it bothers me...A person can have 25 years UAW time but can't receive a ring due to the fact that they've designated in the by-laws of the local agreement that you must have 12 years and one day in that facility....Something small that means a lot to a lot of the men....Although we all have 15-25-28 years, we don't have what is called a

⁷² Interstate 75 runs from Flint, Michigan southward through Pontiac and Detroit on its way to Toledo and beyond. Many auto plants are located alongside this ribbon of concrete as it winds its way through one of the most industrialized areas on Earth.

'home plant.'⁷³

Like the thirty-five year pin, the UAW ring, given after a quarter century, once symbolized the service and loyalty of industrial workers. By ignoring the entire service of the transplanted in calculating who qualified for the ring the local union reinforced the psychological barriers between workers and contributed to the construction of a new identity derived from their displacement. Five hundred "gypsies," "75ers," and "transplants" were encamped with Gabriel Solano at GM's Pontiac, Michigan auto assembly plant: "You name it we have them there," Gabriel concludes. These displaced persons had once called "home": Fleetwood, Cadillac on Clark Street, Fisher Guide, Willow Run, Flint, Grand Blanc as well as closed plants across Ohio and Wisconsin. They had become outsiders looking in: gypsies moving from one place to the next as required for employment.

Another "trans-plant," Diane Garner observed that former employees of Ford's Flat Rock foundry continued to be called "Flat Rock people" years after that plant closed in 1980: "We were outsiders so we had to start to cling to each other."⁷⁴ Due to preferential hiring rights negotiated with the union, Diane Garner's name was placed into a hiring pool with tens of thousands of other Ford workers displaced in the massive restructuring sweeping the auto industry in the early 1980s. A year later, Ford recalled Diane to a foundry in Cincinnati. She relocated to that city for a year, leaving her children behind with her sister. Every weekend, she and other displaced "Flat Rockers"

⁷³ Gabriel Solano interviewed by Steven High at his Detroit home in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WRL.

⁷⁴ Diane Garner interviewed by Steven High at her Detroit home in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WRL.

returned home until they could transfer back to the Detroit area. All the plants of the Big three automakers had displaced persons like Diane and Gabriel.

Bound together by their displacement, "Flat Rockers," and "I-75 Gypsies" had seen the devastating impact of plant closings and, subsequently, resigned themselves to the likelihood that their new plants would also one day go down again. Even, today, job insecurity still reigns supreme, as Diane observes: "You know what, I believe anything, anything can happen. Nothing is guaranteed. Livonia could close. That whole Rouge complex can close. ...All of them could close. You prioritize things." To sum up, this sense of ongoing displacement upon which their identities coalesced, represented a radical departure from the rootedness and security that mill and factory work once accorded them. Asked if the plant shutdown is something that she talks about to others, she replied: "When people are together who have experienced [job loss] we'll talk about it among ourselves. But we don't share it unless someone like you or someone asks about it. We just don't give this information. You're right that's part of history we are letting down. A very important part of history." Under the circumstances, workers were left with the choice of "moving on and surviving or not moving on and dying."⁷⁵ Most displaced workers like Diane Garner moved on. We can see, then, that the theme of survival surfaced repeatedly. As worker-poet Sue Doro contended in "Kittens," another poem about displacement, "survival's a victory to be counted" in towns and cities across the industrial heartland.⁷⁶

This chapter has discussed --albeit indirectly -- the erosion of "class" as a marker of identity. To be sure, the creative destruction of the industrial heartland also

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*.

⁷⁶ Sue Doro, "Kittens," in *Blue Collar Goodbyes*.

reconfigured "gender" and "race" markers. Most critically, the loss of hundreds of thousands of mainly male steelworking, rubber making and auto manufacturing jobs hastened the demise of the male breadwinner label. Many men felt keenly their inability to provide for their families. Claire Sferra's husband, for example, had worked for Youngstown Sheet and Tube; he had a difficult time with the dramatic changes going on, as Claire recalled:

'Boy it was devastating. I think it was devastating for a woman to watch her husband go down.... To see a grown man lose his job and not be educated....It's hard to see them so down. They don't know what to do. It's not like a layoff, it was a permanent lay off. When there's a strike you know you're going to go back, when there's a layoff there's a chance you're going to get called back. It's hard, too hard. You don't know what's next. It's hard but you go on. You have to go on. It affects the whole family, it really does.'⁷⁷

Many observers noted that the massive dislocation of male breadwinners and the attendant rise of service employment resulted in gender role reversals as women took up some of the "breadwinning."⁷⁸

Having said that, we must also recognize that the stigma of being unemployed in a society where working presented a source of identity as well as income proved too much for some workers. Many plant shutdown stories are studded with references to marriage break-up, alcohol abuse and suicide. Dorothy Fisher, for instance, testified that her husband, aged 59, attempted suicide three times and stopped eating, before dying of a heart attack six weeks after the Seamen Manufacturing Company abandoned its Detroit

⁷⁷ Claire Sferra quoted in Jane Sferra's MA thesis "A Way of Life Gone Forever."

⁷⁸ Steve Babson, *Working Detroit: The Making of a Union Town* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1984), 218.

workers in 1979. In the end, she used her husband's severance for his funeral.⁷⁹ Used to being breadwinners, many male interviewees still painfully recall how they had to come home to tell their families that they would soon be out of work. A 49-year-old former employee of Republic Steel in Buffalo, New York recounted one such story. After twenty-three years working in the plant, he found himself scrambling to support his wife and four children:

You lose money. You lose a little self-esteem too. Especially when you're not the breadwinner. My wife, as soon as I lost my job, she was working a little piddly part-time job and she started swinging right into full-time. But... there's no money as compared to what we used to get at the plant and benefits.⁸⁰

Like many other older breadwinners with families to support, it took him two years to find a job paying minimum wage. In the interim, his family almost lost their house but survived by spending their life savings. Fifteen years later, he still cannot afford to retire.

Especially egregious was the collapse of previously understood racial boundaries in mill and factory towns that influenced how residents understood and reacted to the closings. In the steel town of Homestead, Pennsylvania, for example, the mill's closing had rendered the convention of "live-and-let-live" -- which legitimated social and occupational separation -- obsolete.⁸¹ The convergence of racial segregation and deindustrialization took a more ominous form in Benton Harbor in Southwestern

⁷⁹ WRL. UAW. Research. Box 34-20, File: Plant Closings, 1975-80," Sheldon Friedman to Marc Stepp. 17 December 1979.

⁸⁰ Anonymous worker (#4-bricklayer) interviewed during the "community interview" arranged by the SOAR chapter in Lackawanna, New York in April 1998. The videotape recording of the community interview is in the possession of the author.

⁸¹ Hinshaw and Modell in *Pennsylvania History*, 19.

Michigan after the closing of auto parts plants:

On Main Street, the wind noses around boarded-up stores and pokes into crumbling houses in old neighborhoods. Industries have crawled out, dragging the tax base behind them. White residents have fled, refusing out of fear and ignorance to live next door to black people. Benton Harbor is a good place to leave.⁸²

Thousands in the overwhelmingly (ninety per cent) African-American town were left without work when the city's major employers closed -- V-M Corporation in 1977, Superior Steel Castings in 1978 and Michigan Standard Alloys in 1979 -- pushing the unemployment rate in Benton Harbor up to thirty per cent and the poverty level even higher. Just across the bridge in St. Joseph, a town with few racial minorities, a very different story emerged. Compared to Benton Harbor's 1983 per capita income of \$4,854 (US), St. Joseph was booming, boasting a per capita income of \$11,722 (US).⁸³ So much so that residents called their sister city "Benton Horror" and named the bridge that connected the two, the "longest bridge on Earth."⁸⁴ Here, deindustrialization had widened an economic, racial and cultural gap.

But in Canada, none of the twenty-six men and women interviewed claimed that the experience of job loss displaced the image they had of themselves as "workers" and "union" supporters. Like many of the Canadians interviewed, Ed Lawrenson struggled to make ends meet after Bendix closed, taking on odd jobs and accepting retraining.

⁸² Nan Schanze, "Living in a Dying City," *The Detroit News Magazine* (Sunday 31 May 1981).

⁸³ Michael A. Lewis, "Scholars tackle Benton Harbor," *Detroit News* (10 July 1985).

⁸⁴ "When Graffiti are a sign of hope," *The Economist* (16 December 1989). Also, see: Jennifer Harsha, "MSU profs to help city reverse trend of decay," *Lansing State Journal* (Sunday 29 September 1985).

Nonetheless, he claimed that job loss had made him "more union now than I have ever been."⁸⁵ Generally, this was not a sentiment shared by displaced workers in the United States. There, disillusionment had contributed to the emergence of new identities based not on rootedness and security as in former times, but on rootlessness and marginality.

Many Canadian interviewees referred to a profound sense of loss or a sinking feeling in the pits of their stomachs. John Livingstone, for example, not only lost his job at True Temper in 1987. At age 54, he lost his accrued holiday time, his wages and benefits as well as his medical plan. To make matters worse, his three sons also lost their jobs in the plant. One of his sons remains embittered by the experience. "He hates the word 'True Temper,'" John noted sadly. Despite finding employment elsewhere, John never made that kind of money again:

I'm here waiting on retirement now. It's a bad thing when you lose your job. As I said you lose your dignity too. I didn't but a lot of people do. It affects them in various ways. As I said it was like starting a new job again. I went to Burlington Die Cast and after being used to six days [paid leave] and twelve statutory holidays which we had in the contract we went back to two weeks again from eight weeks holiday....Now, this year working for the Board [Hamilton Board of Education as an assistant caretaker] I'll get four weeks holiday again. But it's sad. The money still isn't up to what it was at True Temper.⁸⁶

In fact, after twenty-four years service with True Temper, John will receive a paltry pension of \$286 per month when he turns age 65. Had the plant remained open, he would have retired in 1992 with a full pension. Those like Ed Lawrenson who lost their jobs at the height of the recession found it next to impossible to find work: "It was the early '80s. There was no other work out there, man. There was nothing. Everything

⁸⁵ Ed Lawrenson interviewed by Steven High at his St. Clair Shores home in February 1998. The videotaped interview will be donated to the WMA.

⁸⁶ John Livingstone interviewed by Steven High at his Hamilton home in February 1998. The videotaped interview will be donated to the MUA.

was falling apart. Places were closing up left and right."⁸⁷ To add insult to injury, after his records had been misfiled, the staff person behind the desk at the unemployment office did not believe he had worked at Bendix. Ed told her " 'Like, Christ, I've been there ten years.' But she was adamant: 'You've never worked there before.'" He had been erased:

Well I can remember coming home the day that they announced it and I was twenty-seven years old and had a couple of kids. I didn't have a mortgage, I was renting. I wasn't making great money. I tell you I was scared. I was scared boy....Just the thought of even going out and looking for another job was just unbelievably devastating. You kind of have to build yourself up. You get that worthless feeling.

With so many plants closing in the industrial heartland, many families had to contend with more than one job lost. In Windsor, Paul Hansen not only saw his own plant close in 1990, his wife, son, eldest daughter and brother-in-law also lost their jobs in separate plant closings. "It hit home," Paul poignantly observed.⁸⁸

To be sure, the closure of small and medium sized plants had a devastating cumulative effect on cities like Windsor and Hamilton. Yet unlike the shutting down of steel production in Buffalo or the Mahoning Valley, plant shutdowns in Canada were too small in scale to radically alter the industrial landscape as no Canadian integrated steel mills or auto assembly plants closed during this time period. In some senses, the diminished strength of the gales sweeping Canada's industrial heartland allowed workers like John, Ed, and Paul to retain their identification with industry and trade unionism.

In recounting plant shutdowns, interviewees on both side of the Canada-US

⁸⁷ Ed Lawrenson interviewed by Steven High at his home in St. Clair Shores in February 1998. The videotaped interview will be donated to the WMA.

⁸⁸ Paul Hansen interviewed by Steven High at his Windsor home in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WMA.

border tended to resort to two narrative strategies. They distanced themselves from the worst effects of plant closings by pointing to the experience of co-workers who had lost limbs in workplace accidents, older colleagues and those who never recovered from the ordeal. For example, Willy Eady recalled that:

There was one gentleman who lost his hand at Fabricon Products. And I witnessed him losing his hand and when he ran into the office screaming and yelling right down my aisle, past me holding his hand up by the wrist. There was no hand there. It was torn all up; nothing but a piece of skin... The company supplied him with a false hand and they told him he had a lifetime job. He came across my mind after the meeting [that confirmed the plant would not re-open] that particular day. What is he going to do? They guaranteed him a lifetime job but the plant done burn down. He don't have a hand. Who is going to hire him?⁸⁹

Through this query, Willy stressed the tragedy of displacement for co-workers. Typically, interviewees considered themselves lucky in relation to others who experienced the same collective catastrophe.

In second place, interviewees were pleased that attempts to relocate plants proved to be ill-conceived. When Allen Industries shifted its Hamilton operations to Mexico in the early 1980s, David Christopherson recalled that workers took some solace upon hearing that the move proved an "absolute unmitigated disaster. They couldn't get the plant up and running....It came crashing down. To the best of my knowledge, they never were able to turn it into the utopian high productivity, high profit, low wage, no benefits, no union world they tried to create."⁹⁰ Telling a similar story, Ruby Kendrick, who worked at Al-Craft Manufacturing in Troy, Michigan until the company relocated its operations to Florida in June 1970 remarked that: "It only lasted thirteen months and

⁸⁹ Willy Eady interviewed by Steven High at the office of UAW Local 417 in Troy, Michigan on February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WRL.

⁹⁰ David Christopherson interviewed by Steven High at his Hamilton constituency office in February 1998. The videotaped interview will be donated to the MUA.

he [the company president] had to fold up. And then he felt bad about it. I had talked with one of his assistant managers and he said that he'd talked to him and he said it was his worst move to leave Detroit."⁹¹ The supposed failure of plant relocations presented a bittersweet comfort to workers who could, then, cast the blame for job loss squarely on the shoulders of incompetent management. Otherwise workers feared that they caused their own misfortune.

In returning to the plant shutdown stories told by 137 men and women, we put a human face on the devastation wrought by the gales of creative destruction discussed in the previous chapter. Most critically, the subjectivity of an oral history interview provides a place where we can interrogate the meanings derived from job loss. In the telling, interviewees typically described themselves as "steelworkers," "tool and die makers," "coremakers," "shop rats," "workers," "breadwinners," and "union members." All of these points of identification depended on their continued employment and were, as a consequence, undermined when thousands of mills and factories across North America closed between 1969 and 1984. Everybody had to adjust to industrial transformation. They did so, as always, in a variety of ways and with divergent results.⁹² The rich insights contained in these plant shutdown stories demonstrate the fluidity of the boundary between the individual and the social as interviewees grappled

⁹¹ Ruby Kendrick interviewed by Steven High at her home in Southpark, Michigan in February 1998. The videotaped interview will be donated to the WRL. For further information about this plant closure see: WRL. UAW. Local 417, Box 4, Folder 22, 14 June 1971 Musick to Harry Kujawski, International Rep, Region 1B. Harry Kujawski to Ken Morris 27 May 1971; and WRL. UAW. Local 417, Box 4, File 22.

⁹² John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), xvi.

with their "innermost selves."⁹³

In dealing with memories of job loss, we find important similarities and surprising differences in stories emerging on either side of the Canada-United States border. For Americans, the story was one of helplessness and disillusionment in the face of a collective catastrophe communicated in the recurring metaphors of a sinking ship or the floods of Bangladesh. When large plants closed, familiar social boundaries based on class, gender and race dissolved. One might argue that workers like Gabriel Solano inverted old markers of class identity to mean something quite different while reinventing themselves as the uprooted. Canadians, as well, felt deeply threatened by plant shutdowns and bleakly viewed their future economic prospects and present uncertainty. Yet where the identities of many of the Americans were irrevocably altered by the experience of the plant's closing, Canadian workers continued to see themselves as workers and as union members. Hence, the oxidation of hope and self-respect in the United States did not extend into the plant shutdown narratives told by twenty-six Canadian workers.

How do we account for this divergence in the stories told by displaced workers? This difference may, in part, be explained by the fact that mills and factories closing in Canada tended to be smaller. Thus, the larger ramifications that we have seen above in such hard-hit American cities as Youngstown and Detroit did not correspond to those in Windsor or Hamilton. American workers were surrounded by the physical traces of the aftermath of the gales of creative destruction. By the time that I interviewed them, several interviewees in the United States had reconstructed their identities in terms of "I-75 Gypsies," "Flat Rockers," "transplants" and other displaced persons. Having

⁹³ Mary Jo Maynes, *Taking the Hard Road*: 3-4.

traversed old class boundaries, displaced workers appreciated the markers of class identity -- such as the thirty year pin or union ring -- like few others could. Their inversion of these markers to mean something entirely different was one of the distinguishing features of the plant shutdown stories told by Americans in Detroit, Michigan; Youngstown, Ohio and Buffalo, New York. In the following two chapters, we examine collective resistance to plant closings, first in the United States, and then in Canada. In doing so, we will shed light on the differing narrative paths taken in the plant shutdown stories told in Canada and the United States.

SECTION IV: RESISTANCE

CHAPTER SIX

THE LIMITS OF "COMMUNITY": AMERICA RESPONDS TO PLANT CLOSINGS

A siren wailed twice. Two minutes later, the silence was again shattered by two more five second blasts. Another minute passed before the siren sounded the final warning three times in quick succession. A voice then crackled onto the loud speaker for the final countdown before a series of dull thuds spaced at half-second intervals lifted the four century-old blast furnaces slightly before they crashed to the ground. One observer described the spectacle: "As the detonations occurred, each furnace staggered momentarily, then toppled slowly.... As the rumble subsided, the huge reddish-brown cloud -- the residue of scores of millions of tons of iron ore from Minnesota, Labrador, Quebec and Venezuela -- billowed up, threatening to shower the crowd."¹ Thus did a landmark fall to the earth on a Spring day in Youngstown in 1982.

The significance of the event was impossible to miss but each spectator interpreted it differently. Charles D. Horne, a vice president of the US Steel Corporation celebrated the demolition as a "whole new era" of industrial diversification for Youngstown, Ohio. Accordingly, Horne viewed the demolition "in terms of the future, not the past." The proposed industrial park for the site, albeit never built, promised to create new jobs for the hard-hit Mahoning Valley. But Clem Smereck, who had fed the blast furnaces for thirty-two years, could only watch "impassively" as one by one the blast furnaces fell to the earth. For him, it represented the "second saddest day" of his long career as a steelworker; the worst day had been 26 June 1980, the day the mill

¹ George Reiss, "Says Industrial Diversification to Follow Demise of Furnaces," *Youngstown Vindicator* (29 April 1982).

closed.² Smereck found no satisfaction in the demolition: " 'I have a lot of memories, a lot of good friends, in that dust there.'" Smereck and Horne nonetheless agreed that the day's events had irrevocably changed the valley.

The differing perspectives of Horne and Smereck could be seen at the national level in the ideological struggle to define the meaning of plant shutdowns and demolitions. Where conservatives spoke of "post-industrialism," liberals lamented "deindustrialization." Post-industrialism was popularized by American sociologist Daniel Bell in 1973 when he argued that, like the farmer before him, the mill or factory worker was being displaced to the periphery.³ By way of comparison, economists Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison stressed the negative consequences of the deindustrialization of the capital base of local communities.⁴ Subsequent scholarship correspondingly stressed the struggle between global capital and local communities.⁵ The

² Richard Ellers, "Ohio Works furnaces, era are dynamited into dust," *Youngstown Vindicator* (24 April 1982).

³ Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, 15-17.

⁴ Bluestone and Harrison. *The Deindustrialization of America*, x; 19-20. They structured their argument around the conflict between capital and community; between economic space and life space; between abstract and local places. In doing so, Bluestone and Harrison dedicated their book to the movement resisting "the economic destruction of their communities." Indeed, its original title -- commissioned by the "Progressive Alliance" of various liberal organization including the UAW that supported a full-employment bill-- was *Capital and Communities: The Causes and Consequences of Private Disinvestment* (Washington: The Progressive Alliance, 1980).

⁵ Kenneth A. Root, *Perspectives for Communities and Organizations on Plant Closings and Job Dislocations* (Ames, Iowa: North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, 1979), 1; Gregory D. Squires, *Capital and Communities in Black and White: The Intersection of Race, Class and Uneven Development* (Albany: State University New York Press, 1994); John C. Raines, Lenora E. Berson and David Mcl.Grace, eds. *Community and Capital in Conflict: Plant Closings and Job Losses*

key difference between the two was whether, like Horne, the demolition of the blast furnaces was interpreted as a brave step forward into a post-industrial future, or, like Smereck, as an end of a way of life.

Regardless, the falling blast furnaces became one of the most powerful visual images to come out of the faltering heartland.⁶ Repeated images of the demolition on television, in newspapers, or in documentary films reinforced the message that things would never be the same.⁷ Orderly demolitions like the one in Youngstown were, therefore, choreographed to engineer consent and legitimate a redefinition of place and work. By erasing the old industrial landscape, management wanted to send a clear message to area residents that they should abandon their hopes for a revitalized "Steel Valley."

Yet there were alternative images available for those wishing to resist the sense of inevitability surrounding plant shutdowns. Nearly four months after the four blast furnaces fell to the earth in Youngstown, US Steel brought VIP's and the curious together again for another grand spectacle. But this time, the massive, one-quarter mile long, open hearth building defied the wreckers. Instead, the building had to be smashed down "bit by bit." The Youngstown *Vindicator's* George Reiss and many former steelworkers

(Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982).

⁶ There was naturally a close relationship between ideology and iconography: "our icons are concrete symbols of our abstract ideological values." See: Bruce W. Hawkins, "The Social Dimension of a Cognitive Grammar," in Wolf-Andreas Liebert, Gisela Redeker and Linda Waugh, eds. *Discourse and Perspective in Cognitive Linguistics* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1997), 35.

⁷ This photograph appeared on the cover of Terry F. Buss and F. Stevens Redburn, *Shutdown at Youngstown: Public Policy for Mass Unemployment* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983). and Gilda Haas and Plant Closures Project, *Plant Closures: Myths, Realities and Responses* (Boston: South End Press, 1985).

exulted when such a well-known landmark could not be easily erased:

At 2:45 pm Wednesday, with observers stationed at safe spots, the alligator was to tug at a cable attached to a beam at the north end of the building. With a ripple effect, the roof, beginning at the north end, was to come tumbling down in an enormous cloud of dust....But nothing happened....At 3:27 pm, the 'gator tugged again....But only a single bay came down. After repeated efforts to bring the whole roof crashing down, the wrecking crews finally gave up.

As we will see, the story of this "staunch old structure" presents us with a metaphor of Youngstown's own defiance.

This chapter examines the nature of collective resistance to plant shutdowns in the United States. It focuses exclusively on the American response because it differed so dramatically from the nationalist response in Canada discussed in the following chapter. The first section of this chapter investigates the evolution of legislative, legal and contractual constraints on worker resistance to plant shutdowns. This general discussion will be followed by two case studies that reveal how the concept and discourse of "community" was used as a rhetorical weapon against and for labour in Dayton and Youngstown, Ohio. Deindustrialization was typically cast as a struggle between "capital and community."⁸ In a round table discussion on deindustrialization published in *Pennsylvania History*, participant-observer Mark McColloch thus argued that the subdued reaction of workers stemmed from "not enough" community identity.⁹ This summoning of "community lost" proved to be a familiar refrain among American

⁸ John A. Jakle and David Wilson. *Derelict Landscapes: The Wasting of America's Built Environment* (Savage, Maryland: Rocoman and Littlefield Publishers, 1992), 78.

⁹ Paul Clark et al, "Deindustrialization: A Panel Discussion," *Pennsylvania History* 58, 3 (1991), 197.

academics studying the plant shutdown phenomenon.¹⁰ Yet the anti-shutdown movement invoked a notion of "community" very much tied to place in its efforts to pry open the legal framework that defined the shutting of mills and factories as a contractual matter limited to employers and employee representatives. By looking at the "Frigidaire situation" and the "Youngstown Story," we see that community was a more powerful rhetorical weapon in the hands of capital than it was for workers and for the residents of industrial towns and cities like Youngstown.

While rank and file insurgents in the union movement joined with local ecumenical coalitions and public interest groups in the name of defending "community" against "capital" disinvestment, union leaders stressed American nationalism in their contention that imports were largely to blame for industrial retrenchment. Unlike the situation in Canada, where nationalism had been embraced by the political left, American nationalism had been tarnished by the Vietnam War and McCarthyism, making it unattractive as a symbolic weapon to fight plant shutdowns. Needing a rhetorical lever to politicize what was generally considered to be a private contractual matter between an employer and his or her employees, the anti-shutdown movement fell upon "community." Despite the best efforts of Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison to nationalize this notion of community, it remained firmly tied to place. Hence, its usage acted to confirm state and regional difference and did nothing to dampen the hyper-competitive atmosphere that existed between the fifty states, within the United States. The chapter will show the relationship between the struggle to define and use community and the miserable failure of the anti-shutdown movement in the United States during the 1970s and early 1980s.

¹⁰ See, for example, Gregory Pappas, *The Magic City*, 188.

Illustration 5: "Community's loss is corporation's profit," Fred Wright

Community's loss is Corporation's profit



Source: University of Pittsburgh Archives. UE. Fred Wright Cartoon Collection

Between Two Parties: The Invention of Due Process

Although the right of the employer to terminate individuals at-will has been constrained by labour law and the Equal Rights (14th) Amendment, managerial prerogative has remained almost intact in matters of collective discharge. In fact, the at-will doctrine, which has framed legal decisions in the United States, has allowed employers to terminate without notice or justification. Pointing to the fact that plant closings were a matter of mandatory collective bargaining, business spokespersons claimed that plant shutdowns were a contractual matter between themselves and their employees. To adopt legislation, then, was to interfere with free collective bargaining and undermine "due process." In turning a familiar union position against working people, business spokespersons proved highly successful. Politically, the resulting procedural due process allowed most Americans to believe that plant closings were carried out fairly.¹¹ As corporate attorney Richard Van M. Krotseng observed, as long as the company successfully answered the following three questions they would not get into trouble: "Can it legally terminate its operations at the closing site? What are the contractual costs associated with the closing? How should the closing be handled?"¹²

¹¹ Due process is a concept laden with legal and cultural meaning. According to Frederick F. Schauer, on the one hand due process originated with the English idea of "natural justice" as articulated in the Magna Charta. Namely, the right to be heard and tried fairly. The American conception of "procedural due process," on the other hand, refers to the judicial power to review the fairness of state action. Frederick F. Schauer, "English Natural Justice and American Due Process: An Analytical Comparison," in Sidney R. Peck, ed. *Due Process: Introductory Material for a Seminar on Due Process* (Toronto: Osgoode Hall Law School, 1994), B4. See also: William D. Preston Jr. and Gerson B. Mehlman, "The Due Process Clause as a Limitation on the Reach of State Legislation: An Historical and Analytical Examination of Substantive due process," 8 *Baltimore Law Review* 1 (1978).

¹² Richard Van M. Krotseng, "Judicial and Arbitral Resolution of Contractual Plant Closing Issues," *Labor Law Journal* 35, 7 (1984), 392-93.

Otherwise, at the outset of the 1969 recession, there were few legal constraints on employers wishing to close or relocate an industrial enterprise.

Throughout the boom years after the Second World War, it was commonly understood that displaced workers could always find employment elsewhere. Unemployment insurance would tide them over as they adjusted to temporary job loss and found another employer. But beginning in the 1960s, this supposition began to breakdown as trade liberalization brought with it massive dislocation that often involved older workers with few other job prospects. In practice, the Trade Adjustments Act (TAA), inaugurated in 1963 to cushion the effects of trade liberalization after the Kennedy Round of the General Agreement in Trade and Tariffs (GATT) negotiations, reinforced managerial prerogative to close plants and terminate workers at will. Once workers began to be awarded compensation in 1969, it gave unions a powerful incentive to blame plant shutdowns on imports. To suggest otherwise would have undermined their bid to win extra benefits for displaced members. Under the TAA, Meyer Bernstein, a senior representative of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA), coached locals on how to put together a convincing package to back their claims.¹³ By relying on these techniques, Youngstown Sheet and Tube workers were "certified" by the government for extra assistance even though oral history interviews clearly indicate that the workers themselves blamed the 1969 merger with the Lykes steamship conglomerate for their job loss.¹⁴ In consequence, debates surrounding plant shutdowns were channelled into a

¹³ Penn State University Archives. USWA. Legislative Department. Box 46, File 10 TAA-Detroit Steel, Portsmouth Division Case (1969-71). August 14, 1970 Meyer Bernstein to Clinton Palt of New Boston.

¹⁴ Lawrence E. Rothstein, *Plant Closings: Power, Politics and Workers* (London: Auburn House Publishing Co., 1986), 17-18.

critique of imports, rather than of American corporations and capital.

Advocates of a more aggressive government role in regulating plant shutdowns tried unsuccessfully to push legislation requiring compensation to displaced workers and local communities through the United States Congress for reasons other than trade. From 1974 to 1984, a bill was introduced each year to ensure workers and their communities had advance warning, severance pay, assistance in job placement and short-term compensation for lost tax revenue.¹⁵ None of these bills made it out of committee until a scaled-back version was introduced in 1985. That bill, shorn of any reference to severance pay, transfer rights, community compensation and employee ownership was narrowly defeated, 208 to 203, on the floor of the House of Representatives.¹⁶ In the end, federal politicians refused to regulate plant shutdowns until the Worker Adjustment and Notification Act (WARN) passed in 1988.¹⁷

Prior to 1988, the only legislative "victory" for the anti-shutdown movement came with the adoption of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) in 1974. Private pensions had become a matter of national concern ever since displaced workers at Studebaker's plant in South Bend, Indiana received only fourteen cents on the

¹⁵ William D. Ford, "Coping with Plant Closings," *Labor Law Journal* 36, 6 (1985), 323-26.

¹⁶ John T. Addison and Pedro Portugal, "Advance Notice," in John T. Addison, ed. *Job Displacement: Consequences and Implications for Policy* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 203.

¹⁷ Linda D. McGill, "State Laws Extend Warn Provisions," *Employment Relations Today* 18, 2 (1991), 253. The WARN Act of 1988 made prenotification of mass terminations of over five hundred workers mandatory in the United States and created labour-management committees modelled on the Canadian experiment of 1963.

dollar when their plant shut down.¹⁸ In the 1970s, the United Steelworkers of America took the lead in demanding regulation of private pensions. Steelworkers urged the federal government to insure adequate funding, lower the vesting rights to increase eligibility and provide for a re-insurance scheme to further protect workers.¹⁹ The House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly for ERISA, 375 to 4. But the new Act resulted in the over-funding of many private pension plans. As a result, it actually encouraged companies to close plants in the early 1980s in order to terminate pension plans. A congressional committee discovered that 114 plans, with surpluses exceeding one million dollars each, were terminated in 1980-82.²⁰ By 1988, 1,600 pension plans had been terminated "in order to recoup overfunded plan assets," amounting to \$18 billion (US).²¹ Thus, this major legislative "victory" for workers facing plant

¹⁸ Penn State University Archives. USWA Records. Legislative Department. Box 52, Pensions, File 12 PR. AFL-CIO Meeting (1975). "Some Historical Notes Regarding Pensions," nd.

¹⁹ Penn State University Archives. USWA Records. Legislative Department. Box 49, File 3, August 17, 1971, I.W. Abel to all USWA District Directors, Staff Representatives and Local Union Secretaries. Throughout the campaign, the AFL-CIO, the major union central in the United States, was immobilized by the opposition of the teamsters as well as the clothing and building trades, all of whom relied on multi-employer plans and therefore did not want to pay higher pension contributions. College Park. Penn State University Archives. United Steelworkers of America Records. Legislative Department, Box 50, File 5 Pension Reform-General. 12 February 1974, 1974.

²⁰ Library of Congress. *Pension Asset Raids*. Hearing Before the Select Committee on Aging. House of Representatives. 98 th Congress, 1st Session. September 28, 1983 (Washington: 1984). The 114 plan terminations occurred between 1 January 1980 and 1 August 1983.

²¹ *Corporate Raiding of Worker Pension Plans*. Hearing Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operation. House of Representatives. 100th Congress, 2nd session, 28 September 1988. Chairman Tom Lantos.

closings proved to be a mixed blessing at best.

Advocates of plant shutdown legislation fared little better at the state level. In fact, only a handful of the estimated 125 plant closing bills introduced in state legislatures saw the light of day.²² Between 1974 and 1988, many of these bills featured "community" in their titles. The Ohio Public Interest Campaign, for example, lobbied unsuccessfully in 1977 for the passing of the "Community Readjustment Bill." By evoking community, the Ohio Public Interest Campaign wanted to situate the plant shutdown issue in a context other than labour law. Prior to 1988, only three state legislatures had introduced mandatory advance notice of shutdowns or severance pay: Maine (1971), Wisconsin (1975), and Hawaii (1987). The State of Maine that had adopted a thirty day pre-notification period for all lay-offs of more than 100 workers, dropped this requirement in 1973, due to business pressure. In its place, Maine mandated severance pay to all dislocated employees with more than five years seniority.²³ Similarly, Wisconsin's legislation was limited to a thirty day notice period. In addition to these "mandatory" statutory regulations, Massachusetts, Maryland and Michigan legislated indirect programs to encourage, rather than compel, businesses to

²² Ronald G. Ehrenberg and George H. Jacobson, "Advance Notification of Plant Closings: Does it Matter?," *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society* 28, 1 (Winter 1989), 60. Also, see: Kenneth A. Kovach and Peter E. Millspaugh, "The Plant Closing Issue Arrives at the Bargaining Table," *Journal of Labor Research* 4, 4 (Fall 1983), 370. See, for example, Edward Kelly, "Plant Closings Legislation: The Ohio Experience," in William Schweke, ed. *Plant Closings: Issues, Politics and Legislation* (Boston: Conference on Alternative State and Local Policies, 1980).

²³ Lawrence E. Rothstein. *Plant Closings: Power, Politics and Workers* (London: Auburn House Publishing Company, 1986), 26-7. Maine's legislation was amended again in 1975, to ensure that the state Bureau of Labor was notified of mass terminations sixty days in advance. Not until 1981 did the state require companies to notify their employees of an impending plant closing.

provide advance warning of layoff and shutdown. If a company did not comply, displaced workers in Massachusetts could draw state funded supplemental unemployment benefits for a ninety day period.²⁴

Nonetheless, the existence of plant shutdown legislation did not mean that advance notice of layoffs was always given. In practice, neither Wisconsin nor Maine tended to enforce the legislation.²⁵ For example, a study by the Legislative Audit Bureau found that only twenty-one of 255 Wisconsin businesses gave advance warning of their decision to close a plant between January 1985 and September 1987. One government source estimated that only twenty-seven per cent of Maine and ten per cent of Wisconsin companies actually gave the legally required notice to their employees.²⁶ Enforcement of Maine's severance pay requirements reached fifty-six per cent, in large part, because of the vigilance of the workers themselves: most of the payments occurred "after successful litigation by the state or by individual claimants."²⁷ In general, companies did not feel compelled to provide notice.

²⁴ Roger Kerson and Greg LeRoy, *State and Local Initiatives on Development Subsidies and Plant Closings* (Chicago: Federation for Industrial Retention and Renewal, 1989), 25. The state of Connecticut also required in 1983 that non-bankrupt firms maintain employee health insurance benefits for a 120 day period; whereas Rhode Island required that laid-off employees be paid wages owing within 24 hours.

²⁵ Michael Shippini, "Creative Alternatives to Plant Closings: the Massachusetts Experience," *Labor Law Journal* 38, 8 (1987), 462.

²⁶ Nancy R. Folbre, Julia L. Leighton and Melissa R. Roderick, "Plant Closings and their Regulation in Maine, 1971-1982," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 37, 2 (January 1984), 190.

²⁷ Kerson and LeRoy, *State and Local Initiatives on Development Subsidies and Plant Closings*, 25.

In the hyper-competitive atmosphere of the 1970s and early 1980s, state governments feared that shutdown legislation or its enforcement would hasten the departure of capital. This is not to say that they lacked sympathy for displaced workers. Rather, they lacked the political will to act alone. Companies used this fear to wring tax concessions and state subsidies. In this atmosphere, politicians of all political stripes lived in mortal fear of doing anything to undermine their state's "business climate."²⁸ Accordingly, Michigan Director of Commerce, Norton L. Berman, advised the Governor in December 1981 that General Electric had given "us the ultimate compliment" by saying "Michigan has gone Southern."²⁹ Attempts to regulate plant shutdowns at the state level thus crashed on the rocks of inter-state competition.

Those state AFL-CIOs involved in efforts to pass legislation tended to be in the Northeast or Industrial Midwest.³⁰ Typically, legislative action originated in response to a large plant closing. For example, legislating on shutdowns was "political poison" in Montana until Anaconda Ltd closed its huge smelter and refinery operations in the late 1970s, laying off fifteen hundred workers. Thereafter, calls for regulation had a new credibility.

²⁸ Barry Rohan, "Dodge Main shutdowns spurs plant-closing legislation," *Detroit Free Press* (24 June 1979)

²⁹ SAM. RG 86-51. Box 9, File 3: SF-Economic Development, 1981-82. Norton L. Berman, Director of the Department of Commerce to Governor William G. Milliken. 22 December 1981.

³⁰ Although at least thirteen state AFL-CIO union centrals were involved in plant closing legislation by 1981 (Alabama, Iowa, Maine, Michigan, Mississauga, Montana, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Wisconsin and Washington), twenty others were not (Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Hawaii, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, South Carolina and Oklahoma).

Yet public support for plant shutdown legislation was deemed minimal or non-existent in every state except Iowa, New York and Ohio. To ascertain the likelihood of legislative action, United Rubber Workers' Director of Research Carl Dimengo sent out a series of questionnaires in March 1981 to lawmakers and union affiliates. The responses revealed deep pessimism among advocates of legislation. Eight state legislators who had co-sponsored a previous attempt to legislate plant shutdowns in Ohio responded to the questionnaire. They pointed to the "unified" and "vehement" opposition of manufacturers in the state and acknowledged that the opponents of the bill "did a better job" explaining their position to the public.³¹ Opposition hinged on the fear that passing the bill would irrevocably harm Ohio's "Business Climate" and result in additional plant shutdowns. Not surprisingly, then, proponents of the bill were unable to create a ground swell of public support. Even in "post-industrial" Youngstown, the union movement could claim only "some" support for legislation.³² Asked if they intended to co-sponsor another bill, five of the eight state legislators declined, stating that such an effort was doomed to fail.

Frustrated by the inaction of state governments, several municipal governments tried to take matters into their own hands by adopting city ordinances requiring pre-notification of mass layoffs or plant shutdowns. Pittsburgh City Council, politicized by the fight to keep the Nabisco plant open, over-rode the Mayor's veto in 1983 to adopt a three-month minimum pre-notification period for plant shutdowns. According to John

³¹ United in their opposition were the Ohio Manufacturers' Association, Ohio Council of Retail Merchants, the Chamber of Commerce, the Ohio Department of Economic and Community Development, and the Cleveland Growth Association.

³² University of Akron Archives. URW. Research. File: Plant Closures or Permanent Curtailments, 1981-82. Carl Dimengo. 20 March 1981

Portz, the ordinance "also called for the establishment of a city office to investigate possible closings and develop economic alternatives."³³ The Pittsburgh ordinance, however, was quashed as *ultra vires* of the state's home rule law by the District Court in 1984 and subsequently by the Court of Common Pleas in *Smaller Manufacturers v. Pittsburgh*.³⁴ At about the same time, the City of Vacaville, California required all companies locating in its redevelopment area to offer one year's advance notice and to bargain with their unions over the decision to close. The first city to regulate plant closures, Philadelphia empowered the courts after 1982 to force a company to remain open for the sixty day notice period. This law, clearly *ultra vires*, does not appear to have been enforced. Lacking political strength, it was little wonder that trade unionists increasingly turned to labour law and collective bargaining in order to provide a measure of job security for their members.

In the words of attorney Peter Pitegoff, the National Labor Relations Act "provided the basis for a variety of plant closing responses." It was common practice for unions to file a complaint to the NLRB once a plant shutdown had been announced. These complaints usually involved two clauses of the NLRA: Section 8 (a) (3) which prohibited the employer from discriminating against an employee on the basis of union membership and, Section 8 (a) (5) which required both parties to bargain over matters involving "wages, hour, and other terms and conditions." Legal challenges to plant closings, however, proved a disappointment for the labour movement even in those cases when judges were openly sympathetic to the workers' plight. In the case of *Local*

³³ John Portz. *The Politics of Plant Closings* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 165-66.

³⁴ James F. Fitzpatrick, ed. *WARN Act and State Plant-Closing Handbook* (Washington: Bureau of National Affairs, 1993), no page number.

1330 *USWA versus US Steel Corp*, for example, the judge ruled in 1980 that:

'[t]his Court has spent many hours searching for a way to cut to the heart of the economic reality-that obsolescence market forces demand the close of the Mahoning Valley plants, and yet the lives of 3,500 workers and their families and the supporting Youngstown community cannot be dismissed as inconsequential. United States Steel should not be permitted to leave the Youngstown area devastated after drawing from the lifeblood of the community for so many years. Unfortunately, the mechanism to reach this ideal settlement...is not now in existence in the code of laws of our nation.'³⁵

An "ideal settlement" was made even more remote the following year when the Supreme Court ruled in *First National Maintenance* that " 'an employer's decision to close down part of its business for economic reasons...was not a mandatory subject of bargaining.'"³⁶ This decision effectively limited the unions' bargaining power to negotiating the effects of plant shutdowns. In 1984, the *Milwaukee Springs Division* decision further eroded union influence, granting employers, eager to avoid high labour costs, the right to relocate work to non-union facilities in mid-contract.

Yet close-out agreements proved to be exercises in frustration for displaced union members and their representatives. Without any bargaining power to speak of, workers won little above and beyond what was guaranteed in their collective agreements. For a contractual promise not to interfere with the close-down of the plant, they might

³⁵ Peter Pitegoff. *Plant Closings: Legal Remedies When Jobs Disappear* (Sommerville, Mass.: Industrial Cooperative Association, 1981), no page number. (492 DC Ohio, 1980, 90, LC TT 12,445). The union asked the court to prevent US Steel from removing machinery from the Youngstown plant until such time that the community could buy the mill. Peter Pitegoff was impressed by this so-called "creative litigation" because the union used the legal concept of "promissory estoppel" and claimed that US Steel was in breach of federal anti-trust law due to its refusal to sell the plant.

³⁶ This decision overturned the 1965 *Textile Workers Union of America v. Darlington Manufacturing Co.* that held that an employer's anti-union animus only counted if it chilled labour relations in another location. In other words, an employer's actions could only be deemed an unfair labour practice if the shutdown was partial.

receive nominal extensions of health and life insurance and pension guarantees. For her part, Detroit union activist Bernice Adams recalled that "you don't have much leverage. You take what they're going to give you."³⁷ Another trade unionist with considerable experience negotiating plant closing agreements for the United Auto Workers, Marilyn McCormack added "you're begging" because "you have nothing" in the contract to compel an employer to compensate workers for jobs lost.³⁸ These agreements were typically negotiated in the immediate aftermath of the plant shut down announcement. Yet it is important to note that there was no obligation that the company come to an agreement with their union -- only that they bargain in good faith. Afraid that public protests against shutdowns would jeopardize even these small tokens of corporate goodwill, unions tended to keep quiet about mill or factory closings.

Having been defeated in the political arena, the union movement resorted to an over-riding legalistic response. The United Auto Workers, for example, designated its legal department as "primary contact" for union locals going through a plant shutdown. Most notably, the legislative branch of the UAW, responsible for coordinating the union's political action, did not have a role to play.³⁹ Only as a last resort did the UAW

³⁷ Bernice Adams interviewed by Steven High at the UAW Local 417 office in Troy, Michigan in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WRL.

³⁸ Marilyn McCormack interviewed by Steven High at the office of UAW Local 417 in Troy, Michigan in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WRL.

³⁹ WRL. UAW. Community Services Department. Box 9, File 5: Plant Closings. General Information, January 1980-January 1991. Douglas Fraser, President to Department Heads and International Representatives. 1 May 1981. Also see: WRL. UAW. Community Services Department. Box 9, File 6: Plant Closings, General Information, January 1980-January 1991. UAW Plant Closing Manual (For Confidential Use of UAW International Representatives). February 1981. The plant closing manual directed locals to negotiate the decision to close with the company before moving to the effects of the decision. If the company refused to furnish responses to union questions,

advise local unions faced with a shutdown to contact government agencies for adjustment assistance, enlist community support, lay a charge of (age, race, sex) discrimination and, above all, "Be Creative." An effective union negotiator in the rough and tumble world of the 1980s had to be a "legal innovator" and a "bargaining tactician."⁴⁰ Yet unless the existing agreement with the union provided for severance pay, prenotification, preferred hiring rights, early retirement or health care extension, even the most creative and innovative union negotiator had little bargaining power. In good times, workers wanted wages and benefits. In bad times, it was often too late to negotiate a job security provision or it came at the price of major wage and benefits concessions.

The anti-shutdown movement's failure to convince politicians to intervene, coupled with the string of unfavourable court decisions, forced unions into concession bargaining across the United States. It is worth emphasizing that the 1979 Chrysler bailout acted as the catalyst. It set a pattern duplicated by other "smokestack" industries such as steel and rubber as well as by General Motors and Ford and their auto parts suppliers. Arguably, the mainstream of the union movement accepted the "logic" that the "misfortunes of US industry" were caused by high wages.⁴¹ American collective agreements, in 1980, included pre-notification clauses in only ten per cent of cases

international representatives were told to file an unfair labour practice charge with the National Labour Relations Board: "The charge can strengthen the union's bargaining position in negotiating shutdown benefits."

⁴⁰ Leonard Page and Judith Scott (UAW Legal Department) *The Law of Plant Shutdowns* (March 1981).

⁴¹ Robert Saute, "The Fightback Against 'Givebacks,' *Guardian* (16 March 1983).

(representing twenty per cent of unionized workers), preferred hiring in eleven per cent of cases (twenty-six per cent), and severance pay in thirty-four per cent of cases (thirty-nine per cent).⁴² This was somewhat higher than the corresponding figures for 1972.⁴³ Over the next four years, however, all of the big industrial unions negotiated severance pay, supplemental unemployment insurance and transfer rights during concession bargaining. In a study of 203 concessionary agreements, the Bureau of National Affairs found that a quarter of these agreements included explicit job guarantees. William D. Torrence, likewise, argued that unions made real inroads into the job security issue. Having analyzed 400 collective agreements, reached in 1979, 1983 and 1985 respectively, Torrence demonstrated that the number of contracts that included transfer rights, relocation costs, and pre-notification had doubled (52 to 104) and the number of collective agreements with severance clauses had increased seven-fold (7 to 52).⁴⁴ In any case, only twenty percent of companies gave notice of more than thirty days and this was due, in large part, to existing collective agreements. This trend is confirmed by a 1983-84 survey of business executives, the first of its kind, that found that the median notice given of layoff was only seven days. One-third of employers

⁴² John T. Addison, "Job Security in the United States: Law, Collective Bargaining, Policy and Practice," *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 24, 3 (1986), 399. "Historically...unions have sought to establish job rights through a seniority system underwritten by severance payments. In recent years, this passive approach to job security has changed. Plant closing issues have gained in importance and unions have often been granted decision bargaining rights."

⁴³ United States. Department of Labor. *Major Collective Agreements: Layoff, Recall and Worksharing Procedures* (Washington, 1972). This study of 1300 major agreements found that 9.58 per cent of contracts had pre-notification clauses in 1972.

⁴⁴ William D. Torrence, "Plant Closing and Advance Notice: Another Look at the Numbers," *Labor Law Journal* 37, 8 (August 1986), 462-3.

gave no notice whatsoever.

By the early 1980s, the fear of job loss had primed the membership of the big industrial unions for concessions. Indeed, plant closings hung over their heads like a "Damocles Sword."⁴⁵ After two tentative concession agreements with the big steel companies were defeated, an embarrassed USWA leadership amended its ratification procedure to limit voting eligibility, clearing the way for final approval of a nine percent roll-back in wages.⁴⁶ However, we should not jump to the conclusion that ordinary union members were more willing to resist concessions than their leadership.⁴⁷ For one thing, local union minutebooks revealed a great deal of resignation in the face of plant shutdowns at the local level.⁴⁸ Locals formed in the heady days of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC) died with a whimper. As the recording secretary of Local 4384 in Monessen, Pennsylvania noted on 20 January 1972,

⁴⁵ Jeff Stansbury, "Putting the Brakes on a Runaway Shop," *Solidarity* (February 1983). If previous administrations were unsympathetic to the plight of displaced workers and their unions, the administration of Ronald Reagan was outright hostile. Even more than the Chrysler bailout concessions, the crushing of the PATCO air controllers' strike put trade unions in the United States on the defensive.

⁴⁶ *Time Magazine* (24 January 1983), 58-59.

⁴⁷ Several scholars have pointed to the de-radicalization of the union movement during the anti-communist purges of the Cold War. See: Scott D. Camp, *Worker Response to Plant Closings: Steelworkers in Johnstown and Youngstown* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1995) and Ronald L. Filipelli and Mark McCulloch, *Cold War in the Working Class: The Rise and Decline of the United Electrical Workers* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 1.

⁴⁸ Typically, the last membership meetings dealt exclusively with the mechanics of job loss: severance pay, pension eligibility, health and life insurance extension and the liquidation of union assets. There was no defiance. Penn State University Archives. USWA Archives. Cancelled Local Unions. District 13, Box 6, Local 4384, Monessen, PA. Minutebook, 1950-1972.

"people are leaving now."

In sum, plant closing agreements were treated like any other collective agreement. Typically, international unions considered shutdowns a local responsibility. One senior union official recalled that: "In all my experience dealing with plant closings and economic dislocation in my state, I have never had an occasion to involve any international. Most of our involvement comes after the fact, after the closing with local unions if applicable."⁴⁹ Moreover, unions generally responded to plant shutdowns in a highly bureaucratic fashion. In the United Steelworkers, for example, once a plant shutdown had been announced, the international headquarters of the union placed the local union into trusteeship to protect union funds. The trustee, usually the local's business agent, then proceeded to liquidate local property and send the proceeds to the Union's international headquarters.

Even though there were undoubtedly valid reasons for winding up local business in an orderly manner, the rapid disappearance of the union embittered many workers, with far-reaching consequences for trade unionism. According to one UAW official:

Where there is no hall available to the members of the closed plant, very little of the foregoing is available and separation and isolation quickly develops. It's in situations like these that workers end up with the view that the Union has done nothing for them, or has looked after itself rather than after the members.⁵⁰

Meagre close-out agreements and a "business as usual" attitude by union bureaucrats contributed to member disillusionment with trade unions. From 1967 to 1985, the

⁴⁹ University of Akron Archives. URW. Box 2, File: Plant Closing or Permanent Curtailment, 1979-1980. Leona Sibelman, Industrial Relations Specialist and Elaine Davis, Southeastern Regional Representative to Steve Clem, Director of Research, URW. 17 September 1986.

⁵⁰ WRL. UAW. Region 1. Box 221, File 1: Plant Closings. John Fillion to Owen Beeber. 30 June 1983.

United Auto Workers, for example, lost 32.6 per cent of its overall membership (489,000 members), while the United Steelworkers of America lost 40.6 per cent (392,000) of its membership.⁵¹

Table 9: Discontinued Local Unions and Displaced Members in North America, United Steelworkers of America⁵²

Dates	Discontinued Locals	Displaced Members
1979-1982	448	60,895
1983	649	44,273
TOTAL	1,097	105,168

In the wake of the closing of mills and factories across the industrial heartland, thousands of local unions were declared "defunct" or "cancelled," with local union halls sold and office equipment auctioned to the highest bidder. In table nine, we see that hundreds of steelworker locals folded between 1979 and 1983. Over one hundred thousand steelworkers had been thrown out of work. Other union locals merged in order to stave off extinction. In Detroit, for instance, inner-city amalgamated locals like UAW Local 205 in River Rouge (organized in 1937) merged with their suburban counterparts -- a change that union members such as Bernice Adams recalled as

⁵¹ Kim Moody. *An Injury to All: The Decline of American Unionism* (New York: Verso, 1988), 4.

⁵² *Hearing on Plant Closing Legislation*. Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Employment Opportunities of the Committee on Education and Labor. House of Representatives. 98th Congress. Second Session. Washington, 1984.

difficult: "Its kind of hard to let that heritage go."⁵³ Bernice noted that the union had no choice but to follow relocating industries to the northern suburbs. In the Mahoning Valley, where USWA District 26 had once represented tens of thousands of steelworkers, an entire administrative district was erased in 1980 and divvied up between its neighbours. Opposition was swift: Critics circulated flyers entitled "First They Closed the Plant-We Lost Our Jobs! Now They Are Abolishing Our District-We Are Losing Our Union!"⁵⁴ Indeed, the "Committee to Preserve District 26" felt they were undergoing a "Union shutdown." The unsympathetic attitude taken by their union leadership was symbolized, for many, in the closure of local union halls and the cancellation of local union charters.

By 1983, field organizers in the United Auto Workers were telling their superiors that former members of the UAW who had undergone plant shutdowns in Michigan, and who now worked in non-union shops, were among the most resistant to signing a union card.⁵⁵ Union organizers repeatedly heard complaints about union inaction the "last-time" these workers had been employed in an organized plant. At around the same time, steelworkers warned their union leadership that laid-off members who lost their union recognition after one year, even though their recall rights with Bethlehem Steel remained active, naturally came to the conclusion that the company

⁵³ Interview with Bernice Adams at the office of UAW Local 417 in Troy, Michigan conducted by Steven High in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WRL.

⁵⁴ Youngstown Historical Centre of Industry and Labour (YHCIL). Gerald Dickey Collection. Box 1, File: USWA Flyers. Leaflet from the "Committee to Preserve D. 26."

⁵⁵ WRL. UAW. Region 1. Box 221, File 1: Plant Closings. 27 June 1983.

"cares more about them" than their union.⁵⁶ In the United States, at least, the union movement's bureaucratic handling of plant closings disillusioned members who expected their union to fight for them. Deserted by federal and state agencies and confronted with the unions' failure to negotiate job security, workers turned to their own communities for support. In the face of legislative, legal and contractual constraints on worker resistance to plant shutdowns, the anti-shutdown movement went local. This chapter will now turn to two case studies that explore the political power of the "community" discourse.

"The Frigidaire Situation": Capital's Manipulation of "Dayton's Pride"

One of the clearest examples of corporate manipulation of "community" identification related to Frigidaire's behind-the-scenes effort to wring concessions from the union at its "home" plant in Dayton, Ohio in 1971.⁵⁷ It set a trend which conditioned management-labour relations over the 1970-1980s. Clearly, the company was motivated by Frigidaire's deteriorating proportion of the home-appliance market, exacerbated by the economic downturn of 1969-1970, and by the wages paid to its Dayton employees, the highest in the industry. To push union members into voting to re-open their collective agreement, signed only six months previously, Frigidaire director of public relations, Rex Smith, had unnamed sources spread the rumour that the

⁵⁶ Proceedings. USWA 21st Constitutional Convention. 20-24 September 1982. Atlantic City, New Jersey., 75. Delegate Rich (LU 6787, District 31).

⁵⁷ The Dayton plant had been the base of operations for the company since 1921. By 1970, Frigidaire employed seventeen thousand people in the Dayton area and paid \$5,554,000 in local taxes that year. General Motors' Institute (GMI) Archives. Frigidaire Collection. Box 68, File 79-10.8-23. Rex Smith to V.E. Lewis, Industrial Relations Manager.

plant would close and urged the formation of the "Save Our Frigidaire for the Community Committee" by the Chamber of Commerce, to whip up anti-union sentiment in the area.

In his "plan of action," Rex Smith saw the "Community Committee" placing newspaper advertisements, distributing leaflets at the plant's gate and even overseeing a secret ballot among employees:

'Save Frigidaire Committee' letter and questionnaire to hourly employees, urging a vote to mandate union leadership to expand the offer. This could be presented to the community very dramatically with Frank Anger conducting a press conference, involving all media. Would have blowup of newspaper ad, announcing the membership letter and questionnaire, advising the ad would appear in next day's Journal and News. Also announce that letters and questionnaires will be handed out at factory gates to union membership. Have self-address envelope forwarded to a local accounting firm so that the balloting can be secret. Return ballot within five days.⁵⁸

Next, he planned to "leak a story" that White Consolidated would purchase the Frigidaire name. Adding, "we would give a 'no comment' when queried to further amplify the issue. Infer layoffs bound to follow." Clearly, the game plan involved the manipulation of place-attachment by circulating rumours and letting the local committee generate an atmosphere of urgency. The "Frigidaire situation," thus, will show that capital tried to use the symbolic power of community to control labour.

The corporate "mind-game" began with a 12 June 1971 speech by Harold W. Campbell, Frigidaire's General Manager, who claimed that the company was at a distinct disadvantage due to its undeniably high wages. As a result,

We have investigated having another manufacturer build our appliances. We have investigated the possibility of plants located in the area outside of Dayton.

⁵⁸ Although the company's campaign to re-open the contract did not go as far as to sponsor a secret ballot of dubious legal standing, the fact that it was seriously considered revealed the blurring of boundaries between "public relations" and "industrial relations" in the modern corporation. GMI. Frigidaire Collection. Box 68, File 79-10.8-21. Typed "Plan of Action" not on letter head. No author identified. However, written notations appear to be in Rex Smith's handwriting.

We have talked with one of the largest manufacturers in Japan concerning the possibility of building our appliances. These investigations have not been resolved at this time and no decisions have been made.⁵⁹

This speech fell like a ton of bricks in Dayton, a Southwestern Ohio city long identified with Frigidaire. Within a mere five days, a "Save Our Frigidaire for the Community" committee was formed, comprised of eleven representatives drawn from business, labour, academia and the community. Yet as journalists conceded it was primarily the vehicle of Frank G. Anger and the Dayton Chamber of Commerce.⁶⁰

On 29 June the committee asked local residents to write to both company and union expressing their desire to keep Frigidaire in Dayton. In an open letter addressed to "All Interested Citizens," Anger urged Frigidaire and IUE 801 to "work together" in order "to keep appliance manufacturing here in this community....If heads need to be knocked together or compromise is necessary, then let's do it. Full employment and a living wage is far more important than insisting on travelling down a one-way street to destruction."⁶¹ Throughout the "situation," Anger presumed to speak on behalf of all local residents.

For the hundreds of local citizens who responded to the call, Frigidaire was "Dayton's Pride." For George T. Lytle, the Frigidaire name had become synonymous with Dayton: "I have lived in Dayton and used Frigidaire products since 1926. I don't say

⁵⁹ GMI. Frigidaire Collection. Box 67, File 79-10.8-2. Statement by Harold W. Campbell, General Motors Vice President and General Manager of Frigidaire. 12 June 1971.

⁶⁰ Larry Froelich, "Dayton Citizens Saved Worker Jobs," *Akron Beacon Journal* (7 December 1971).

⁶¹ GMI. Frigidaire Collection. Box 68, File 79-10-8-10 Labor Relations: Save Frigidaire Committee. Frank G. Anger to All Interested Citizens. 28 June 1971.

'refrigerator.' To me the refrigerator is the Frigidaire. NCR, Wright-Patterson and Frigidaire mean Dayton. Save Frigidaire and you save Dayton."⁶² The attachment to Frigidaire was particularly strong for Martha Murphy:

I am writing on behalf of keeping the Frigidaire plant in our Dayton community. Do hope the management will see fit to keep it here, it means so much to all the people & the many different businesses here. I work in a Restaurant and needless to say I have to depend on my 'tips' to make my living. I am a widow and need to work very badly and without the 'customer' I can't make it so therefore when people are working here-they use the Restaurant-I say if it means Frigidaire get rid of Mr. Campbell and the present management--then do it--or maybe the union could get a new negotiator and try and work something out. Am praying 'Frigidaire' stays with us here in Dayton, Ohio. Thank you.⁶³

Perhaps, C. Thomas summed up the anxiety many Daytonians felt during the summer of 1971 when he wrote: " Talk in terms, to the FRIGIDAIRE EXECUTIVES and UNION OFFICERS, that this is THEIR COMMUNITY, not only the employees, and they should definitely feel that it is THEIR RESPONSIBILITY to keep FRIGIDAIRE HERE and be willing to use a solution for the good of all."⁶⁴ In sum, the fate of Frigidaire had become emotionally entangled with the fate of the city as a whole.

Not everyone, however, bought the company's line. Women in particular took a leading role in turning the rhetorical weapon of the local "community" against the company. Women often spoke with authority. They boldly castigated politicians and businessmen alike in the name of "family," "community" and the "consumer." As most

⁶² GMI. Frigidaire Collection. Box 68, File 79-10.8-10. Labor Relations: Save Frigidaire Committee. George T. Lytle to Frank G Anger.

⁶³ GMI. Frigidaire Collection. Box 68, File 79-10.8-10. Labor Relations: Save Frigidaire Committee. Martha Murphy to Frank G. Anger.

⁶⁴ GMI. Frigidaire Collection. Box 68, File 79-10.8-10. Labor Relations: Save Frigidaire Committee. C. Thomas to Frank G. Anger.

writers were not directly dependent on Frigidaire for employment, the voice of the family often gave way to the voice of the consumer. One woman after the other defiantly warned the company that it would pay a heavy price indeed if it abandoned Dayton. As Frigidaire produced an array of home appliances, several women tallied the number of company products in their homes and vowed never again to purchase Frigidaire products.⁶⁵ Others urged the company to make design alterations to their appliances to bolster sales among women.⁶⁶ Still others took considerable pride in the apparent superior quality of Frigidaire products and claimed it unthinkable that the company should ever leave Dayton.

In the meantime, Frigidaire worked closely with the Dayton Chamber of Commerce and local media to "turn up the heat" on the union. To that end, General Motors intimated it was actively looking for a new factory to house Frigidaire production. A 16 July 1971 statement by GM, for example, noted that it had "several study teams go through the surplus RCA plant in Memphis, Tennessee" but had no plans "at this time" to purchase it.⁶⁷ In the wake of this press release, petitions were circulated. Sunday sermons conducted. By mid-June, the story dominated the talk-shows

⁶⁵ A good example of this point can be seen in letter written by Josephine McDermid: "it never occurred to me to buy other than Frigidaire; but if the appliance lines leave Dayton believe me I will." GMI. Frigidaire Collection. Box 68, File 79-10.8-10. Labor Relations: Save Frigidaire Committee. Josephine McDermid to Frank G. Anger.

⁶⁶ See, for example, the letter written by Mrs. Paul J. Maple who advised Frigidaire to: "Get a woman designer. We want simple operations, and less clutter." GMI. Frigidaire Collection. Box 68, File 79-10.8-18. Labor Relations: Save Frigidaire Committee. Mrs. Paul J. Maple to Frank G. Anger.

⁶⁷ GMI. Frigidaire Collection. Box 68, File 79-10.8-10. General Motors Press Statement. 16 July 1971.

with most callers believing that Frigidaire workers would gladly accept concessions to keep the plant in Dayton.⁶⁸

Throughout the "Frigidaire situation," Smith reported daily to his superior, Thomas E. Groehn, director of News Relations at General Motors world headquarters in Detroit, with the latest news clippings. On 13 July he reported that Frigidaire answered queries about the rumours "in the same manner, only admitting as our earlier statement indicated, that 'the company is continuing to investigate all possible solutions to our difficulties. One of the avenues selected was to investigate having another manufacturer build our appliances. Another was to investigate sites outside of Dayton. Beyond that we have no comment.'"⁶⁹ At other times, Smith met with reporters, like Don Bauder of *Business Week*, over lunch, to ensure that "he heads down the right track."⁷⁰ On 13 July, Smith noted the escalating media frenzy consuming the city:

Obviously this morning's Journal Herald front page story stimulated the Dayton Daily News to further action; hence another front page story this afternoon. The small story also appeared on the front page of the Cincinnati Enquirer this morning. Common sense writing seems to have been replaced by some rather wild speculation, but then under the circumstances I suppose that this is to be expected. When queried, we're sticking to our original declarations which were contained in our June 12 statement. Also, a wild rumor swept the city this afternoon that 'Frigidaire had been sold'. This came to me from both newspapers, radio and one of the television stations. This concludes today's report.⁷¹

⁶⁸ GMI. Frigidaire Collection. Box 68, File 79-10.8-15. WAVI RADIO. Memo. 18 June 1971.

⁶⁹ GMI. Frigidaire Collection. Box 68, File 79-10.5-15. Smith to Groehn. 13 July 1971 [first of two reports that day].

⁷⁰ GMI. Frigidaire Collection. Box 68, File 79-10.8-15. Rex Smith to Thomas Groehn, Director, News Relations Staff at General Motors. 22 July 1971.

⁷¹ GMI. Frigidaire Collection. Box 68, File 79-10.8-15, Smith to Groehn. 13 July 1971 [second of two reports that day].

So great was the growing uncertainty in Dayton, in anticipation of the closure voters defeated new school bond issues and the city government pared down services.

From the outset, Frigidaire was careful not to ask employees explicitly to re-open their collective agreement. This would have been politically inastute and legally dubious. Its silence only served to fan public hysteria about the future of the plant. All summer long Smith reported that he was "getting plenty of help from all quarters, now that we're in the public arena."⁷² When asked to comment, himself, he just called the potential plant closing: "rumour" and "innuendo." He happily reported that the "local community is really putting on the heat with all kinds of offers of help, for the employees, depending, of course, on the decision of the union membership at Sunday's meeting. With TV and Radio stations following up full blast today, I think you can see the community is now putting on the heat."⁷³ The local Committee, then, "swung into action" with a full page open letter outlining the "Community's Position" on the outside back page of the *Journal Herald*. It sustained the company's position in every way. Three days later Smith reported that the Frigidaire "situation" was about to "run its course" with press activity building to a climax just before the union's meeting.

By the time that the workers cast their ballots on whether or not to re-open their contract on 12 September, Smith was convinced that they would bow to the will of the community. Yet when workers overwhelmingly voted neither to reopen the contract nor to rollback wages by one dollar an hour, he was shocked to find that union members

⁷² GMI. Frigidaire Collection. Box 68, File 79-10.8-15. Smith to Groehn. 15 July 1971.

⁷³ GMI. Frigidaire Collection. Box 68, File 7-10.8-16. Smith to Groehn. 10 September 1971.

"turned their backs on the community."⁷⁴ In response, Frigidaire issued a brutally terse statement to the media where it warned that the union's unwillingness to meet the problem "halfway" forced it to investigate "possible alternatives."⁷⁵ Taking the perspective of a "community" bystander, the editor of the *Journal Herald* acknowledged that union members voted against wage rollbacks because they were sceptical, rightly or wrongly, about the company's claim of financial trouble.⁷⁶

Despite this setback for Frigidaire, communal pressure generated through the Chamber of Commerce's committee was such that the local union reversed its decision two months later, voting for concessions in exchange for a new guarantee to call-back 850 laid-off employees and a renewed commitment by GM to make a go of its Frigidaire Division. By agreeing to forego raises for the following two years, the company saved \$18 a week on every Dayton worker. The local daily newspaper heralded the agreement as "a boon to the community." As the editors of the *Journal Herald* noted,

Intense community pressure was brought to bear on the workers in the first go-

⁷⁴ GMI. Frigidaire Collection. Box 68, File 79-10.8-16. Smith to Groehn. 13 September 1971.

⁷⁵ GMI. Frigidaire Collection. Box 68, File 79-10.8-16. Statement to the Media. Frigidaire Division, 13 September 1971 and Smith to Groehn 10 September 1971. The entire statement read as follows: "Obviously the Union is not willing to meet the problem halfway now and consider having a long-range plan to achieve labor cost parity later. As a result we find it necessary now to pursue possible alternatives." However, had the membership gone along with concession at this meeting Frigidaire would have released the following press statement: "We have already explained the situation relating to the appliance business and the alternatives available under the existing labor agreement to Union officials. Also, in response to a question from the Union, we have expressed a willingness to consider a Union proposal that would meet the problems halfway now and a long-range plan to achieve labor cost parity later. We stand ready to continue the talks with the Union officials on this basis."

⁷⁶ "Frigidaire Showdown" *The Journal Herald* (Tuesday 14 September 1971).

round. It was pressure generated by the fear that Frigidaire would leave Dayton and take 5,000 jobs with it unless the workers agreed to wage adjustments. But the workers refused to be stampeded. Their deliberateness, and that of their leaders particularly, was probably best in the long run.⁷⁷

To maximize favourable press coverage, Frigidaire "spaced" the call-back of employees. According to Rex Smith, no recent business story had garnered as much national media attention as the "Frigidaire situation."⁷⁸

Was the permanent closure of the plant a possibility? Clearly, Smith believed so. A Dayton resident himself, he argued forcefully within Frigidaire for keeping production in Dayton:

To summarize, the pressures of business failure and closure of such a Division as Frigidaire would result in extremely serious public relations problems for the Corporation, especially in social, civic and economic fields. In these days of demonstration and protest, undoubtedly GM would be questioned publicly on its social obligations and responsibilities by pressure groups headed by the Naders, the Moores and many others....All factors considered, without any question of doubt, the Corporation's public posture would be extremely difficult to defend, if not untenable.⁷⁹

Although Frigidaire refused the union's request to examine its financial books, the records held at GMI in Flint suggest that the company was at a disadvantage because its

⁷⁷ Editorial, "Frigidaire Settlement...a boon to the community," *Dayton Journal Herald* (23 November 1971).

⁷⁸ GMI, Frigidaire Collection. Box 68, File 79-10.8-4. Rex Smith. Memorandum. "The Frigidaire Situation: A Review of the Public Relations Aspects Before and After the Unique Labor Settlement." 16 March 1972.

⁷⁹ GMI, Frigidaire Collection. Box 67, File 79-10.8-3. Labor Relations-Special Project, 1971. Rex Smith, PR Director, Frigidaire. An Estimate of the Public Relations Shock Effects of a Business Failure. Nd.

wage levels far surpassed those of its competitors.⁸⁰ As a General Motors subsidiary, Frigidaire employees benefitted from the master agreement, making them the highest paid appliance makers in North America. But declining market share since Frigidaire's hey-days during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, when one in four major home appliances sold in the United States was a Frigidaire, had left the company with only eleven per cent of the market by 1970.⁸¹ Although older customers remained loyal to Frigidaire, the company had not attracted younger consumers. Yet the paradox of giving concessions to one of the richest corporations on the planet, GM had outweighed the problems of the Frigidaire division in the minds of most local union members. That is, until the company offered to exchange wage concessions for a renewed commitment to the community in the form of a greater obligation to the Frigidaire division and the recall of laid off workers.

In the end, the concession agreement received considerable nationwide attention as it dovetailed with President Nixon's fight against inflation. It was widely acclaimed as a bow to "realism" and a blow against inflation. Akron's political leadership was particularly impressed by "Dayton's example."⁸² Still others predicted Dayton was

⁸⁰ GMI. Frigidaire Collection. Box 67, File 79-10-8-1. Notes taken by Bill Pierce at meeting on Frigidaire Wednesday 28 July 1971. 4:00 pm.

⁸¹ GMI. Frigidaire Collection. Box 67, 79-10.8-2 Labor Relations Miscellaneous, 1971. October 22, 1971 Frigidaire Renaissance: A Marketing Plan for Rebuilding Frigidaire Leadership in the Appliance Industry"

⁸² Jim Good "Akron Tries to Copy Dayton Bounce," *Dayton News* (17 January 1972).

where the "pendulum" began to swing from labour towards management.⁸³ Jim Good, the daily business news editor for the *Dayton Daily News* called it a "poker game" won by Frigidaire. In fact, after Dayton, there was a rush of companies demanding concessions and forming citizens committees to bring "civic pressure" to bear.⁸⁴ Generally speaking, unions steadfastly refused to re-open existing contracts in the early 1970s. Thus, the dam holding back concessionary demands -- though weakened -- held another eight years until the bailout of ailing Chrysler. Going almost unnoticed in 1979, General Motors quietly sold its Frigidaire name to White Consolidated and converted the facility to automotive parts production. Dayton's pride was no more. Yet the "Frigidaire situation" revealed in corporate records and local news reports indicated how "community" became a rhetorical weapon for an employer keen to roll-back union wages and benefits.

The Youngstown Story: In Defense of Place

By way of comparison, "community" proved to be a feeble weapon in the industrial relations arsenal of the anti-shutdown movement. One of the traditional expressions of communal solidarity and civic pride in the United States was the parade. It is not surprising, then, that the anti-plant shutdown movement adopted the parade as well. When National Steel decided to close its Weirton, West Virginia mill in 1982, for example, the community responded by dedicating the traditional Fourth of July parade to the campaign to keep the mill operating. Accordingly, parade floats devoted to employee

⁸³ Jim Good, "It's Whole New Tennis Match, With Management Serving," *Dayton Daily News* (23 January 1972).

⁸⁴ Ralph Orr, "A Growing Trend: Asking Union Aid to Save Companies," *Akron Beacon Journal* (30 January 1972).

ownership followed more traditional fare beneath the green ribbons and huge green flags -- representing community rebirth -- lining Main Street.⁸⁵ In Taunton, Massachusetts, the announced closing of Paragon Gears that year sparked a similar response. Supported by the United Electrical workers, the parade opened with local veterans who held aloft their American flags followed by beauty queens, floats, fire engines and five school bands. These were all the components of a typical small-town parade but it had an earnest purpose: saving Paragon Gears Inc. As journalist Joan S. Lublin reported: "In its campaign to keep the 65 jobs, the union at Paragon has sponsored a school essay contest and placed posters in most downtown stores."⁸⁶ Parades such as these emphasized consensus and "oneness" over local diversity. Defiant shouts of "Save Our Valley," "My Hometown" and "Remember Youngstown" echoed across the aging industrial heartland.⁸⁷

Local religious coalitions such as the Ecumenical Coalition in Youngstown and the Denominational Ministry Strategy in Pittsburgh; prominent dissident trade unionists such as Ed Mann, John Barbero and Gerald Dickey in Youngstown, and Ron Weisen in Homestead, Pennsylvania; political radicals like Staughton Lynd and Gar Alperovitz; public interest advocates like the Ohio Public Interest Campaign and Ralph Nader; groups of unemployed workers trying to stop the foreclosure of homes; and rogue unions like the

⁸⁵ William Serrin, "Town Rallies for Workers Trying to Buy Plant," *New York Times* (6 June 1982).

⁸⁶ Joan S. Lublin, "Unions Try New Kinds of Resistance As Anger Over Plant Closings Grows," *Wall Street Journal* (27 January 1982).

⁸⁷ If the anti-plant closing movement in the United States had a slogan it would have been "Remember Youngstown!" See, for example, Barry Rohan "Dodge Main Shutdowns Spurs Plant-closing legislation," *Detroit Free Press* (24 June 1979).

leftist United Electrical Workers demanded that local plants re-open and that politicians intervene to protect workers and local communities.⁸⁸ Similarly, when 3M decided to close its Freehold, New Jersey plant, it probably did not expect the local union to rally entertainers like John Cougar Mellencamp, Willie Nelson, Joan Jett and the Blackhearts, and Bruce Springsteen to the cause. Springsteen's hit song, "My Hometown" became that fight- back campaign's anthem.⁸⁹ Meanwhile, a range of religious groups attempted to influence corporate behaviour by infiltrating the annual shareholders meetings of large industrial corporations.⁹⁰ Shutdowns also began to be considered in terms of a Civil Rights issue by some African-American organizations. The Illinois Advisory Committee on Civil Rights, for example, published a scathing report in 1981 that

⁸⁸ Roy Lubove, *Twentieth Century Pittsburgh: The Post-Steel Era* (Volume II), 18. The Denominational Ministry Strategy utilized the more aggressive tactics developed by Saul Alinsky. At least one historian has labelled their tactics "disastrous" as their attack on the locally based Mellon Bank provoked a backlash. See: University of Pittsburgh Archives. Denominational Ministry Service. Box 716 (green dot-unorganized.), File: 1984-pt 1. October 3, 1984 document. Homestead Steelworkers Local 1397 launched a three pronged response to the mill closing: (1) meet daily needs of unemployed by opening a food bank, (2) use legal system and politics to send a defiant message, and (3) educate people. See, for example, Irwin Marcus, *Pennsylvania History*, 174. Small local groups representing unemployed workers such as the Philadelphia Unemployment Project resisted attempts by banks to foreclose on people's homes after shutdowns. But more violent means were taken by homeowners like Norma MacReynolds who shot and wounded a sheriff's deputy trying to serve her with an eviction notice just prior to Christmas in 1982. When GE decided to close its Ontario, California clothes-iron plant, the mainly female employees fought back. Their petitions and rallies received national attention. Lorraine Bennett, "GE Closes Plant, Ending Tradition of Employment," *Los Angeles Times* (27 February 1982).

⁸⁹ University of Pittsburgh. United Electrical Workers. Green Dot 2787. UE Local 610. Swissvale Switch. Pamphlet "3M: Violating the Human Rights of Our Hometown."

⁹⁰ "Churches Press Resolutions on Plant Closings," *Labor and Investments* (March 1983).

concluded companies discriminated against minority workers when they relocated from the inner cities to suburban or rural areas.⁹¹

In the absence of political leadership at the federal or state levels, Americans facing job loss or community dislocation increasingly turned to their civic leaders for guidance. As the editor of the *Detroit News* conceded in 1981: "The public desire for leadership, active leadership, to guide Michigan out of the economic morass is loud and clear."⁹² In an ironical twist, however, civic elites in many (formerly) industrial towns tended to celebrate the loss of mill and factory. Historian Roy Lubove, for one, noted that Pittsburgh's newspapers were "eager to write an obituary for steel production within the city's limits."⁹³ They wanted to modernize through "diversification."

The eagerness to throw smokestack industries into the dustbin of history was based upon assumptions about a post-industrial future. Typically, civic elites responded in time-honoured fashion by boosting post-industrial schemes or by "smokestack

⁹¹ The committee suggested that employers could be compelled to justify relocation using the Equal Employment Opportunities Act adopted in 1972. When a memorandum prepared by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission found as much, the federal agency's chairman, William H. Brown III, quickly disavowed the findings of his General Counsel. In spite of these developments, plant shutdowns were largely ignored by the civil rights community. Illinois Advisory Committee to the US Commission on Civil Rights. *Shutdown: Economic Dislocation and Equal Opportunity* (June 1981), 43-44.

⁹² WRL. Metro Detroit AFL-CIO Council Collection (Part 4) Accession 53, Box 108, File 108-55 1981. William J. Giles to Tom Turner, President of Detroit AFL-CIO. 7 May 1981.

⁹³ Roy Lubove, *Twentieth Century Pittsburgh (Volume II)*, 20-21.

chasing."⁹⁴ A study of the declining auto town of Flint, Michigan surmised that civic elites turned to boosterism in times of deindustrialization.⁹⁵ In that city alone, millions of taxpayer's dollars went into the building of a Hyatt Hotel, an indoor amusement park celebrating the automobile and a major retail complex. Every one of these post-industrial projects failed.

A similar story unfolded in Youngstown after the closing of the Campbell Works there. Pettiness and party politics, made any coordinated response to Black Monday on 19 September 1977 -- the day the Campbell Works closed -- impossible. Like Chaucer's Canterbury character, civic leaders in the Mahoning Valley mounted their "horse" riding off in four directions simultaneously.⁹⁶ Even under less dramatic circumstances, the Valley had consisted of a patchwork of political jurisdictions, each with its own personalities, partisan affiliations and agendas. These divisions came to the fore in the immediate aftermath of Black Monday. When Democratic Party Congressman James Carney convened a meeting of a new committee (the Mahoning Valley Economic Development Committee) to coordinate federal aid to the area, he excluded his political rival, William Sullivan, President of the Western Reserve Economic Development Agency. He also did not invite the mayors of Campbell, Struthers and Lowellville even though the closed mill was located within the boundaries of the first two municipalities.

⁹⁴ Lloyd Rodwin, "Deindustrialization and Regional Economic Transformation," in Lloyd Rodwin and Hidehiko Sazanami, eds. *Deindustrialization and Regional Economic Transformation: The Experience of the United States* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 21.

⁹⁵ George F. Lord and Albert C. Price, "Growth Ideology in a Period of Decline: Deindustrialization and Restructuring, Flint Style," *Social Problems* 39, 2 (May 1992), 155.

⁹⁶ Jack C. Hunter interviewed by Philip Bracy on 24 April 1981. The transcript of the interview is held at the library of Youngstown State University.

Responding to this snub, these three municipalities turned to the Republican administration in the state capitol and formed CASTLO in order to redevelop a portion of the mill as an industrial park. As a result, area politicians were roundly criticized by the editor of the *Youngstown Vindicator* for "behind-the-scenes maneuvering" and "on-the-record bickering."⁹⁷

In spite of the "frantic rush" to promote industrial redevelopment (including a blimp factory), the *Youngstown Vindicator* could only report "limited" results two years after Black Monday.⁹⁸ Concrete results were so meagre that Anthony C. Centofanti spoke for many area residents when he recalled: "I can't really think of any political figure who distinguished himself by his services during that time."⁹⁹ By contrast, one political figure in the valley became a lightning rod for the growing discontent, Democratic Congressman James Carney. Despite his pro-labour voting record and incumbency, Carney won the 1978 Democratic primary by a slim 78 votes. Union members had voted massively against him because of the public perception he had done too little, too late after Black Monday.¹⁰⁰ In the lead-up to the Congressional elections,

⁹⁷ Tim Yovich and Tom Petzinger Jr., "In Steel Crisis, Politics and Economics Make the Strangest of Bedfellows of All," *Youngstown Vindicator* (6 November 1977), 2.

⁹⁸ "Results are limited in Scramble to Recoup from Cutback by S&T," *Youngstown Vindicator* (19 September 1979).

⁹⁹ Anthony C. Centofanti interviewed by Philip Bracy in 1981. The transcript is held in the library of Youngstown State University.

¹⁰⁰ YHCIL. William J. Carney Papers. Box 5, File 5: Steel General Information 26 July 1978. Carney to Alexander Barkan, Director of COPE, AFL-CIO. August 4, 1978. Also see: YHCIL. William J. Carney Papers. Box 5, File 4: Steel General Information 26 July 1978-20 July 1978. Memo from Steve Nimoff to CJC re. Possible Slogans and Publicity for Campaign. 19 October 1978.

Carney pleaded with the AFL-CIO to assist his faltering campaign. Yet for the first time in forty-two years, the 19th Ohio District -- hitherto one of the strongest Democratic Party bastions north of the Mason-Dixon Line -- elected a Republican to the US House of Representatives.¹⁰¹

Only the Ecumenical Coalition seemed to rise above partisan politics and personal rivalry. Given this "incredible [political] vacuum," it took someone with the stature of Bishop James W. Malone to launch a fight-back campaign that would garner international attention. Religious leaders -- joined by a rag-tag group of union dissidents, political radicals and public interest advocates -- were uniquely qualified to speak on behalf of their local community. In fact, they came closest to resolving the dilemma raised by William Sullivan: "the community, in the fullest sense of that, has no lobby. There is no lobby that is broad enough to cover that kind of lobby together and you need more time than we had to get it in place."¹⁰² They proposed -- with a plan developed by historian Gar Alperovitz -- to re-open the Campbell Works under community ownership. Reverend Charles Rawlings called this the "third alternative" to laissez faire economics and nationalization.¹⁰³ While the Cold War loomed, "community" proved to be a socially acceptable way of saying that the public should be consulted about plant closings. However, as "Community Inc" needed 300 million in federal loan guarantees to get off the ground, it was forced into the already inhospitable national

¹⁰¹ "Williams Defeats Carney; Rhodes Wins 4th Term," *Youngstown Vindicator* (Wednesday 8 November 1978).

¹⁰² Sullivan interviewed by Philip Bracy in 1981. The transcript of the interview is held by the library of Youngstown State University.

¹⁰³ Reverend Charles Rawlings interviewed by Philip Bracy in 1981. The transcript of the interview is held in the library of Youngstown State University.

political arena.¹⁰⁴

At the request of the Steering Committee of the Ecumenical Coalition, Chuck Rawlings sized up the political situation in the wake of Charles Carney's defeat to the Republicans in 1978. He perceived the new Republican Congressman to be an ally who would assist in the Coalition's fight to save the mills. Moreover, he hoped the defeat of Carney would send a clear message to the Carter White House: "The pressure on the Carter Administration is clear. They lost the Congressional seat held by Carney in what was clearly an avoidable outcome. They lost the Ohio governorship -- perhaps not quite so clearly avoidable, but arguably so." Rawlings believed that Carter had to do something dramatic before his 1980 re-election bid.¹⁰⁵ Thus, the election of Republicans placed the coalition in a "favorable situation" in its effort to re-open the mill under community ownership.

Yet the situation did not prove to be entirely positive. Rawlings noted that during the first nine months of the campaign, local business leaders gave "passive support" publicly but expressed serious misgivings in private. City officials like Mayor Philip Richley believed that the era of steelmaking had passed and that the town's survival depended on diversification: "I think the trouble with a lot of people in Youngstown, especially those who are not in government, is that they don't want to accept reality. They never wanted to accept the facts of life that these are old decrepit plants that cost

¹⁰⁴ Library of Congress. *Problems in US Steel Market*. Field Hearings before Subcommittee on Trade of the Committee on Ways and Means. House of Representatives. 96th Congress, 1st Session. In Youngstown 27 December 1979. (Washington, 1980), 140.

¹⁰⁵ YHCIL. M19 Ecumenical Coalition of the Mahoning Valley, Inc. Records. Box 1, File 5: Ecumenical Coalition of the Mahoning Valley. 8 November 1978 Confidential Working Paper for use by Ecumenical Coalition (Chuck Rawlings at request of Steering Committee).

too much to operate."¹⁰⁶ For Richley, the local effort to re-open the mill was an "exercise in futility" by a group of people without much "business sense." As the mill closings were construed as "inevitable," area politicians did not take the bid of the religious leaders to save the mill seriously.¹⁰⁷ Accordingly, the "magnitude of the closing and its apparent catastrophic dimensions seem to have permitted us the freedom, the reason, to make bold entreaties in new directions," said activist Staughton Lynd.¹⁰⁸ Still, the local steelworker locals and the Youngstown *Vindicator* were on-board.

In their pastoral letter circulated to valley church goers, the Ecumenical Coalition made it clear that the closing of the Campbell Works on 19 September 1977 had wounded their "community."¹⁰⁹ In the eight pages that followed, Bishop James Malone evoked "community" thirty-eight times. In combination with other keywords such as "Our Valley," "neighbours," and "Youngstown," it became clear that the underlying message of the pastoral letter was that the closing involved everyone in the

¹⁰⁶ Philip Richley interviewed by Philip Bracy on 10 April 1981. The transcript of the interview held in the library of Youngstown State University.

¹⁰⁷ Anthony C. Centofanti interviewed by Philip Bracy on 4 December 1981. The transcript is held at the library of Youngstown State University. Staughton Lynd -- a prominent person associated with the coalition -- later recalled that the movement's greatest mistake was not to draw one of the Valley's steel managers into the project to give it more business credibility. Staughton Lynd interviewed by Donna DeBlasio on 29 April 1991 and again on 30 April 1991. The videotape recording of the interview is held at the YHCIL.

¹⁰⁸ Staughton Lynd interviewed by Donna DeBlasio on 29 April 1991 and again on 30 April 1991. The videotape is held at the YHCIL.

¹⁰⁹ YHCIL. William J. Carney Papers. Box 5, Folder 5. November 22, 1977. Bishop W. Malone to Members of Youngstown Religious Coalition with an attached copy of the Pastoral Message prepared by the committee. The original draft was written by John Carr of the US Catholic Conference.

Mahoning Valley. They noted that it was their Christian duty to “serve our community” and “give witness to our religious principles of justice.” Thus, an Ecumenical Coalition composed mainly of the Valley’s spiritual leaders became the de facto voice of “community” shortly after Black Monday until the Carter administration turned down their loan request in 1978.

“Back to Work in Youngstown,” a ballad in the “Woody Guthrie tradition,” written by Tom Hunter, struck a “responsive chord” among movement activists in the Mahoning Valley. So much so, it quickly became the “anthem of clergy and other social activists.”¹¹⁰ The song told the tale of the closing of the Campbell Works and the subsequent fight to re-open it. The last verse particularly resonated with the members of the Ecumenical Coalition and their sympathizers:

I'm going to own a little piece of a steel mill
so will others in my neighborhood.
We'll all have a stake in what goes on,
and that sounds pretty damn good.¹¹¹

These lines quickly became a standard feature of public demonstrations in the valley. At one such rally, held on 17 March 1979, protesters sang “Back to Work in Youngstown” twice, once at the beginning and again at end of the demonstration, whereas people sang “Solidarity Forever” only once. Communal solidarity, not union brotherhood, defined the anti-shutdown movement in places like Youngstown.

“Black Monday” and the subsequent fight to re-open the mill sparked a national debate about the meaning of industrial decline. Notably, when ABC News televised “The

¹¹⁰ Dale Peskin, “Area’s Coalition Has Own Ballad,” *Youngstown Vindicator* (1 October 1978), A1.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*.

Fight Against Black Monday" to a national audience in 1978, it noted that the community's "refusal to die" was "something new." This documentary featured the February 1978 "community rally" and the "trail blazing" role played by the local clergy.¹¹² Almost overnight, the nation's media presented Youngstown as a symbol of what was happening across the industrial heartland:

Reporters didn't merely discover the valley, they descended upon it. They've been as ubiquitous as ants at a summer picnic, lugging typewriters, tape recorders, and camera equipment to steelyards, mill bars, and ethnic neighborhoods. From Tokyo and Topeka, they came to report the saga of Steeltown.¹¹³

For one local journalist, the resulting "Youngstown Story" was a "simplistic portrayal of steel and survival in the valley." The basic formula employed by out-of-town reporters involved interviewing the mayor of Youngstown, a spokesperson for the Ecumenical Coalition and "some unemployed steelworkers" and taking some video footage of the closed mills. Not surprisingly, local politicians and the Ecumenical Coalition stressed the devastation wrought by the closing in order to wring more state and federal money or to add more political pressure to re-open the mills. The result was a larger-than-life story of gloom and doom.

Youngstown had clearly achieved symbolic importance in the national debate over

¹¹² Protests were also imbued with religious ritual. For example, the movement commemorated Black Monday in 1978 and 1979 with silent prayer at Stop 14, the main gate, and the carrying of the cross. They held a torch aloft, whose flame was supposed to symbolize the light of faith that a new day would dawn after the dousing of the fires of the furnaces had cast a shadow "over the community." As a reporter for the *Youngstown Vindicator* observed the marking of the first year anniversary of Black Monday represented "a rite that was as much protest as it was ritual." Dale Peskin, " 'Black Monday' Observance Held," *Youngstown Vindicator* (19 September 1978), 1.

¹¹³ Dale Peskin, "Many Have Looked at Youngstown, But Few Have Seen," *Youngstown Vindicator* (17 September 1978).

plant closings. Due to the extraordinary media attention given the area between 1977 and 1980, no town or city in America appeared to be hit by shutdowns as hard as Youngstown. Indeed, the city's name became synonymous with the crisis sweeping the industrial heartland of the United States. Notably, other industrial states pointed to "Youngtowns' of their own."¹¹⁴ Delegations of federal and state politicians made their pilgrimage to the Mahoning Valley to see for themselves the devastation wrought by industrial decline. In due course, Youngstown became the site of numerous congressional hearings investigating the issue. At one such hearing, Congressman Clarence Brown of Ohio summarized the opinion of many when he said: "what happened in northeastern Ohio is a sad symbol of our total national decline."¹¹⁵

Yet union leaders did not join in this pilgrimage; in part because they did not want a re-opened plant -- even under union stewardship -- to undercut union wages and benefits elsewhere, and because their top economic advisor considered the plan unworkable.¹¹⁶ Like many of the Youngstown workers interviewed, Sam Donnorummo felt betrayed by the International Union: "Our International [union] didn't care. Pittsburgh never came down. Them guys never came around. They didn't care about

¹¹⁴ Michigan State Library. Lansing, Michigan. Vertical File: "Employment '82." Conference on Alternative State and Local Policies. *Preserving Jobs and Communities in Michigan*. (25 June 1981)

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*.

¹¹⁶ Penn State University Archives. USWA. Lloyd McBride, Box 20, File 4, December 19, 1977. James W. Smith to Lloyd McBride regarding a Feasibility Study for Reopening Campbell Works, Youngstown Sheet and Tube.

us...."¹¹⁷ Obviously, an appeal to communal solidarity held little appeal to centralized unions with plants operating in dozens of often competing towns and cities.

At its 1978 bi-annual convention, the United Steelworkers refused to endorse the Ecumenical Coalition's drive to re-open the mill. The convention proceedings reveal a union leadership unmoved by the spectre of plant shutdowns and displacement. Blaming imports, President McBride told delegates in an otherwise upbeat state of the union address that the year had been "one of significant transition."¹¹⁸ Following his lead, delegates adopted two resolutions to that effect, including Resolution 18 dealing with the shutdown of steel plants. Conspicuously absent from the resolution drafted by the union leadership was any mention of community or employee ownership in general and the Ecumenical Coalition's bid to re-open the Campbell Works in particular. This omission is telling as at least one resolution from Youngstown Local 1462 had called on the union to endorse the local drive. Instead, unions remained wedded to traditional industrial capitalism.

Two years later, yet another bureaucratic-sounding resolution blaming steel imports for the shutdown of American mills, was adopted in Los Angeles. There, another "union dissident," Ron Wiesen from the Homestead Works of US Steel, called on delegates to support communities resisting shutdowns: "That our International join with other unions, religious groups, community organizations, etc to put a stop to this rape

¹¹⁷ Sam Donnorummo interviewed by Donna DeBlasio in Youngstown, Ohio during 1991. The videotape recording of the interview is held at the YHCIL.

¹¹⁸ United Steelworkers of America. *Convention Proceedings*. 18-22 September 1978. Atlantic City. Resolution 16. The Shutdown of Steel Plants.

and abandonment of our communities by the giant steel corporations."¹¹⁹ Wiesen urged delegates to support the efforts of the Ecumenical Coalition in Youngstown: " They had no moral help, no financial help from the International. We had two plant gate collections for Youngstown. That's more than I can say for the Executive Board from the International." Others joined Wiesen in calling on union leaders to act decisively in response to the "radical steel executives."

Community thus failed to act as a catalyst for cooperation between unions and public interest groups or local ecumenical coalitions. In retrospect, it becomes easier to see that calls for communal solidarity held little promise for centralized trade unions with members in dozens of towns and cities across the United States. Instead, union leaders stressed group solidarity among their members. Thus, the closure of Youngstown Sheet and Tube's Campbell Works in 1977 could be reformulated in the USWA as a necessary evil in order to reduce over-capacity in the domestic steel industry and add a measure of security for the rest of the membership. In the face of plant shutdowns and union ambivalence, union dissident "Rank 'n Filers" like Ron Wiesen and Ed Mann were drawn to communal solidarity.

As was argued above, plant shutdowns and the resulting job loss had become imaginatively tied to the Great Lakes states of the once mighty industrial heartland. As the area metamorphosed into the "Rust Belt," the problem became imaginatively contained, tied to one place thus saving the rest of the country the indignity of thinking that the American Dream was not all what it seemed. Hence, the emerging "Rust Belt" seemed "exceptional," making it a regional crisis and not a national one. In Washington, regional chauvinism within the Republican and Democratic parties ensured the

¹¹⁹ United Steelworkers of America. *Convention Proceedings*. 1980.

immobility of the federal government. Simply put, southern Democrats and western Republicans opposed any and all attempts to regulate plant shutdowns because these were seen as efforts to favour one region over another. In the absence of federal plant shutdown legislation, the US government used import restrictions, adjustment assistance programs such as the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program, retraining schemes, tax relief to companies, non-enforcement of environmental and safety regulations, employment stock ownership loan guarantees, and unemployment insurance to soften the blow.¹²⁰ Undoubtedly, the past failure to improve demonstrably the situation in the inner cities, despite pouring massive amounts of federal money into the problem, acted against federal intervention in industrial decline.¹²¹ At the national level, then, the "community" banner acted to confirm state and regional difference in US politics.

Politics also figured highly in the Carter administration's measured response to the crisis in the steel industry.¹²² Jimmy Carter, a southerner, had little sympathy for

¹²⁰ Irwin M. Marcus, "The Deindustrialization of America: Homestead, A Case Study, 1959-84" *Pennsylvania History* 52, 3 (1985), 164.

¹²¹ William Alonso, "Deindustrialization and Regional Policy," in Lloyd Rodwin and Hidehiko Sazanami, eds. *Deindustrialization and Region Economic Transformation: The Experience of the United States* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 222-223. To be sure, the Nixon administration was keenly aware of these policy failures. National Archives. Nixon Papers. FG 6-12, Council for Urban Affairs, Box 1, 2/23/69, Urban Affairs Council, 3 February 1969. Toward a National Urban Policy, 3.

¹²² For example, he was advised of the "political ramifications" of various responses to the Youngstown Sheet and Tube closing by Stu Eizenstat and Bob Ginsburg. Carter Presidential Library (Carter). Box 284. File: Steel. [O/A 6343] Memo for President from Stu Eizenstat and Bob Ginsburg. 12 October 1977. Also see: Carter. Box 284, File: Steel [O/A 6343, 29 September 1977. Memo to President. Subject: Organizing ourselves on the steel problem.

the deindustrializing cities of the North. In November 1977 (two months after Black Monday), Carter turned down several recommendations from an inter-disciplinary task force that would have increased eligibility and benefit levels for Trade Adjustment Assistance. More radical ideas such as extended health care coverage, community assistance and mandatory advance notification of plant shutdowns proposed by the representative from the Department of Labor had already been rejected by the committee.¹²³ Perhaps, the orientation of his presidency was best articulated in a 1980 report on cities that urged the relocation of inner-city populations in the North to the South.¹²⁴ Republicans and Democrats from the many "right-to-work" states understood that Michigan's loss was their gain. They justified this shift in industrial location as a long overdue redistribution of wealth or regional development. The president's personal aloofness to the drama unfolding in the industrial heartland made it highly unlikely that the federal government would act boldly or decisively. In sum, the Carter administration dismissed plant closings as a regional problem.

In addition, the steel industry's dismal pollution record coloured the

¹²³ Carter. Box BE-5, File BE 3 6/1/80-1/20/81. Jerry Jasinowski to Stu Eizenstat. 5 August 1980. Carter. Box 292. File Trade Adjustment Assistance [O/A 6237-2]. Hand-written notes by Jimmy Carter on a memo from Stu Eizenstat to President. 14 December 1977. Faced with a delegation from Mahwah, New Jersey in May 1980 to discuss Ford's closing of an auto assembly plant there, Carter's domestic policy advisor Stu Eizenstat urged him to appear "personally concerned" as the closing had become "a major political issue in the primary on June 3rd, particularly since Senator Kennedy visited the plant last Monday. Gov. Byrne feels strongly that you should show your deep concern for this problem so that he can carry that message to the voters in the next few weeks." Carter. Box 163, File Auto Industry. May 8, 1980. Ralph Schlosstein to Stu Eizenstat re. Mahwah Ford closing.

¹²⁴ The Commission for a National Agenda for the Eighties, named by Carter, called the decline of the cities of heartland "inevitable" and urged the federal government to facilitate the relocation of the urban poor to the Sunbelt. Large industrial cities had been rendered "obsolete." *Time Magazine* (12 January 1981), 19.

administration's response to "the steel problem." Douglas M. Costle, director of the Environmental Protection Agency, advised the President shortly after Black Monday that the steel industry was one of the worst polluters in the nation. Every day, steel mills affected public health by the release of sulphur oxides and various hydrocarbons into the air and the discharge of solids, acids, heavy metals, arsenic, cyanide, phenols, ammonia, oil, grease, and heat into the waters.¹²⁵ Costle further noted that 7.3 million Americans were exposed to carcinogenic coke oven emissions and that air pollution contributed to asthma, bronchitis, emphysema and cancer. Even though the potential political fallout of closing marginal mills worried the administration, the mill's closing erased a lingering public embarrassment for the Carter Administration.¹²⁶ But, in private, this ad-hoc approach to dealing with trade-offs between jobs and the environment concerned Costle:

to approach each industry in an ad hoc fashion -- ask the members of the industry what they want, analyze the public costs, barter a bit, and accede to those requests which promise the greatest real or apparent benefits to the industry at the lowest apparent cost to the public. This approach is likely to provide short-term relief without addressing more fundamental, underlying problems. Moreover, this approach tends to sacrifice important regulatory goals in the short-term without any promise of eventual compliance.¹²⁷

Obviously, the government never seriously considered giving the loan guarantees to re-

¹²⁵ Carter. Box 284. File: Steel. [O/A 6343] 30 September 1977. Memo for the President from Douglas M. Costle, director, US Environmental Protection Agency.

¹²⁶ Carter. Box 284. Steel/Chrome. [CF O/A 24-3] US EPA. Barbara Blum, Deputy Administrator to Stuart Eizenstat, Asst to President for Domestic Affairs and Policy. Accordingly, the EPA had allowed a one-time exemption for the Mahoning Valley mills from its effluent guidelines. The decision sparked considerable public controversy and court challenges. Gerald Ford Presidential Library. George Humphrey's Associate Director for Environment. Box 22, File Mahoning Valley, Ohio. 27 May 1976 to Jim Cannon.

¹²⁷ Carter. Box BE-5, File BE 3 6/1/80-1/20/81. Memo to President from Douglas Costle, Administrator of EPA. 6 August 1980.

open an old polluting mill even though the decision remained secret until after the congressional elections. A visibly upset Bishop James Malone wrote to Carter: "Mr. President, for this community the incumbency of Jimmy Carter has not been an experience of compassion. Rather, you are associated with cruel indifference."¹²⁸

The failure to re-open the Campbell Works under community ownership affected how Youngstown residents subsequently responded to the announced closing of Lykes' Brier Hill Works in December 1979 and US Steel's decision to close its Ohio and McDonald Works in 1980. Unlike the sudden shutdown of the Campbell Works, these mills closed months after the announcements. This time lag gave community activists and union leaders a window of opportunity to resist the closing. They tried to do so through a combination of protests -- occupying the first two floors of US Steel headquarters in Pittsburgh and its office building in Youngstown -- and legal action. After their failure to re-open the Campbell Works, trade unionists in Youngstown realized that they had to adopt more aggressive tactics in order to be heard. One worker hit the nail on the head when he told a planning meeting: "If we behave rationally, we get shafted." Notably, they no longer bothered to elicit the federal government's assistance. Instead, fights over plant shutdowns became a showdown between the steel companies and the local community.

This change in emphasis was reflected in the political slogans scrawled on home-made placards during the occupation of US Steel's skyscraper in 1980: "US Steel Kills Communities" and "Steel Companies Kill Communities." Indeed, most of the twenty slogans appearing in photographs of the action, demonstrated strong place attachment:

¹²⁸ YHCIL. M19 Ecumenical Coalition of the Mahoning Valley, Inc. Records. Box 3, File 5: General Record-Memos. Most Reverend James W. Malone to President Carter. 21 May 1979.

protesters frequently evoked "community" and "our valley." A growing sense of abandonment such as "Cobweb City" and "Ghosttown USA" crept into these messages a new note of desperation and hopelessness not seen earlier. This is not to say that protesters stopped their resistance to capital divestment. In fact, as, historian turned lawyer, Staughton Lynd has noted, the genesis of a community "right" to abandoned industrial property represented one of the great achievements of the fight against Black Monday. He even suggested that the traumatic experience of steel mill closings in the Mahoning Valley and US Steel's refusal to sell the Ohio Works to its employees eroded public support for private property rights.¹²⁹ In court, Lynd claimed that the company had broken a contractual agreement (an oral promise) not to close the plant if it remained profitable. Obviously sympathetic to the Youngstown workers, Judge Thomas D. Lambrose introduced the notion of community property rights in the mill. Although the notion of community property rights implied in "eminent domain" had been regularly used by municipalities to expropriate private dwellings in slum clearances or highway expansions, this was the first time the concept was applied to industrial property. Subsequently, Lynd won a temporary injunction against US Steel in December 1979. For the first time, US Steel's decision to close a mill had been put on trial.

Even though the lawsuit ultimately failed, the notion of eminent domain had the capacity to counter capital's summoning of private property rights. In Lynd's own words, "Eminent domain offered the movement against plant shutdowns a version of constitutional rhetoric as ancient and deeply rooted as the appeal to due process in

¹²⁹ Staughton Lynd, "The Genesis of the Idea of a Community Right to Industrial Property in Youngstown and Pittsburgh, 1977-1987," *Journal of American History* 74, 3 (1987), 926. It is not coincidental that the son of the couple who documented life in "Middletown" --the quintessential American community--during the 1920s should find himself at the centre of a community coalition in Youngstown.

defense of private property. Eminent domain is the power of government to take private property for a public purpose without the owner's consent."¹³⁰ In 1984, for example, the threat of "eminent domain" proved sufficient in New Bedford, Massachusetts to convince Gulf & Western to sell its unwanted factory to employees. Granted the power of eminent domain by nine municipalities in the Mon Valley in January 1986, the Steel Valley Authority proved to be yet another legacy of the fight against Black Monday.¹³¹ Thus, the notion of "eminent domain" became a legal weapon in the arsenal of communities.

With hindsight, Bishop James W. Malone noted that the fight against Black Monday promoted the idea of a national policy as both activists and observers began to make connections between events in Youngstown with plant shutdowns in towns and cities across the United States: "Frankly, if we only whimpered about what was happening in Youngstown, we didn't think that would be very significant or newsworthy. We felt we could gain more attention by saying that what's happening to Youngstown is happening all over. And in fact, that strategy worked."¹³² According to Malone, the campaign succeeded in responding positively at a time of enormous pessimism. However, he admitted it failed to promote worker ownership, galvanize widespread public support or re-open the mills. Many fight-back campaigns were plagued by poor attendance at public meetings and rallies. Lawrence McCarthy, for one, remembers: "I was up there [for a

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 945.

¹³¹ University of Pittsburgh. Tri-State Conference on Manufacturing (or Steel) Records, 1982-1993, Box 53 (green dot 9053) unprocessed. Folder: "Campaign for Human Development, 1981-82" proposal and resumes.

¹³² Bishop James W. Malone interviewed by Philip Bracy on 8 April 1981. The transcript of the interview is held at the library of Youngstown State University.

Struthers town hall meeting after announced shutdown] and it was poorly attended....the public response right from a year before the mill went down until today, I would call disgraceful."¹³³ Across the United States, the pattern of protest followed a predictable path: "first, overflow public meetings and a brief season of unfocused militancy, an ebbing of group support as each displaced worker concludes that the plant will probably not reopen and begins to devise a private strategy for survival."¹³⁴ This repeated dissipation of protest energy reflected the institutional incapacity of the movement as well as the unwillingness of politicians to react swiftly to popular pressure. As Mary Lynne Cappelletti, legislative director of OPIC, told a senate committee hearing into "The Community Readjustment Act," that in spite of the energetic efforts of some members of the Youngstown community, and national media attention, "it wasn't enough."¹³⁵

As long as the fight continued, Youngstown remained a symbol of hope in the Rust Belt. In the immediate aftermath of "Black Monday" the city symbolized communal resistance to deindustrialization and blight. Two mill closings later, Youngstown

¹³³ Lawrence McCarthy interviewed by Philip Bracy on 5 May 1982. The transcript is held in the library of Youngstown State University.

¹³⁴ Staughton Lynd, "The Genesis of the Idea of a Community Right to Industrial Property in Youngstown and Pittsburgh, 1977-1987," *Journal of American History* 74, 3 (1987), 926.

¹³⁵ University of Akron. URW Research. RG 15. Box 2, File: Plant Closings or Permanent Curtailments, 1979-80" Ohio Public Interest Campaign. *Public Interest Report*. (November/December 1979). Its headline: "No More Youngtowns." See, also, Terry F. Buss and F. Stevens Redburn, *Shutdown at Youngstown*, 25. The anti-shutdown movement failed to re-open the Campbell Works, according to Buss and Redburn, for five principle reasons: (1) the resistance of the steel companies, (2) the opposition of the United Steelworkers, (3) the lack of grassroots support demonstrated by poorly attended rallies, (4) the associations with political radicalism and (5) the political divisions in the Valley.

exemplified the failure of communities to fight-back. Shorn of its fighting spirit, "the Youngstown Story" transmuted into one of victimization in the documentary photography of *Journey to Nowhere* and in Bruce Springsteen's more recent ballad "Youngstown," neither of which made mention of the fight-back campaign that had made the city newsworthy in the first place. Lacking the organizational capacity and national leadership of the trade union movement, the anti-shutdown movement withered. By the early 1980s, the "community" that defied deindustrialization paradoxically connoted its "inevitable" effects, thereby reinforcing the sense of inevitability that already accompanied mill and factory closings. In the popular imagination, departing companies left empty deindustrialized spaces behind and it was futile to oppose them.

By claiming an "intractable crisis" commentators "severed" their moral ties to places in decline.¹³⁶ According to social scientist Dale A. Hathaway, "dejected acceptance" typified worker responses to plant closings.¹³⁷ Likewise, David Bensman and Roberta Lynch suggested that "almost from the first steel mill closing, there has been a sense of the inevitable clouding all discussions about the industrial crisis, confronting our nation."¹³⁸ Discourses of decline thus conveyed a message of "collective powerlessness" and their apparent inevitability acted to undermine a sense of collective moral responsibility. Michigan State Senator John Kelly accounted for the political

¹³⁶ Beauregard, *Voices of Decline*, 186.

¹³⁷ Dale A. Hathaway, *Can Workers Have a Voice? The Politics of Deindustrialization in Pittsburgh* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1993), ix.

¹³⁸ David Bensman and Roberta Lynch, *Rusted Dreams: Hard Times in a Steel Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 202.

paralysis this way:

Everyone knows Michigan is hurting. That is familiar news....Like the surrealistic TV clips from Vietnam in the '60's we see three dimension[al] images of a padlocked factory gate, a long unemployment line and worried faces of throngs of jobless workers....No probing at the themes. No rage. No visionary response. We are expected to recover, naturally. We have before. Lull yourself off to a warm hibernation, everything will be alright. Not this time.¹³⁹

Imaginatively tied to place, "community" largely failed to inspire action outside the immediate area. As a result, defending "community" remained a local affair of little concern to state or federal politicians, or to trade union leaders who represented members in many -- often competing -- towns, cities and states.

The movement did not fail due to a lack of community identity. Rather, it failed because the kind of community it invoked did not sway legislators and businessmen living far away from affected towns and cities. Anti-shutdown activists and progressive academics who met in January 1981 to discuss the prospects of the movement wondered whether "local citizens have any realistic hope that their actions will make a difference?"¹⁴⁰ Unfortunately for displaced workers, they did not. The confusion of the times became most striking when Detroit mayor Coleman Young and the UAW teamed up in the early 1980s to find millions of dollars to subsidize the construction of a new GM assembly plant in the downtown core. However, in doing so, the surrounding Poletown neighbourhood had to be expropriated through Detroit's eminent domain powers and demolished. As a consequence, many of the same social forces behind the anti-shutdown

¹³⁹ Library of Congress. *Outlook for the Auto Industry and Its Impact on Employment, Industries and Communities Dependent Upon It*. Hearings before the Subcommittee on Economic Development of the Committee on Public Works and Transportation. House of Representatives. 97 th Congress, 1st Session. 21 December 1981. Lansing, Michigan. Written remarks from State Senator John Kelly.

¹⁴⁰ Raines, Berson and McI.Grace, eds. *Community and Capital in Conflict*, 28.

movement elsewhere suddenly found themselves in opposition to this effort to save thousands of industrial jobs. Given the choice between "jobs" and "community" they chose rhetoric over substance. The Poletown story reminds us that there are different levels of "community" comprising an urban neighbourhood, city, region or country. In Detroit, we saw the good of the city trump that of the neighbourhood, as it usually does. In the end, the anti-shutdown movement in the United States failed because a "community" strategy predicated on emotional appeals to people and place failed to politicize a contractual (and therefore private) matter between an employer and its employees.

But as we will see in the following chapter, to constrain the destructive tendencies of capitalism between 1969 and 1984, one needed to rise in defence of a community based on the nation. Failing that, the anti-shutdown movement in the United States failed miserably. As the former mayor of Youngstown, J. Philip Richley, bluntly summed up: "what we were trying to deal with was a national problem. Youngstown was simply one piece of that national problem and there was no way that Youngstown could solve this problem alone."¹⁴¹ Hence, the dramatic visual images of the first demolition resonated the most. In the permanent exhibit "By the Sweat of Their Brow: Forging the Steel Valley," visitors to the Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor end their visit in a small darkened room where they are confronted by the black and white image of the falling blast furnaces covering two walls.¹⁴² In this imaginative re-

¹⁴¹ J. Philip Richley interviewed by Donna DeBlasio on 12 June 1991 and again on 11 December 1991. The videotape recording is held at the YHCIL.

¹⁴² Donna DeBlasio, "Oral History, Deindustrialization and the Museum Exhibit: 'By the Sweat of their Brow' Forging the Steel Valley," Paper presented to the American Oral History Association Meeting held in Buffalo, New York in October 1998.

enactment, visitors are separated from the dramatic image by a barbed wire fence recreating the sense of helplessness felt by local residents, forced to watch their own un-making.

CHAPTER SEVEN

"I'LL WRAP THE F*#@ CANADIAN FLAG AROUND ME": A NATIONALIST RESPONSE TO PLANT SHUTDOWNS

Instead of a rite-of-passage into a new post-industrial world or the last-rites of industrial capitalism, plant shutdowns in Canada took on a fundamentally different meaning than in the United States. In the broadest sense, an emerging economic nationalist discourse incorporated plant shutdowns into the very centre of its anti-imperialist critique of direct foreign investment.¹ It was virtually impossible, then, to disentangle concern over plant shutdowns from anxiety over foreign direct investment and the presumed threat to Canadian sovereignty presented by American multinational corporations. Canadian economic nationalism represented a "cry for coherence, for continuity, for control of the random forces of displacement, change, and often of disintegration."² At the same time, economic nationalism strengthened the will to resist plant shutdowns and worker displacement, thereby slowing the pace of industrial restructuring. Economic nationalism thus acted as a kind of "rust proofing" that barred the Rust Belt label entry into Canada.

Many Canadians met the expanding level of American direct investment in the

¹ All manifestations of nationalism comprise four basic elements: principles of inclusion and exclusion, a conception of national interest, comparisons with external groups, and views on the effects of the social environment on the nation. See, for example, Raymond Breton, "From ethnic to civic nationalism: English Canada and Quebec," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 11, 1 (January 1988), 85. For their part, economic nationalists were convinced that Canada's political sovereignty was threatened by the country's growing economic dependence on the United States. See Sylvia B. Bashevkin, *True Patriot Love: The Politics of Canadian Nationalism* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1991), 83-84.

² Abraham Rotstein, "Is there an English-Canadian Nationalism?" in *The Walter Gordon Lectures Series, 1977-1978* (Volume 2), 10-11.

post World War II era with growing unease.³ Foreign ownership in the manufacturing sector in Canada, for example, rose to fifty-four per cent in 1963 from thirty-eight per cent in 1926.⁴ Seeking a means of escaping the potential, and later realized, dangers of such a close and dependent relationship with American capital, the 1957 report by the Royal Commission on Canada's Economic Prospects, chaired by Walter Gordon, and subsequent reports filed by Melville Watkins in 1968 and Herb Gray in 1972, confirmed many of their worst fears.⁵ The protectionist measures introduced by American President Richard Nixon in the early 1970s also worked to generalize nationalist sentiment in Canada. While economic nationalism had served as a label for both moderate and left nationalism in the 1970s, it entered the political mainstream in mid-decade when it was appropriated by the trade union movement, by social democrats

³ See, for example, Stephen Azzi, *Walter Gordon & the Rise of Canadian Nationalism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999). For a longer term look at economic nationalism see Michael Bliss, "Canadianizing American Business: the Roots of the Branch Plant," in Ian Lumsden, ed. *Close the 49th Parallel: The Americanization of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 40. Economic nationalism first emerged in the late nineteenth century in Canada with the adoption of the "National Policy" by the government of Prime Minister John A. Macdonald. The combination of high tariffs, immigration promotion and railway construction encouraged American manufacturers to build branch plants in this country, mainly in Ontario and Quebec. In 1911, the Canadian public's fear of the open market overcame Wilfrid Laurier's attempt to negotiate a reciprocity agreement with the United States.

⁴ Melville Watkins, "Foreign Ownership and the Structure of Canadian Industry," in Dave Godfrey and Mel Watkins, eds. *Gordon to Watkins to You, A Documentary: the Battle for Control of our Economy* (Toronto: new press, 1970), 65.

⁵ Canada. *Royal Commission on Canada's Economic Prospects* (Walter Gordon, Chairman) (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1958); Canada. *Foreign Ownership and the Structure of Canadian Industry*. Report of the Task Force on the Structure of Canadian Industry (M. Watkins, Chairman) (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1968); and Canada. Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce. *Foreign-Owned Subsidiaries in Canada, 1964-1969* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1972).

within the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party.

Far from being a tool employed exclusively by Canada's economic and political elites, economic nationalism became a powerful rhetorical weapon in the hands of working people to be used against companies that closed plants.⁶ Trade unionists increasingly relied on nationalist rhetoric to legitimate their demands for increased legislative protection for Canadian workers. When workers evoked nation they called forth the notion of a community of interest encompassing the entire country -- what Benedict Anderson calls an "imagined community."⁷

The sources upon which I build my argument in this chapter differ dramatically from those found in the previous one. In the United States, the resistance to plant shutdowns is primarily documented in the records of local coalitions held in area archives. This was a reflection of the non-institutional nature of the anti-shutdown movement in the United States and its ties to places in decline such as Youngstown and Pittsburgh. But in Canada, the records left behind by the anti-shutdown movement are preserved in the archival collections of the major trade unions. In this chapter, then, the narrative shifts perspective, as the nature of the story requires that it be told from the union's point of view. Another major difference in the sources found in Canada and

⁶ Jack Granatstein, *Yankees Go Home? Canadians and Anti-Americanism* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1996), x. For an interesting discussion of national emblems and symbols in France see: Pierre Nora, ed. *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past* (New York: Columbia University, 1998).

⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 5-6. For a discussion of how working people used language as a cultural weapon to express their discontent, see Alan Pred's study of the "folk geography" of Stockholm in Alan Pred and Michael John Watts, *Reworking Modernity: Capitalisms and Symbolic Discontent* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 111.

the United States is that government records play a much larger role in this chapter. While plant shutdowns in the United States were dismissed as localized campaigns, with government agencies showing great reluctance to interfere, plant shutdowns in Canada were of great concern to politicians at all levels of governance with government institutions compelled to consider action to soften the blow of economic displacement.

The structure of this chapter begins with an examination of the regulatory environment governing the shutting of plants in the 1960s before moving to a case study of the closing of Dunlop Tire in 1970. Dunlop acts as a window through which to see the relationship between plant shutdowns, union reactions, political protests and government legislation. The closing of Dunlop also established a pattern of nationalist defiance in worker responses to shutdowns seen during the early 1980s. Part of this divergent meaning in Canada and the United States was derived from the simple fact that economic displacement in Ontario did not include the shutdown of large sites of production such as integrated steel mills and auto assembly plants. We can see, then, that the closure and eventual demolition of abandoned factories did not reconfigure a town's identity overnight. While the dominant narrative of deindustrialization in the United States enshrined the names of hard-hit industrial cities like "Youngstown," "Detroit," "Akron," and "Pittsburgh," Canadians associated shutdowns with departing foreign-owned companies like "Dunlop," "Bendix," "Houdaille," and "Tung-Sol." This chapter therefore argues that Canada's nascent anti-shutdown movement had a ready villain in the foreign multinational corporation, usually American, that allowed it to stoke the fires of national outrage and advance public demands for corporate social responsibility.

Prior to 1969, only common and labour law constrained managerial prerogative to close plants in Canada. Under common law, employers provided "reasonable notice"

to workers of their termination, usually fixed at one pay period.⁸ In addition, the Ontario Labour Relations Board held that an employer could legally terminate its operations in a plant "for cause":

'We start with the proposition that an employer is free to run his business so long as he does not contravene his collective agreement or act for motives proscribed by the governing labour legislation. If not prohibited by the collective agreement, an employer can transfer operations, close down or contract out for genuine business reasons. He cannot, however, take these initiatives for purposes of defeating employee rights under the applicable statute.'⁹

Admittedly, common and labour law only "regulated" job loss in the most general terms. In so doing, however, they afforded more protection against lay-off than collective bargaining. Aside from provisions for seniority, supplemental unemployment benefits and early retirement, few collective agreements in Canada provided for job security.¹⁰ A 1967 study identified only eighty-seven collective agreements, representing 38,000 workers, with advance notice or consultation clauses.¹¹ Consequently, plant closings in Canada were not subject to mandatory collective bargaining. Indeed, even though the Canadian government had signed a Declaration of the International Labour Organization in 1963, stipulating that the termination of employment should not take place "unless

⁸ Morley Gunderson. *Permanent Layoffs, Dismissals and Plant Closings: The Role of the Labour Market, Collective Bargaining and Legislation*. A Report to the McDonald Commission on the Economic Union (Ottawa, 1984), 6.6-6.7.

⁹ Jeffrey Sack and C. Michael Mitchell. *Ontario Labour Relations Board: Law and Practice* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1985).

¹⁰ AO. Ontario Ministry of Labour. RG 7-20-0, Box 2, File 69: Plant Closures and Layoffs, 1970-1971. Research Branch. Ontario Department of Labour. "Background Information on Advance Notice and Severance Pay." 20 January 1970.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

there is valid reason," the commitment to job security was conditional. Indeed, Canada's official response to the declaration claimed that "Canadian custom favours procedures for termination of employment worked out by the individual employer, or preferably developed by labour and management in agreement."¹² Yet this stance of non-interference came increasingly under review.

Beginning in the early 1960s, Canadian federal and provincial governments began to play a more active role in softening the blow of economic displacements. In 1963, the federal government formed the Canadian Manpower Service to assist workers in finding new employment in anticipation of economic dislocation from international trade liberalization.¹³ The following year, Justice Samuel Friedman filed his report on Canada's railroad labour problems recommending that employers provide advance notice of all major changes to workplace relations.¹⁴ Other voices calling at this time for mandatory advance warning of job loss included the Economic Council of Canada in December 1964 and the Task Force on Labour Relations in 1969. Nineteen sixty-nine turned out to be a watershed year, when the province of Quebec became the first

¹² AO. Department of Labour. RG 27, Volume 4491, File 104-1-4, page 2.

¹³ The common law principle of advance notice in cases of individual termination was formalized by legislation in Saskatchewan (1929), Manitoba (1951), Nova Scotia (1964) and Newfoundland (1969). NAC. Department of Labour. RG 27. Box 4465, File 47-2-4 pt 1. Memo, page 4.

¹⁴ NAC. Department of Employment and Immigration. RG 118, Accession 1985-86/071, Box 90, File 3325-2-3 pt 1. Memo from Deputy Minister L. E. Couillard to the Minister, 8 June 1970; and Arthur Krugar. *Human Adjustment to Industrial Conversion* (draft study prepared for the Task Force on Labour Relations). April 1968.

jurisdiction in North America to require mandatory advance notice of mass layoffs.¹⁵ Many provincial jurisdictions and the federal government considered following suit.¹⁶ A January 1970 meeting of the Ontario Committee on Labour Relations, for example, expressed its intention to codify present common law principles, possibly extending their provisions somewhat and legislate modest severance pay.¹⁷ However, outside of Quebec, the issue remained in the political realm.

As we will see below, political events soon pushed the Ontario government to go well beyond their original intentions. By 1970, the charged political atmosphere generated by boisterous economic nationalists, provided the combustible material easily ignited by the closing of mills and factories and fanned into popular protest. The first spark came when British-owned Dunlop Tire announced its intention to close an East End

¹⁵ The Quebec Manpower Vocational Training and Qualification Act of 1969 provided advance notice of mass terminations of more than ten employees on a sliding scale of four months for terminations of more than 300 workers, three months for the lay-off of 100-299 employees, and two months for the dismissal of 10-99 employees. Jean Sexton, *Fermetures d'usines et reclassement de la main-d'oeuvre au Québec* (Québec: Ministère du travail, 1975).

¹⁶ Ronald Saunders. *Permanent Layoffs: Some Issues in the Policy Debate* (Toronto: Ontario Economic Council, 1981), 8. British Columbia (1973), Manitoba (1973), Saskatchewan (1972) and the Federal government (1973) also developed legislation dealing with "technological change" with the aim to compel companies to renegotiate their collective agreements in cases where technological change appeared likely to fundamentally alter the condition or security of employment. The Canada Labour Code, for example, was amended to require 90 days notice of major technological change to unions.

¹⁷ AO. Ontario Ministry of Labour. RG 7-20-0. Box 2, File 69, Plant Closures and Layoffs, 1970-1971. "Discussion on Technological Change," 12 January 1970.

Toronto factory employing 597 people.¹⁸ The factory specialized in the manufacture of industrial rubber products such as conveyor belting and hosing. Almost overnight, Dunlop became -- in the context of Great Britain's diminishing influence -- a concrete example of Canada's growing dependency on the United States. In "doing a Dunlop," the company's name became a derogatory term applied to departing foreign-owned companies that abruptly laid-off their Canadian workers.¹⁹ Dunlop earned such a negative reputation in Canada that company directors decided to change its Canadian name to Whitby Tires.

Despite the best efforts of Canadian subsidiary president, Neville Proctor, to manage the closing announcement, reportedly even rehearsing his public statement announcing the closure in front of the company's public relations consultants, nothing could have prepared him for the political fire-storm unleashed.²⁰ Popular protest took the form of rallies at Queen's Park, vigils, a street benefit dance, picketing, and a court challenge. When workers, under the leadership of United Rubber Workers local president, Phil Japp, tried to buy the plant, Dunlop refused to sell the factory or to open the company's financial records for an independent audit. Seeing a political opportunity, the New Democratic Party canvassed much of Toronto's East End in the process of collecting thousands of signatures on a petition. Nationalist students marched from the University of Toronto campus to the rubber plant and a special edition of the University

¹⁸ AO. Ontario Ministry of Labour. RG 7-91 Interim Box 28, File: Dunlop of Canada. D. C. McNeill, Special Projects Officer to T. M. Eberlee, Deputy Minister. 5 October 1970.

¹⁹ Editorial, "Time of Grace," *Toronto Star* (10 April 1970).

²⁰ Alexander Ross, "Tale of a plant closure: no pat answers for 597," *Financial Post* (28 March 1970).

of Toronto *Varsity* savaged Dunlop.²¹ These two events signalled to the public that the fight against plant shutdowns had become a nationalist cause célèbre and the Dunlop workers their first martyrs. In this political climate, Dunlop's decision to give its workers only six weeks notice struck many as a "stark injustice."²² It connoted for many people the negative effects of foreign companies operating in Canada. Political-economist Melville Watkins spoke for many when he wrote that the "multi-nationality of a corporation matters."²³

Newspaper editors expressed overwhelming sympathy for the workers being displaced and wholehearted support for the introduction of new government regulations. It seems that the "fair size" of the factory and its seventy-one years of operation distinguished Dunlop from previous plant closings. In painting their sympathetic portrait of Dunlop workers, editors emphasized their advancing age, most being in their 40's and 50's, their long service with the company, and their Canadian citizenship. By comparison, editors stressed that Dunlop Tire was a huge foreign-controlled company and that the decision to close the Toronto plant probably originated outside Canada. "The

21 "Students Protest Dunlop Closing," *Oakville Journal Record* (22 April 1970). For a report on public protests including vigils, petitions and a benefit street dance see: "Negotiations Falter on Offer to Purchase, Operate Dunlop Plant," *Toronto Globe and Mail* (24 April 1970).

22 Harold Greer, "Queen's Park Report," *Brockville Recorder Times* (21 March 1970).

23 Melville Watkins, "Dunlop's demise is paid for by taxpayers," *Toronto Star* (2 April 1970). In responding to the Dunlop Tire closing, Toronto City Council adopted a resolution on 15 April 1970 condemning the "continuous process of the take-over of Canadian plants by foreign concerns." AO. RG 3-26. Box 376, File: Trade and Industry Branch-Plant Closings Trade and Development, January-December 1970. City Clerk to Premier John Robarts. 17 April 1970. The petition was forwarded to the next meeting of the Ontario cabinet.

suspicion is widespread that the decision was made-somewhere in the higher reaches of the huge multi-national concern that more profit could be made by transferring the production," the *Toronto Star's* editors cautioned. Such "tragedies" would happen time and again, they continued, until the adoption of adequate legislation. At the same time, the editor of the *Peterborough Examiner* argued that the interests of a multinational like Dunlop did not coincide with the "best interests of the Canadian people."²⁴ Thus, local protests entered national public discourse through the media, prompting legislative action because they lit the fire of Canadian economic nationalism.

The Dunlop shutdown "put a big question mark over the hallowed rights of company management to do as it pleases."²⁵ At a minimum, the editors of Canada's major establishment newspapers wanted the federal and provincial governments to regulate how foreign companies went about shutting plants in Canada. The *Toronto Globe & Mail*, for example, contended that the Ontario government had a duty to respond to the Dunlop shutdown. By claiming that companies should demonstrate to the public that the closing was unavoidable, editors revealed that they did not believe in the inevitability of industrial decline.²⁶ After Dunlop, even a reporter for the *Financial Post* thought a

²⁴ Editorial, "The Dunlop Caper," *Peterborough Examiner* (17 April 1970). Also see Jack Cahill, "Foreign-controlled companies blamed for most layoffs," *Toronto Daily Star* (Thursday 19 November 1979); and "Foreign control called unemployment cause," *Toronto Daily Star* (12 December 1970).

²⁵ Harold Greer, "Queen's Park Report," *Brockville Recorder Times* (21 March 1970).

²⁶ Editorial, "The Government has a duty," *Toronto Globe & Mail* (1 April 1970).

company should be required "to show at least some cause to somebody."²⁷ These reactions, brought about by protests on the streets of Toronto and an undercurrent of economic nationalism, reflected the unprecedented politicization of mill and factory closings. According to one *Montreal Star* columnist,

The impact of the Dunlop Toronto dismissal, and the success of the company ultimatums at the other two plants, have probably done more than any statistics to bring home to Ontario residents, at least in Ontario's golden horseshoe, the deterioration in the job market in the past two years.²⁸

In response to employee efforts to re-open the plant, Dunlop issued a press release on 17 March advising that it would not sell the factory building and equipment, advice that heightened public consternation still further.²⁹ The federal government was under intense pressure to nationalize the Dunlop Tire plant. Politically, the issue dominated question period as the Progressive Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party battered the government. Conveying his doubts that foreign-controlled companies treated their Canadian workers fairly, NDP leader Tommy Douglas pointed to the nationalization of the Dominion Steel Company (DOSCO) works in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia in 1967 as a shining example of what could be done in response to a

²⁷ Alexander Ross, "Tale of a plant closure: no pat answers for 597," *Financial Post* (28 March 1970).

²⁸ Michael Moore, "Ontario: Economists worry about next boom," *Montreal Star* (13 February 1971).

²⁹ Ontario Labour Relations Board. *Annual Report*. (Toronto, 1970), 356. The case was *Local 130 United Rubber, Cork, Linoleum and Plastic Workers of America v. Dunlop of Canada Limited and Scott-Atkinson International Ltd*,

foreign company that abandoned its Canadian workforce.³⁰ It is clear that the DOSCO example proved symbolically important in the public debate over Dunlop. For the *Toronto Daily Star*, " 'Pulling a Dosco' hasn't fully worked itself into the Canadian vocabulary to describe situations in which foreign owners decide to gather up their marbles, but it deserves to."³¹ Liberal Party finance minister E.J. Benson later stated that the economic nationalist claim that foreign-owned companies treated their Canadian workers unfairly was a "natural NDP premise" hatched by Ontario NDP leader, Stephen Lewis.³² In response, NDP Members of Parliament heckled back: "His dream is your nightmare." Such was the political climate of the day.

Discontent over the Dunlop closing spread to the ranks of the Liberal Party, whose Standing Committee on Policy and Research urged Trudeau "to take all measures

³⁰ Canada. *Hansard*, March 13, 1970.; NAC. RG March 19, 1970. Federal NDP leader Tommy Douglas called on the government to "take over and operate this plant, as was done with the Dosco steel plant in Sydney, at least until such time as the feasibility of the operation can be established and a course of action mapped out." At the time, the steel plant was widely seen as a public ownership success story. See, for example, Ben Malkin, "Job Security: Much more could be done when a plant closes down," *Ottawa Citizen* (21 April 1970).

³¹ Editorial, "Dunlop's plight," *Toronto Daily Star* (23 March 1970).

³² House of Commons. *Debates*. (15 December 1970), 2050 and *Debates* (21 September 1971), 8030. However, former finance minister Walter Gordon, the most prominent economic nationalist within the Liberal Party, later wrote that: "The directors of a US parent company...when faced with a choice between closing down a plant at home under the baleful eye of a watchful US government, or closing down a plant in friendly Canada can hardly be blamed for deciding to save US jobs at our expense." One of the strongest arguments presented by advocates of more government regulation over plant shutdowns thus hinged on the commonly held belief that American companies laid-off their Canadian workers first. Walter Gordon, "Foreign Ownership adds to Ontario Unemployment," *Toronto Daily Star* (Tuesday 28 March 1972).

necessary to keep the Toronto plant of Dunlop Rubber operating...."³³ For committee chairperson Stephen Clarkson, a prominent economic nationalist, the Dunlop situation represented "a critical example of a general national problem -- multi-national corporations taking steps that may be in their world interests without regard to the best interests of the host country." He also stressed that by requiring advance notice of mass terminations, workers would get a chance to adjust to job loss. There was therefore internal party pressure as well as external popular protests to do something dramatic about the Dunlop situation.

As for the federal government, there was no question, at least in the minds of the advisors to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, that the Dunlop plant was too old to be run profitably.³⁴ As a result, Trudeau declined to intervene directly, preferring instead to require pre-notification and mandatory severance pay fixed at a relatively low rate of two days per year employed (to a maximum of forty days wages) for displaced workers with a minimum of five years continuous service.

At the same time, the Federal government released a White Paper on Unemployment Insurance (UI) that recommended a major overhaul of the program: nearly doubling the maximum UI benefits, making all workers contribute to the plan and penalizing those companies that regularly laid off employees. A.G.W. Sinclair, the President of the Canadian Manufacturers Association, hoped that these changes would

³³ NAC. Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce. RG 20. Volume 1609, File 6-41. 1c. Stephen Clarkson to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. 14 April 1970. Clarkson refers to a Liberal Party of Ontario resolution entitled "Man and Social Change," adopted in 1966, that stated, in part, that due to the effects of automation and technological change there should be "obligations for employers to provide advance notice in case of shutdown or re-location."

³⁴ Robert W. Sexty. *Public Enterprise and Employment in Canada* (Technical Study 33) (Ottawa: Labour Market Development Task Force, 1981), 11.

deter more radical proposals to regulate the problem of plant closings. In the charged atmosphere after Dunlop went down, even the changes to UI were pitched by the government as a part of its larger legislative package to assist displaced workers.³⁵ In addition, the closing of Dunlop set in motion a chain of events that led to the adoption of the Foreign Investment Review Act two years later. By enabling the federal cabinet to disallow those foreign takeovers deemed not of "substantial public good," FIRA gave the anti-shutdown movement the legal basis to fight shutdowns.

In the face of this opposition, provincial politicians scrambled, as well, to legislate pre-notification. Whereas Premier John Robarts had initially declared in the legislature that the government "was not going to tell an industry what to do," his 21 April reversal was largely attributable to public sympathy for Dunlop employees.³⁶ To assuage these concerns, the government proposed amending the Employment Standards Act to compel companies to provide advance notice of mass terminations. The bill was first brought to Cabinet on 28 April and approved at its 12 May meeting.³⁷ Soon

³⁵ Editorial, "Mackasey package on labor laws," *London Free Press* (10 March 1971).

³⁶ AO. Ontario Ministry of Labour. RG 7-67. Box 3, File: Termination/Severance Pay Legislation Review, 1972-1974. M.L. Skolnik, Director of Research to Len Haywood, Chief Economist. Briefing Notes on Termination Legislation, page 2. 21 January 1976. Even though Labour Minister Bales publicly denied the legislation had anything to do with the Dunlop protests, the connection between the two was made explicit. The legislation sought to stop "five o'clock dismissals," counter-act the apparent "lack of government interest in and ability to act on terminations (Dunlop)" and respond to the Woods Task Force.

³⁷ AO. Cabinet Office. RG 75-6, Box 1, 1970, Cabinet Decisions. Memos. J.K. Reynolds, Secretary to the Cabinet to Dalton A. Bales, Minister of Labour. 28 April 1970. Also see: AO. Cabinet Office. RG 75-14 Cabinet Minutes, Box 40, File 1970 Labour.

thereafter, the Ontario legislature adopted the measure despite opposition demands for a longer notice period.³⁸ Henceforth, companies operating in Ontario had to provide advance warning of a mass termination of employees calculated by the number being displaced (see table ten).

Table 10: Notice of Mass Terminations, Ontario Employment Standards Act of 1970 ³⁹

Number of Employees Laid-off	Advance Notice Required
50-199	8 weeks
200-499	12 weeks
500 or more	16 weeks

These reforms did not go far enough for the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) or for the New Democratic Party. Dismissing the province's advance notice legislation as "woefully inadequate," critics on the Left pointed to the many inadequacies of the legislation including the fifty person or ten per cent (of the workforce) minimum thresholds; the absence of a severance pay provision; and the many loopholes available to employers.⁴⁰ For these reasons, Ontario's prenotification legislation was explained away

³⁸ "Ontario Bill Makes Employers Give Advance Layoff Notice," *Toronto Daily Star* (28 May 1970).

³⁹ Ronald S. Saunders, *Permanent Layoffs: Some Issues in the Policy Debate* (Toronto: Ontario Economic Council, 1981), 5.

⁴⁰ John W. Eleen and Ashley G. Bernardine. *Shutdown: The Impact of Plant Shutdown, Extensive Employment Terminations and Layoffs on the Workers and the Community* (Toronto: Ontario Federation of Labour, 1971), 90-91. Ontario's advance

by organized labour as the product of a government in "panic" over "the Dunlop situation." Following the lead of the OFL, New Democrat Member of Provincial Parliament, Jim Renwick, whose riding included the now closed Dunlop plant, complained that it was "difficult to conceive of a more pathetic response to the efforts of the NDP, and the labour movement, and the people of Ontario to ensure fair job security at Dunlop and elsewhere."⁴¹ For all the statute's weaknesses, the *Toronto Telegram* was undoubtedly justified in saying that it promised to be "a widely-accepted piece of legislation."⁴² Indeed, the Ontario government later concluded that advance notice had been "fairly well accepted by the Ontario community."⁴³ As economic nationalism had made the political climate inhospitable to laissez-faire arguments, the anti-shutdown movement found itself with its first -- albeit partial -- legislative victory.

These provincial and federal government initiatives provoked only muted public criticism from business. In private, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association (CMA), for example, tried unsuccessfully to convince the Ontario government to limit its advance notice requirements to cases of partial or complete plant closures. When the government went ahead and legislated all mass terminations of more than fifty persons within a six month period, the CMA's Ontario Manager complained it went "far beyond

notice of mass termination did not cover those workers with less than three months service, on fixed term contracts, on suspension for disciplinary reasons, laid-off due to labour disputes, bankruptcies, or temporary layoffs of less than 13 weeks.

⁴¹ *Ontario New Democrat* (May-June 1970).

⁴² Editorial, "New laws on layoffs," *Toronto Telegram* (22 April 1970).

⁴³ AO. Ontario Ministry of Labour. RG 7-67, Box 3, File 1: Review of Termination Legislation up to October 1974. "Submission to the Resources Development Policy Field. Advance Notice of Termination," 4.

what appeared to be the Government's original intention."⁴⁴ Nonetheless, the lobby group thanked Premier Robarts for his rational response "when this emotional subject brought the Government under severe attack," adding that "manufacturers could not fail to appreciate" the government's position.⁴⁵ As one business journalist explained, it was "hard for employers to oppose advance notice, unless they are prepared to be regarded as reactionaries."⁴⁶ Politically, they understood that the government had little choice but to respond.

As we have seen above, the fight against the Dunlop Tire closing culminated in amendments to the Ontario Employment Standards Act and the Canada Labour Code requiring advance notice of mass terminations and, in the case of the latter, providing for mandatory severance pay. In the second place, the fight to keep the plant operating brought together middle class economic nationalists and trade unionists in an unlikely coalition. Thereafter, the fate of the nation and the fate of industrial workers became conflated in the popular imagination and, in so doing, reinforced public demands that the state regulate the plant shutdown process. Despite their eventual failure to re-open the plant, the strength of this anti-shutdown movement convinced Ontario Cabinet Minister Stanley J. Randall to write to his colleague Dalton Bales, the Ontario Minister of Labour: "We should, however, learn a lesson from the Dunlop Corporation...so that we don't receive another barrage from the NDP permitting them to make a mountain out of a mole

⁴⁴ AO. RG 3-26. Box 177, File: Employment Standards Act, Labour, January 1970-December 1970. D.S. Keen, Manager, Ontario Division CMA to Premier John Robarts. 19 October 1970.

⁴⁵ AO. RG 3-26. Box 177, File: Employment Standards Act. Memo. 11 August 1970.

⁴⁶ John Schreiner, *The Financial Post* (13 June 1970).

hill."⁴⁷ Riding the wave of nationalist apprehension, the New Democratic Party had suddenly become a real political threat to the ruling Progressive Conservatives in the Spring of 1970.

In the years that followed, the Ontario Ministry of Labour received a flood of private complaints from Ontario businessmen and, subsequently, reviewed the efficacy of the province's advance notice regulations. In order to placate business supporters of the Progressive Conservative government, ministry official Ian Welton met with company executives across the province to discuss the application of the province's advance notice regulations. He found that some companies operating in the province already found loopholes in the legislation, and others simply ignored it. Most alarming was Welton's discovery that the managers at Stelco's Page-Hersey works in Welland, Ontario, got around the advance warning regulation by keeping 150 workers on continual notice. He reported that company managers spent "a fair amount of time and effort in arranging layoffs so as to take advantage of the '10% Rule'" (that allowed employers to lay-off more than fifty employees if it represented less than 10% of the overall workforce at the facility) and, in so doing, made "a complete farce" of the legislation.⁴⁸

The province's advance notice regulation was, at times, rendered meaningless by collective agreements. In March 1974, the Minister of Labour met with the "Big 4" auto makers to discuss the disturbing fact that only a "relatively small proportion" of

⁴⁷ AO. RG. 3-26. Box 376, File: Trade and Industry Branch-Plant Closings, Trade and Development, January-December, 1970. Stanley J. Randall to Dalton Bales. 3 April 1970. Government ministers made the connection between Dunlop and the legislation in their confidential correspondence.

⁴⁸ AO. Ontario Ministry of Labour. RG 7-67. Box 3, File: Review of Termination Legislation (Interviews), 1974. Report by Ian Welton. Advance Notice of Termination-Steel Company of Canada Ltd. (Page-Hersey Works and Welland Tube), 5-6. 8 August 1974.

auto layoffs came to the Minister's attention.⁴⁹ In response, the managers of Chrysler Canada pointed out that it was impossible to satisfy the requirements of the legislation. While the collective agreement with the United Auto Workers held that laid-off workers enjoyed recall rights for three years, the government considered them "terminated" after only twelve weeks. As a result, Chrysler found itself engaging in the "fairly meaningless ritual of [regularly] issuing the necessary notice in advance of the layoffs" to escape paying substantial sums of money in lieu of notice.⁵⁰ In consequence, senior officials in the Ministry of Labour remained uncertain over the legislation's "effectiveness in achieving its stated aims" of providing workers with clear and ample warning of impending job loss.⁵¹

The shortcomings of Ontario's new pre-notification regulations were not lost on academics such as Fred Caloren at the University of Ottawa. In his exhaustive study of layoffs, shutdowns and closures in Ontario from January 1971 to June 1972, Caloren found that employers routinely evaded provincial minimum pre-notification requirements through graduated layoffs.⁵² To that end, one company managed to lay-off

⁴⁹ AO. Ontario Ministry of Labour. RG 7-67. Box 3, File: Review of Termination Legislation (Interview), 1974. Report by Ian Welton. Advance Notice of Termination: Chrysler. 25 April 1974.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Report by Ian Welton. 11 September 1974, page 4. A Supplemental Unemployment Benefits (SUB) plan required an employer to establish a trust fund to top-off the income of temporary laid-off workers. It was designed as a way to keep temporarily laid-off workers available for work.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Intra-Memo from J. R. Kinley, Director of Research Branch. 8 October 1974.

⁵² Fred Caloren. *Layoffs, Shutdowns and Closures in Ontario Manufacturing, Mining and Trade Establishments, January 1971 - June 1972* (Ottawa: unpublished paper, 1974), 252.

1,300 workers in four locations during 1971-72 without giving notice because each termination affected less than ten per cent of the employees.⁵³

As business opposition to the new legislation mounted, Ministry officials secretly recommended that the government replace the province's advance notice requirements with a severance pay program. Economically, this modification of the law would have limited the substantial financial obligations incurred by employers who found themselves paying in lieu of advance notice, something Ontario employers continued to complain bitterly about. However, the political cost of rolling back employment standards regulations worried civil servants and provincial politicians alike: "Removing a benefit once bestowed may be politically difficult. Consequently, the separate schedule [mass termination advance notice] may have to be kept unless an adequate sweetener were found."⁵⁴ A March 1975 letter from the Ontario Federation of Labour to the Deputy Minister of Labour called for the adoption of a pension plan termination insurance program, the Ministry considered it in exchange for "less popular changes to the notice of termination section of the Act."⁵⁵ Yet while this plan of action might have been "tactically attractive," the potential political costs in proceeding proved too great.

It is important to note that legislation won in the wake of the Dunlop closing left

⁵³ AO. Ontario Ministry of Labour. RG 7-12. Box 80, File: 4228. John Kinley, Director of the Research Branch to R. D. Johnston, Deputy Minister of Labour. Memo on "Mass Lay-Offs in Ontario During 1971," 3. June 1972.

⁵⁴ AO. Ontario Ministry of Labour. RG 7-67. Box 2, File 2: Review of Termination Legislation, 1975. Cabinet Submissions, James M. Mackay, Policy Development Co-ordinator. 29 April 1975 and 12 May 1975.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, D.E. Hushion, Executive Director, Employment Services Division to J. R. Kinley, Research Branch. Re.: Pension Plan Termination Insurance. 26 March 1975.

the larger issue of how foreign companies should close their Canadian plants unresolved. This question was taken up by trade unionists and their political allies in the NDP.⁵⁶ Despite tensions between left-nationalists in the Waffle faction of the NDP and senior trade unionists, exacerbated by the Waffle's blistering assaults on "international unionism," economic nationalists and trade unionists came to draw upon Robert Laxer's "deindustrialization" thesis.⁵⁷ Laxer's study appeared to offer a compelling explanation of plant closures across Southern Ontario by blaming "deindustrialization" on Canada's dependent relationship on the United States. Thus, years before the deindustrialization thesis took hold in the United States, Canadian trade unionist Stewart Cooke referred to the "crime of de-industrialization" when pointing to the wave of plant closings in Ontario's industrial heartland.⁵⁸

Laxer's notion of deindustrialization resonated with economic nationalists because it tapped into the common belief that American multinationals operating in Canada were closing branch plants in order to protect jobs in the United States.⁵⁹ As

⁵⁶ University of Windsor Archives, Papers of Hugh Peacock. Box 7, File 78, Cliff Pilkey to John Moynahan, Plant Chair. Dominion Forge. UAW Local 195.

⁵⁷ Robert Laxer, ed. *(Canada) Ltd. The Political Economy of Dependency* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973).

⁵⁸ Stewart Cook quoted in "No One Was Happy As Closing Debated," *Oshawa Times Gazette* (13 July 1978). To see how the deindustrialization thesis contributed to the politicization of industrial restructuring: Rianne Mahon, *The Politics of Industrial Restructuring: Canadian Textiles* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1984), 134.

⁵⁹ Despite its usefulness to working people, anti-nationalists on the political left dismissed deindustrialization as a myth "symbolic of the theoretical poverty of left-nationalism." See: Steve Moore and Debi Wells, "The Myth of Canadian De-industrialization," in Craig Heron, ed. *Imperialism, Nationalism and Canada* (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1977), 46.

journalist Robert Perry reported in his popular book, *GALT, USA*: "Several times in the Grand Valley I heard about layoffs in subsidiaries implemented to keep the payrolls fat in Pittsburgh and Akron, and I have no reason to disbelieve the accounts."⁶⁰ In this way, the convergence of economic nationalism and the anti-shutdown movement resulted in a fundamentally different understanding of the issue in Canada; hence, every time a mill or factory closed, it signalled the negative effects of American economic domination over Canada. Even when the factory was British-owned, as in the case of Dunlop's industrial rubber products factory in Toronto, it became intertwined with American economic domination.

This, admittedly simplified, perception of "American bosses" versus "Canadian workers" came to the fore when Columbus McKinnon, a manufacturer of chains and hoists, closed its St. Catharines, Ontario, plant seven months after a strike had been called on 23 October 1977. It chose to supply the Canadian market from the United States. For local UAW president John Washuta, the shutdown proved foreign ownership was "detrimental to the welfare of Canadian workers."⁶¹ In response, the Canadian region of the United Auto Workers launched an aggressive boycott against Columbus McKinnon products. Drawing up a list of alternative suppliers of hoists and chains, UAW staffers canvassed virtually every company with whom they had collective agreements to press them to change suppliers. Their efforts met with surprising success. At Northern Telecom, for instance, where the UAW represented office staff, the change was made

⁶⁰ Robert L. Perry, *GALT, USA: The 'American Presence' in a Canadian City* (Toronto: Maclean-Hunter Limited, 1971), 52.

⁶¹ NAC. Canadian Auto Workers. MG 28 I 119. Box 354, File 23: Columbus McKinnon Ltd. Memoranda and Correspondence, 1977-1979. CNCP Telegram. John Washuta, Local President, Fred Hancock, Plant Chairman to Robert White, UAW Canada Director. 18 August 1978.

quietly without bothering upper management.⁶² Elsewhere, the managers of the GM diesel plant, Massey Ferguson in Toronto, and Pullman Trailmobile in Brantford agreed immediately to the request.

The "buy-Canadian aspect of our argument," the UAW noted, compelled many businessmen to agree to the boycott even when they worked for American owned companies.⁶³ Favourable responses were elicited from many American-owned companies such as American Motors, Bundy Tubing, Sheller-Globe and Long-Manufacturing. The local UAW president at Daal Specialties in Collingwood, for example, urged the plant manager "to cease dealing with such a company, that obviously regard the Canadian people as nothing more than pawns on a chess board, that can be moved and removed at will."⁶⁴ Ironically, the company's affirmative response came from corporate headquarters in Mt. Clements, Michigan.

By contrast, some Canadian managers did not appreciate the UAW's brazen advice. For his part, union organizer Pat Clancy reported from Sarnia that three small companies met his request with stone silence and a curt " 'we'll buy from whoever we like.'"⁶⁵ In St. Catharines, the home of the closed Columbus McKinnon plant as well, the president of Kelsey-Hayes initially refused to "acquiesce" even though he acknowledged

⁶² *Ibid.*, B. Rovers, International Representative to Robert White. 6 December 1978.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Gord Parker, International Representative to Robert White. 23 November 1978.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Ed Robinson, President UAW Local 1474 (DAAL Specialties in Collingwood, Ontario) to Company Management. 5 October 1978.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, Pat Clancy, International Representative to Robert White. November 1978.

the "seriousness" of the situation. Following the reception of a hoist, UAW plant chairman Bill Dow "laid it right on the line to him saying if the Company [was] going to use Columbus-McKinnon products that he had better be prepared for lots of shutdowns and sit-downs. In addition, Brother Dow pointed out we have approximately 40 laid off Columbus McKinnon workers in this area and if they heard we were using Columbus McKinnon products made in the United States, undoubtedly there would be an informational picket line go up...."⁶⁶ To avoid a confrontation, Kelsey Hayes ordered the cancellation of all future orders with Columbus McKinnon. Although these efforts failed to compel Columbus McKinnon to reopen its St. Catharines plant, the boycott campaign re-assured workers that their union could do something meaningful in the face of a plant closure and that its actions might have contributed to the Columbus McKinnon's decision in 1979 to return the production of chains and hoists to another city in Canada.

The legislative successes of 1970-71 and the broad public appeal of the UAW fight-back campaign at Columbus McKinnon left union leaders and economic nationalists hungry for more. When a wave of plant shutdowns struck the province in 1980, job loss, once again pushed to the political forefront. Indeed, business correspondent Anthony Whittingham provoked a public outcry when he revealed that Sealed Power Company had informed its 180 employees in Stratford, Ontario, in a "nasty, brutish and short" note that the plant "will be closed until further notice effective today."⁶⁷ By the summer of 1980, "the angry mood in Ontario" could be attributed to "the cumulative impact of the relatively large number of shutdowns during the past year."

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, William J. Marshall, International Representative to Robert White. 2 November 1978.

⁶⁷ Anthony Whittingham, *Maclean's* (25 August 1980), 32-34.

For the first time since the 1930s, workers across Ontario took direct action against their American employers and returned to the famed sit-ins conducted in the formative days of industrial unionism.

By June 1980, the Canadian UAW was primed to escalate its resistance to plant closings when 350 delegates gathered in Port Elgin for their regular council meeting. Instead of the usual low key affair, delegate after delegate from doomed plants rose to say their good-byes. As Wendy Cuthbertson recalled: "The horror of what was happening was focused as never before."⁶⁸ Responding to the emotion, Canadian UAW director Bob White told delegates that something "dramatic" needed to be done to focus public attention on the crisis facing industrial workers.⁶⁹

Responding to the meeting's electrifying effect, Bendix Automotive delegate Rick Byrne returned to Windsor to lead a six-hour occupation by twenty workers. The plant's closing just prior to the council meeting had heightened anti-American feeling in Windsor where workers such as Paul Hansen claimed Bendix preferred to keep its American workers on the job.⁷⁰ During the occupation, workers lowered the plant's Canadian flag to half mast, thus sending a message of national mourning.⁷¹ After years of

⁶⁸ Wendy Cuthbertson, " 'This is Our Real Estate': How They Fight Shutdowns in Ontario," *Solidarity* (March 1982).

⁶⁹ Julian Hayashi, "UAW eyes plant takeover to fight closures," *London Free Press* (23 June 1980).

⁷⁰ Paul Hansen interviewed by Steven High at his Windsor home in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WMA.

⁷¹ Sheila McGovern, "Bendix Powderkeg! Peace Talks Continue," *Windsor Star* (24 June 1980). It was also reported that workers gathered outside the plant's gate complained that "Canadians are always suffering at the hands of Americans."

health and safety concerns about asbestos used in automotive brakes manufactured in the plant, union staffer Andy Morocko recalled that the decision to occupy the closed plant was taken in his office: "We said enough of this shit. These guys have left us with cripples."⁷² Like the sit-down strikers of the 1930s, Morocko and his co-workers wanted to send the American owners a defiant message that "you're not just going to leave us." Forced by public opinion to the negotiating table, the company agreed to what Andy called a "beautiful" close-out agreement. Ed Lawrenson also recalled with pride his own role in the illegal protest: "We were the first ones who did it. And it worked out so well for us that there were four or five places that closed down within the next [few] years that took that strategy."⁷³

The Bendix sit-down strike was soon eclipsed by the two week occupation of the Houdaille Bumper plant in Oshawa. All two hundred employees of Houdaille occupied the plant on 8 August 1980. They prepared themselves for a long siege by bringing all of the essentials of modern life into the plant: sleeping bags, food, a television set, a dart board and dozens of decks of cards. Frank Byra notified UAW readers of *Solidarity* that the sit-down strikers at Houdaille Industries in Oshawa, Ontario, were acting on behalf of workers across Canada: "I could be home sleeping in a soft bed. But I've made up my mind to stay here because it's time we showed the plant owners across the country that they have to start treating their employees with respect....We're standing up by sitting

⁷² Andy Morocko interviewed by Steven High at his Windsor home in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WMA.

⁷³ Ed Lawrenson interviewed by Steven High at his home in St. Clair Shores in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WMA.

down.”⁷⁴ Economic nationalism gave the occupation an added sense of national purpose.

In the days that followed, the protesters received hundreds of telegrams in support and a steady stream of politicians and union leaders. Houdaille's decision to close the plant was particularly galling because the Foreign Investment Review Agency (FIRA) had approved the purchase of the company by an American conglomerate in December 1979. At the time, workers feared, rightly as it turned out, that the new owner would close down production in Oshawa. As a result, a sign displayed prominently during the occupation read “Another FIRA Giveaway” and Canadian flags billowed from every window.⁷⁵ As the *Financial Times* editorialized, Houdaille Bumper provided the pan-ultimate economic nationalist passion play:

The company behavior that provoked the sit-in of 200 workers at Houdaille Industries Ltd of Oshawa has been roundly condemned by all the professional nationalists and political axe-grinders of the land. That was to be expected. It provided an almost perfect text of their oft-repeated sermons.⁷⁶

Television viewers across the country took pride in seeing Canadian workers mowing the lawn and trimming the hedges and leading their families through the immaculately clean plant. “It’s our plant now,” declared Bob Valliers, a thirty-seven year man.

At its most basic level, the fight at Houdaille stemmed from miserly pension eligibility and severance pay offered by the departing American company. If left unchallenged, thirty-eight of the plant’s 200 workers under fifty-five years of age with more than thirty years service would have been ineligible to collect a pension until age

⁷⁴ Dave Elsila, “Standing Up by Sitting Down,” *Solidarity* (5 September 1980).

⁷⁵ “Kicked Out, They Kicked Back,” *Solidarity* (August 1980).

⁷⁶ Editorial, “Tougher plant closing laws not answer,” *Financial Times of Canada* (25 August 1980).

sixty-five. By the end of the two week occupation, "the thirty-eight," as they became known, won the right to retire early with full pension rights. In addition, the company reluctantly agreed to augment severance payments from one week's pay for every eight years worked to \$200 (+) for each year of service. Accordingly, one worker with twenty-nine years service received a lump sum payment of \$7,250 instead of the initial \$1,332 offered by the company.

Acknowledging the strike's importance, the Canadian UAW accorded strike pay in an illegal strike for the first time in its history. Canadian UAW official Buzz Hargrove called the Houdaille occupation an historic victory for labour:

"You've not only shown that workers can go out and win a better settlement. You've served notice to every politician in this country that workers are not going to go on taking it and that they are going to have to bring legislation restricting company's rights to close plants and protecting people from the terrible effects of these closings."⁷⁷

Similarly, film-maker Laura Sky called the showdown "enormously significant" as it provided a "model of militant and dignified action" for Canadian workers defying KKR, an American multinational.⁷⁸

For Canadian workers, it seemed that economic nationalism and worker militancy paid off. Seeking greater compensation for their job loss, workers at Beach Foundry in

⁷⁷ WRL. UAW. Research Department. Box 116, Folder 116-117. *Newsletter*. Public Relations Department. Canada.

⁷⁸ NAC. Canadian Auto Workers. MG 28 I119, United Auto Workers, Box 309, File 11, Films. Publicity UAW Proposal (Houdaille sit-down). 6 September 1980. Laura Sky to Wendy, Buzz and Doug.

Ottawa also occupied their plant that summer.⁷⁹ Beach Foundry worker Brian Hill recalled a spontaneous decision on the part of plant workers: "A group of the guys started talking amongst ourselves and word went around the plant that -- this day we kept watching stuff moving out of the plant -- we all decided at 9:30 after break [to] end production until we got what we wanted."⁸⁰ At Beach, as well, the company capitulated (at least partially) to their demands. The settlement accorded Brian and his co-workers severance pay. Like Dunlop ten years earlier, people saw in these factory occupations further evidence that Canadian workers needed protection from American companies.

In the wake of these disputes, the Ontario government announced amendments to the Employment Standards Act in the fall of 1980 in order to encourage the portability of pensions, compel employers to participate in adjustment committees and ensure that they continued to pay their employees benefits throughout the pre-notification period. To keep up the pressure on the provincial government, the Ontario Federation of Labour mounted an aggressive political action campaign entitled "Ontario Can Work," culminating in an October 1980 rally of approximately 10,000 trade unionists from across Ontario at the provincial legislature. In preparation, the Niagara Peninsula's

⁷⁹ Like the others, the shutdown of Beach Foundry and the subsequent sit-down strike took on nationalist overtones. However, the plant had been sold by its American parent to a Montreal-based holding-company a year prior to the closing. Peeling away the nationalist discourse prevalent in oral history narratives, we find that the plant had actually fallen victim to Quebec *étatisme* when a provincial government grant convinced the company to consolidate its operations in Montmorency, Quebec. In fact, the spectre of the American multinational remains so strongly attached to the plant shutdown phenomenon that a recent short documentary film about Beech foundry mistakenly blames the Americans for extinguishing a century's old tradition of appliance manufacturing in the nation's capital. Ottawa District Labour Council-Workers' Heritage Committee of Ottawa-Carleton. Beach Foundry interviews.

⁸⁰ Brian Hill interviewed by Ken Clavette at his home in 1996. The videotape is held at the City of Ottawa Archives.

UAW Local 199 gathered three hundred signs, a large banner, three coffins (each representing a recent plant closing), and three Maple leaf flags. Notably, one of these three flags featured a "big wedge through the Maple leaf indicating Plant Closures and Unemployment."⁸¹ But nationalist sentiment at the protest took many forms:

Heading up U[nited] E[lectrical Workers]'s contingent was a visual display on runaway plants that elicited an enthusiastic response....The display featured a costumed Uncle Sam with a placard reading 'For Higher Profits,' and he carried a long chain that had attached to it brightly painted mock-ups of six UE plants or operations that have closed. There were also two TV sets which depicted the loss of Canada's home entertainment industry to the United States and other off-shore countries.⁸²

Those in attendance cheered when they heard Bob White say that the worker occupation of the Houdaille, Beach, Bendix and Tung-Sol plants showed the country that "we can do something" in the face of shutdowns.⁸³

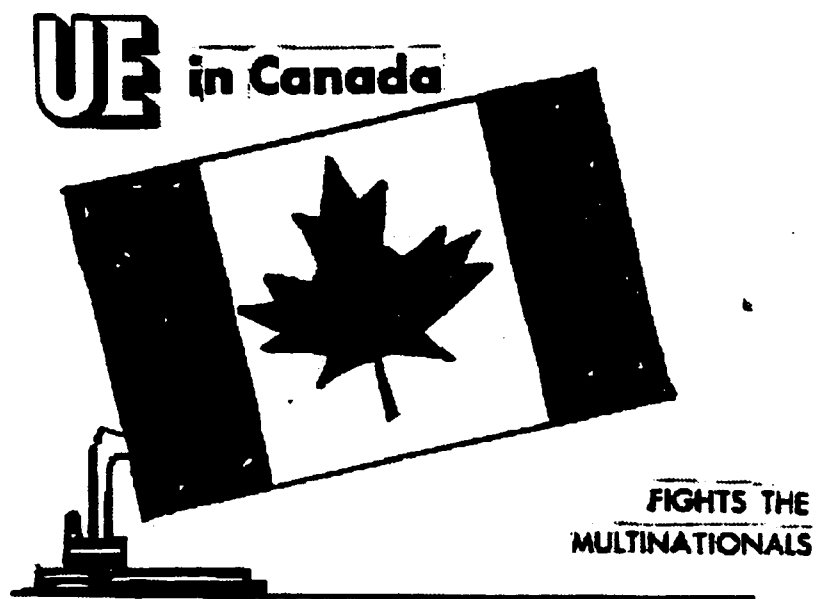
Forced to go further, the Ontario government formed a Select Committee of the Legislature in the late Fall of 1980 to investigate plant shutdowns. Committee transcripts reveal that members from all three political parties associated mill and factory closings with concerns over American control and repeatedly inquired about the ratio of foreign-owned and domestically-owned plants that underwent closure. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business sharply criticized the Committee's support of strict regulations against capital divestment:

⁸¹ NAC. Canadian Auto Workers. MG 28 I119. Box 324, File 2: Ontario Select Committee on Plant Shutdowns, 1980-82. William J. Marshall, International Representative to Robert White. 18 October 1980.

⁸² "Tory Measures on Plant Closings termed Political Window-Dressing," *UE News (Canadian Edition)* 43, 17 (27 October 1980), 1.

⁸³ NAC. Canadian Auto Workers. MG 28 I119 Volume 250, File 2. Robert White speech to OFL demonstration at Queen's Park. 18 October 1980.

Illustration 6: "UE in Canada fights the multinationals," Fred Wright



Source: University of Pittsburgh Archives. UE. Fred Wright Cartoon Collection.

Reading the Committee testimony and discussion, one gets the distinct impression that the Committee is looking for a villain-a villain who can be forced to pay the price of his own malfeasance. Members must ask themselves, which corporation is responsible for high interest rates? Whose fault is foreign ownership? Who is responsible for the saturation of the Ontario market by imports? Whose fault is poor management of a business and how do you force the individual to pay? This business of assigning fault for layoffs and shut-downs is a fruitless exercise.⁸⁴

Industry Minister Larry Grossman also told committee members in no uncertain terms that firms closed plants for economic reasons, "not reasons of patriotism."⁸⁵ Finally, the Canadian Manufacturer's Association and the Railway Association of Canada advised the committee, in a joint submission, that it was impossible to act against multinational corporations without, at the same time, hurting domestically owned enterprises too. Stigmatized by their association with American multinationals, Canadian-owned companies discovered they could not escape the expanding regulatory regime being built in response to the spectre of capital flight.

In response, the Committee pointed to the regulatory regime erected in Western Europe and reminded opponents of the unfair treatment of Canadian workers at Bendix and Houdaille.⁸⁶ To be sure, European regulations of plant closures had long acted as a

⁸⁴ AO. RG 49-173, Box C-295, Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Exhibit 75-80, page 3.

⁸⁵ AO. Select Committees. RG 49-173. Box C-294, Transcripts of Select Committee on Plant Shutdowns and Employee Adjustment. (Wednesday 5 November 1980), 1

⁸⁶ AO. Select Committees. RG 49-173. Box C-294, Transcripts of the Select Committee on Plant Shutdowns and Employee Adjustment (Tuesday 4 November 1980), 14-28 and (Wednesday 5 November 1980), 6-14.

model for Canadian legislators and anti-shutdown activists.⁸⁷ Generally speaking, European governments compelled companies to provide advance notice of mass layoffs, pay severance to displaced workers and accord them preferential hiring rights at other company facilities.⁸⁸ In the second place, several countries such as the Netherlands, France and Greece required state approval before a mill or factory ended production. Modest fines and the non-enforcement of regulations nonetheless took some of the teeth out of state intervention. In fact, the OECD noted that those states that required companies to justify their decisions to close facilities, had never exercised this veto power in practice.⁸⁹ They had merely engaged in symbolic politics. For these reasons, even though many European jurisdictions stressed the employer's obligation to consult both workers and government in the process of plant closings, plant shutdowns in Seneffe, Belgium, in the mid-1970s did not differ dramatically from those in Ontario.⁹⁰

87 Chris Jecchinis. *Public Policy and Institutional Arrangements Concerning Redundancies in Certain West European Countries and their Relevance for Canada in General and Ontario in Particular* (Thunder Bay: Lakehead University Department of Economics, 1978), 58.

88 Canadian Labour Market Productivity. *Labour Adjustments in Canada* (Ottawa, 1986), xv.

89 OECD. *Job Security and Industrial Relations* (Paris, 1979), 11. Even though France's Labour Inspectorate had the right to disallow dismissals (after 1974), the OECD found this right was "hardly ever used."

90 Anon. "Redundancy Law and Practice: Belgium," *European Industrial Relations Review* 89 (1981), 9-10. When, for example, British Leyland decided in the late 1970s to close its plant in Seneffe, Belgium, the company's management informed the union "without delay," allowing for 28 days notice. In accordance with Belgian labour law, British Leyland then negotiated an agreement with the union that included unemployment insurance supplements and early retirement for older workers. Displaced workers also received lump sum severance payments from a state run, employer financed, fund based on their age and seniority.

Even so, the inspiring myth of a more interventionist European approach became a compelling argument for Canadian trade unionists and economic nationalists.

Citing the more aggressive stance ostensibly taken in Europe, the Select Committee released its interim report on 12 December 1980, calling on the government to go beyond its pending legislation in order to require severance pay. Politically, it justified the measure by once again invoking the spectre of the American multinational corporation: "The decision is not only a head office decision but in branch plants one which is made with little input from Canadian management."⁹¹ Despite being disbanded after an intervening election, the Select Committee impelled the Conservative government of William Davis to act on severance pay legislation, thereby making Ontario the second jurisdiction in Canada, after the Federal government, to do so.

Although the adoption of severance pay legislation softened the blow of displacement for some workers, many did not benefit from the legislation. As women tended to work in smaller plants than men, they were far less likely to benefit from the statutory regulations introduced to protect employees in plant shutdowns. This became abundantly clear when Dominion Auto Accessories closed its doors on 20 May 1983 putting forty-six Windsor autoworkers out of work. Ninety-five percent of these employees were women. Despite its modest size, the maker of protective lighting equipment and car mirrors sparked a political controversy. As the number of employees dismissed fell just under the fifty person threshold set by the 1981 severance-pay law, none of the long-service employees qualified for the mandatory payments of one week's pay for every year worked. Even though the company had employed 150 workers only a few years previously, the US-controlled company managed to duck its obligations

⁹¹ AO. Select Committees. RG 49-173, Bx C-294, Select Committee on Plant Shutdowns and Adjustment. *Interim Report*. (December 1980), 33.

through gradual lay-offs. In fact, each employee, with at least ten years service, would have qualified for an average lump sum payment of \$4,700 had there had been four additional people laid-off.⁹² Instead, since the employer was not legally obligated to offer a penny, the union only managed to negotiate a paltry \$150 for each employee.

Dominion Auto Accessories was remarkable only for the publicity. A memo prepared for the Ontario Minister of Labour estimated that only one-third of terminated employees in Ontario actually received severance pay.⁹³ Small workplaces, bankrupt companies and employees with less than ten years seniority fell outside the legislation. As it turned out, severance pay would have made an enormous difference for the employees of Dominion Auto Accessories, many of them "women in their 40s and 50s." These women it must be remembered had "roots, a home. They won't be able to find any work."⁹⁴ In an extraordinary move, the joint labour-management manpower adjustment committee formed at the plant called it quits after only three meetings, deciding unanimously to use the money saved by suspending job placement efforts to purchase extended medical benefits coverage for the displaced. As committee chairperson, T. L. Wickett explained: "...[i]t was felt that in a city with 26% unemployment the money would be better spent" this way. In effect, the committee notified the Federal

⁹² AO. RG 7-11. Box 54, File: Dominion Auto Accessories Ltd., Harry N. Shardlow to File. 11 February 1982.

⁹³ AO. RG 7-11. Box 54, File: Severance Pay Preparation, 1983. Memo. Harry N. Shardlow. 4 November 1983.

⁹⁴ AO. RG 7-11. Box 54. File: Dominion Auto Accessories Ltd.. Esther Thompson, UAW Local 195 recording secretary. Amalgamated Local 195 represented workers in Windsor's troubled auto parts plants. It was thus devastated by plant closures. In fact, of the 2 700 members it represented in January 1981, only 1 371 were left by December 1981.

government that not one of the twenty-nine Dominion Auto Accessories employees who requested assistance was placed in a new job.

Continued labour unrest in the early 1980s, including a successful eight day occupation of Windsor Bumper, prompted the Minister of Labour to demand preferential hiring rights for all workers in the province. To make his point, the Minister of Labour argued that the "refusal of some employers to give serious consideration to such problems" had "generated a degree of acrimony and labour-management tension in specific instances which has heightened public concern on this issue."⁹⁵ In resisting the push to force companies to justify their decision to close a plant before a public tribunal, the Ontario and Federal governments avoided breaking completely with managerial prerogative.

By the early 1980s, a string of legislative victories had relieved Ontario trade unionists of the burden of negotiating job placement, advance notice of plant closings, severance pay, and preferential hiring rights. At a time when American unions were having to exchange wage and benefit concessions for these very protective measures, Canada's unions adopted a tough "no-concessions" stance. For example, at its May 1982 convention, the Canadian Labour Congress overwhelmingly adopted a defiant resolution. To bolster local union resolve, the Canadian Region of the UAW created a "No Concession Fund" to supplement normal strike pay for those resisting demands for wage and benefit concessions. Union records suggest that rank-and-file workers broadly supported this principled stance, even at the risk of losing their own jobs. For his part, Andy Morocko recalled: "We were the sacrificial lambs. The labour movement in Canada, the whole

⁹⁵ Ontario. Ministry of Labour. *Preferential Hiring Rights in Business Relocations and Closures* (Toronto: June 1983), 1.

society, owes these guys a great debt."⁹⁶

Although economic nationalism succeeded in politicizing plant shutdowns, its success proved partial as the anti-shutdown movement largely failed either to re-open plants or reverse decisions publicly announced. As one senior trade unionist observed:

The Houdaille example, where the membership was solid, the union unambiguously supportive, and the public sympathetic shows that we can protest and even win some concessions, but even here we still lost the jobs and lost pension monies [in] the absence of pension portability.⁹⁷

In addition, sit-ins sometimes backfired. For example, Wheatley Manufacturing abruptly closed its Windsor plant in December 1981 after hearing rumours of a potential plant occupation.⁹⁸ In such instances, Canadian workers adopted new forms of resistance.

Instead of occupying American-owned Allen Industry's East End Hamilton plant after that company announced plans to relocate production to Mexico in 1984, workers turned to a "psychological game" of cat and mouse aimed at harassing management and slowing production. As David Christopherson said,

The main strategy inside the plant was to drive them absolutely crazy. Every time you didn't have to work, you didn't but this wasn't an acknowledged slow down, it was an individual thing. ...All day long all you had was all these whistles going off all over the place. Day after day after day and they couldn't stop it. We had the public behind us. There was just enough going on, and enough trouble, it

⁹⁶ Andy Morocko interviewed by Steven High at his Windsor home in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WMA.

⁹⁷ NAC. Canadian Auto Workers. MG 28 I119, UAW, Box 326, File 1: Plant Closures. Reference Material. Correspondence (1), 1979-80. Sam Ginden, Research Director to Shirley Carr, Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Labour Congress. 13 November 1980.

⁹⁸ "Windsor Plant Shuts Down Early," *Windsor Star* (Thursday 10 December 1981).

was interfering with their ability to get their product out....We drove the supervisors crazy with these bloody whistles. It was driving our people nuts too but not in the same way because it was [our] fight. Our people felt good because through it all we all felt so hopeless....We had to do something. By engaging our people, without realizing it at the time, but in hindsight I know now, we were also giving people hope. They were fighting and at least doing something.....at the end of the day we did get a settlement.⁹⁹

The company agreed to a six-month extension of health benefits and a twenty-five per cent increase in severance pay worth \$500,000. In short, local UAW president David Christopherson counted the fight against Allen Industries as yet another "huge victory" for Canadian trade unionists in so far as they won the right to get "something more than a pink slip." Canadian workers were scoring victories with the help of nationalism, even as US workers were failing to mitigate the effects of job loss south of the border.

In consequence, economic nationalism reinforced the continental divide between American and Canadian workers.¹⁰⁰ Notably, almost all of the Canadians interviewed indicated that nationality mattered:

The US and Canada, they talk different...We're not the same people.

- Floyd Harris, Windsor ¹⁰¹

I think it was a different philosophy that we have.

- Paul Hansen, Windsor ¹⁰²

⁹⁹ David Christopherson interviewed by Steven High at his Hamilton East constituency office in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the MUA.

¹⁰⁰ Seymour Martin Lipset, *Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

¹⁰¹ Floyd Harris interviewed by Steven High at the CAW Local 195 union hall in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WMA.

¹⁰² Paul Hansen interviewed by Steven High at his Windsor home in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WMA.

You know what they say: 'Them Damn Yankees.'

- Dorothy Routenberg, Hamilton ¹⁰³

Down deep inside there is something entirely different in the mental makeup of a Canadian versus the American.

- Andy Morocko, Windsor ¹⁰⁴

In effect, the divergent paths taken by Canadian and American trade unionists culminated in the Canadianization of the United Auto Workers in December 1984 when, the National Film Board released *Final Offer*, a behind-the-scenes look at high-stakes collective bargaining between the Canadian UAW and General Motors.¹⁰⁵ The film made district director Bob White into a Canadian star. Unbeknownst to the producers at the time, they had stumbled onto a key moment in the history of the UAW in Canada: its decision to break-away from the international union. Over the course of negotiations, the camera caught the mounting war of words between White and UAW International President Owen Beeber. Especially egregious was Beeber's clumsy attempt to undermine the Canadians' no-concessions position by threatening to withhold the union's strike fund. But White remained defiant; warning Beeber that: "I'll wrap the f*#@ Canadian flag around me.... I will tell them all that. When I get through, the membership will sit...." Knowing the power of their economic nationalist discourse, Canadian UAW members could no longer see much mutuality of interest with their American brothers and sisters. In

¹⁰³ Dorothy Routenberg interviewed by Steven High at her Hamilton home in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the MUA.

¹⁰⁴ Andy Marocko interviewed by Steven High at his Windsor home in February 1998. The videotape will be donated to the WMA.

¹⁰⁵ *Final Offer: Bob White and the CAW Fight for Independence* . 1985. National Film Board. Sturla Gunnarsson and Robert Collison (directors). John Kramer and John Spotton (producers).

consequence, the International Board of the UAW, meeting in Detroit on 10 December 1984, accepted Bob White's motion for the secession of the Canadian Region. Five days later the Canada Council voted 397 to 2 to ratify the split.

The Canadianization of the labour movement has attracted considerable scholarly interest. Initially, Canadian scholars steeped in economic nationalism themselves, claimed that the split in the UAW stemmed from national differences that nurtured "social unionism" in Canada and "business unionism" in the United States. John Holmes and A. Rusonik have since shown that the unevenness of restructuring in the two countries resulted in dramatically different bargaining positions.¹⁰⁶ That said, this economic explanation fails to explain why the federal and provincial governments agreed to regulate plant closures or why the Canadian public sided with workers against capital. As argued above, economic nationalism politicized plant shutdowns in Canada, acting like a brake against runaway restructuring. As Canadian UAW research director, Sam Ginden, has observed, the differing "objective" conditions in the two countries reflected past decisions and past struggles.

This chapter has shown that Canadian trade unionists like Bob White regularly wrapped themselves in the flag in order to defy American companies wishing to abandon workers with little or no compensation or, as in the case of the UAW, to resist a

¹⁰⁶ See J. Holmes and A. Rusonik, "The break-up of an international labour union: uneven development in the North American auto industry and the schism in the UAW," *Environment and Planning A* 23 (1991), 9. Also see: Sam Ginden, "Breaking Away: The Formation of the Canadian Auto Workers," *Studies in Political Economy* 29 (Summer 1989), 64. For an American insider's perspective, see: S. Friedman, "Discussion: IR developments in US and Canada," Proceedings of the 41st Annual Meeting, Industrial Relations Research Association (IRRA, University of Wisconsin, Madison), 288.

meddling American union president.¹⁰⁷ Either way, the Canadian flag shielded working people in Southern Ontario from displacement by raising the cost of closing plants thus slowing the pace of industrial restructuring. If there was any message in the string of legislative and plant victories for the anti-shutdown movement in Canada, it was the usefulness of economic nationalism to their cause. The victories reinforced the union movement. As a result, Canada's rate of unionization in the manufacturing sector was more than double that of the United States by 1984. Whereas the proportion of the American workforce holding a union card tumbled downwards, the percentage in Canada actually increased slightly.¹⁰⁸ The gales of creative destruction did not gain the same force in Canada as they did in the United States. Instead of invoking the local "community" as the anti-shutdown movement did in cities like Youngstown, Ohio, Canadians invoked a national community. In so doing, they armed themselves with a powerful weapon for mobilizing support to regulate plant shutdowns.

Beginning with the closing of Dunlop Tire, the convergence of economic nationalism and a mainly international trade union movement in Canada resulted in a fundamentally different understanding of the issue than in the United States. Instead of a

¹⁰⁷ Charlotte Yates has argued that the divergence in the strategy between Canadian and UAW members stemmed from the Canadians' capacity to mobilize rank 'n file members to resist concessions and shutdowns through its District council. Its American counterparts had been disbanded in 1945 as part of the push to drive out Communist activists. See: Charlotte Yates, "North American Autoworkers Response to Restructuring," in Miriam Golden and Jonas Pontusson, eds. *Bargaining for Change: Union Politics in North America and Europe* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), 112.

¹⁰⁸ Noah Meltz, "Unionism in the Private-Service Sector: A Canada-US Comparison," in Jane Jenson and Rianne Mahon, eds. *The Challenge of Restructuring, North American Labour Movements Respond* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 210.

rite of passage into a new post-industrial world, plant shutdowns seemed to threaten Canadian sovereignty. Nervousness about weak industrialization strengthened Canadian resolve to fight plant shutdowns. In 1970, plant closings became an issue of pressing political concern once "the workers in the factory, their active union and much of the community made Dunlop a symbol."¹⁰⁹ Legislation won in the wake of the Dunlop closing nonetheless left unresolved the larger issue of how foreign companies should responsibly close Canadian plants. Plant shutdowns became an issue of national concern that transcended class in Canada. Once again signalling the apparent intransigence of foreign owners of American branch plants in Canada, plant occupations reinforced the association of foreign ownership and economic displacement in the public's mind. Like many others interviewed, Ed Lawrenson recalled "hearing stories of several companies" where the employees left one night only to "come back the next morning [to find] the place is empty. They [had] loaded trucks and crossed the border."¹¹⁰

In this chapter we have seen that Canadians have a strong sense of territorial nationalism and nation. The imagined community of the nation proved to be a more potent rhetorical weapon against corporations wanting to close mills and factories than a community tied to place. As we have seen, fight-back campaigns in defense of place proved unable to generate political support among state and federal politicians. By contrast, the invocation of an imagined national community did influence provincial and federal politicians largely because of continuing resonance of economic nationalism among politicians across the ideological spectrum particularly on the left, then gaining

¹⁰⁹ "Tears as Dunlop Workers Leave," *Toronto Daily Star* (2 May 1970).

¹¹⁰ Ed Lawrenson interviewed by Steven High in his home in St. Clair Shores in February 1998. The videotape recording of the interview will be donated to the WMA.

popularity and power. Whereas Canadians feared that they had too little industry to be truly independent, Americans believed industry no longer represented the hallmark of economic maturity and progress. These perceptions came sharply into focus when, after winning a six-fold increase in severance pay, the workers occupying the Tung-Sol factory in Bramalea, Ontario (in Ontario Premier Bill Davis' own constituency), filed out of the building in the summer of 1980 singing "O Canada" and "Solidarity Forever."¹¹¹ By way of comparison, Americans sang about the loss of local communities in "Back to Work in Youngstown" and "My Hometown." If there was any message in this choice in anthems, it vocalized the distinctive notions of "community" on either side of the Canada-United States border.

¹¹¹ "Demonstrate! It could be your job next," *UE News (Canadian Edition)* 43, 15 (15 September 1980), 1.

CONCLUSION

The residents of Youngstown, Ohio celebrated their nation's bicentennial in 1976 with a time capsule to be re-opened a century later. Inside that capsule -- an ingot mould donated by the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company -- town citizens left an assortment of artifacts to represent the prosperity and pride of their blue collar community. Nobody in attendance that day could have realized just how soon, and how dramatically, life in the valley was about to change. Like other deindustrialized areas, the Mahoning Valley had largely failed to make the transition into the new "post-industrial" economy. As if to confirm the post-steel era, a bronze sculpture of two open hearth furnace workers, erected in 1979 in front of Higbees Department Store in downtown Youngstown as a "fresh new symbol" of the area's steel-making past, proved, instead, to be an unwelcome reminder and, after a few months, had to be removed on account of the constant acts of vandalism. For residents, the notion of a "steel valley" without steel had become a "cruel irony."¹

The emptying out of the mythical heart of the United States -- and the "birth" of the "Rust Bowl" and "Rust Belt" labels -- signalled the decrepitude of the heavily industrialized states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin. As the Great Lakes states metamorphosed into the "Rust Belt," the problem became imaginatively contained, tied to one place. Having interpreted industrial decline through the filter of popular regional identities, Americans settled on a new regional hierarchy

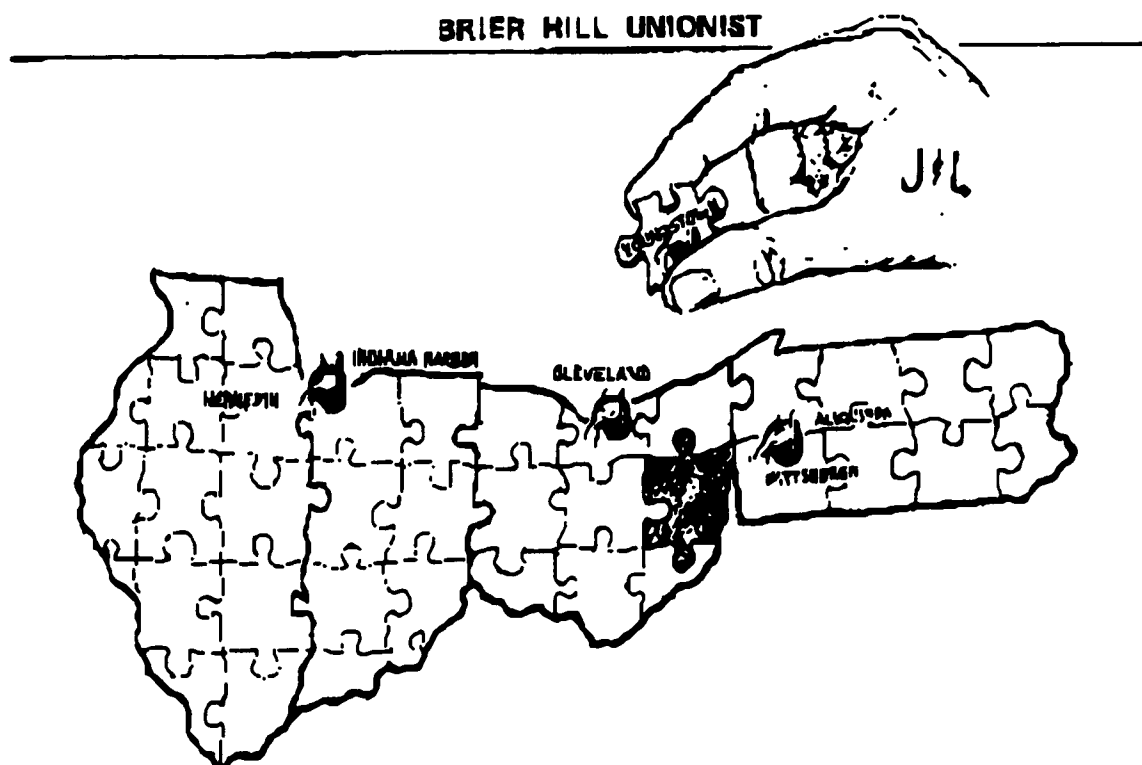
¹ Dale Peskin, *Youngstown Vindicator* (2 October 1977).

of have and have-not regions.² By all accounts, the "Rust Belt" label became a "sweeping metaphor" enclosing and structuring public debate and scholarly research on industrial decline.³ In the public's mind, the industrial Midwest became a no man's land between fading smokestack industries and the ascendant post-industrial economy. It was as though the giant hand that removed the "Youngstown" piece of the puzzle in the accompanying cartoon also removed other industrial centres such as "Pittsburgh," "Akron," "Dayton," and "Detroit." What remained was a jig-saw puzzle of the industrial heartland made unrecognizable by the empty spaces in between.

² As Paul McCracken, the former chief economic advisor to President Richard Nixon, told the Detroit Economic Club in 1975: " 'Detroit' seems to evoke a response nationally suggesting that it is deemed to be on the wrong side of the economic tracks-- instead of being that symbol of industrial vitality for which it once stood." Ford Presidential Library. Ann Arbor. W.L. Seidman, Box 195, File: McCracken, Paul W. McCracken to Seidman with attached speech to Detroit Economic Club. 11 February 1975.

³ Edward W. Soja. *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York: Verso, 1989), 159-160. Also see Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973 [1970]), 195-198. Foucault argues that human societies spatially confine problems. An obvious example of the partitioned "frozen space" in this study was the notion of the "Rust Belt."

Illustration 7: Empty Spaces in the *Brier Hill Unionist*, USWA Local 1462. ⁴



In Canada, where the shift to an increasingly post-industrial economy was only in its initial stages, the "Golden Horseshoe" did not dissolve into "empty spaces." As long as Hamilton's mills continued to produce steel and Windsor's assembly plants carried-on making cars and trucks, plant shutdowns and job loss did not seriously challenge Southern Ontario's standing as Canada's industrial heartland. Hence, these "empty spaces" were confined to parts of the industrial city -- usually older industrial belts -- and to industrial workers who lost a part of themselves the day the plant went down.

⁴ YHCIL. Gerald Dickey Collection. *Brier Hill Unionist* 6, 3 (January 1979), 2.

In responding to an earlier economic crisis, economist Joseph Schumpeter claimed in 1942 that "creative destruction" was the vital force of capitalism; incessantly destroying the old and creating the new.⁵ He also argued that this essential characteristic of capitalism would eventually lead to its self-destruction. Yet surprisingly, even after the massive dislocation discussed in this thesis, public acceptance of the free market has never been higher. What happened? In a very influential article appearing in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Francis Fukuyama provides us with a clue. He holds that the bonds of community that once constrained destructive behaviour have been cut by a series of "liberation movements" on the political left (freedom from social values and morality) and the political right (freedom from economic constraints). Voluntary membership, in turn, has left human communities "smaller and weaker than most of those that have existed in the past."⁶ As a result, the rise of moral individualism narrowed the circle that people trust, freeing corporate managers from any moral obligation they may have had to their employees, while at the same time, restricting the possibilities of collective resistance to industrial transformation. These developments culminated in what Fukuyama calls the "Great Disruption," of which industrial transformation was an integral part.

In modifying Fukuyama's assertion, the plant shutdown stories told by 137 displaced workers in Canada and the United States suggests that this disruption was uneven. In the United States, familiar lines dissolved and old categories collapsed in the aftermath of major mill or factory closings. The disruption of those social boundaries that had long demarcated one's place in relation to class, gender and race suddenly left

⁵ Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 83.

⁶ Fukuyama, "The Great Disruption," 72.

displaced workers disorientated. In consequence, the fears and anxieties engendered by industrial transformation and the resulting job loss turned workers into metaphorical "gypsies" encamped on an emptied industrial landscape. Canadians, as well, felt deeply threatened by plant shutdowns and bleakly viewed their future economic prospects and present uncertainty. Yet while the identities of many Americans were irrevocably altered by the experience of the plant's closing, and their sense of ongoing displacement, Canadians continued to see themselves primarily as "workers" and "trade unionists." Thus the narratives of Canadian and American workers diverged significantly in the aftermath of plant closings.

This thesis has explored the meanings that North Americans derived from mill and factory closings between 1969 and 1984. In doing so, it found that the significance drawn from industrial transformation was filtered through one's nationality. In the United States, plant closings generally signalled the end of the industrial era. As the physical stature of blast furnaces and smokestacks made them stand tall in people's minds, the fall of industry from its privileged position in the American economy played itself out in their ritualistic demolition.⁷ Dramatic images of falling blast furnaces, in turn, lent authority to those who claimed that the industrial era had ended. Canadians, by contrast, interpreted plant shutdowns in nationalist terms. Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, shutdowns were blamed on American economic domination.

In the face of economic dislocation, workers on either side of the Canada-United States border struggled to retain their dignity and identity. Yet strategies of collective resistance differed dramatically as the narratives of displaced workers revealed. In the

⁷ Anthropologist Jack Goody notes that icons become associated with a political or an economic era. See: Jack Goody, *Representations and Contradictions: Ambivalence Towards Images, Theatre, Fiction, Relics and Sexuality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 51 and 71.

United States, the anti-shutdown movement was confined to the local by invoking a notion of "community" tied to place. This "miniaturization" of community, eloquently evoked by Francis Fukuyama, proved to be a feeble weapon for workers facing job loss. Indeed, the nation's political, business and union leadership felt little attachment to communities based in towns or cities other than their own. Hence, the "community" strategy, predicated on emotional appeals to people and place, failed to politicize a contractual -- and therefore private -- matter between an employer and his or her employees. To constrain the destructive tendencies of capitalism between 1969 and 1984, another weapon was needed, namely the ideal of a "national community."

The motive power of "community" to validate and legitimate resistance to plant shutdowns by enlargening the radius of trust was greatest in Canada. By literally wrapping themselves in the Maple Leaf flag, Canadian workers won important legislative victories that forced companies to soften the blow of displacement. While the dominant narrative of deindustrialization in the United States enshrined the names of hard-hit industrial cities, Canadians associated shutdowns with departing foreign-owned companies. Given the fact that Canadian economic nationalism was imbued with the working-class agenda, the Canadian public viewed the resistance to plant shutdowns -- including illegal plant occupations in 1980 -- as meaningful and legitimate. Economic nationalist resistance to plant shutdowns thus slowed the pace of change between 1969-1984 and softened the blow to industrial workers and their local communities.

Historians of post World War II Canada have largely overlooked this particular by-product of economic nationalism, preferring, instead, to stick to the well-worn path of political history, calling on national politicians, major political parties and their

legislative monuments such as the Foreign Investment Review Act.⁸ By their hasty dismissal of economic nationalism as "irrelevant" and "irrational," scholars such as Michael Bliss have failed to see how it initially mitigated job loss.⁹ In the final analysis, then, an emerging economic nationalist discourse incorporated plant shutdowns into the very centre of its anti-imperial critique of foreign -- usually American -- multinational corporations. For a time, the nationalist resistance to plant shutdowns enforced what could be called a "moral economy" on companies operating in Canada.¹⁰ Economic nationalism thus acted as a kind of ideological rust-proofing that denied the "Rust Belt" -- the image and the reality -- entry into Canada and slowed the pace of industrial change and the accompanying social disruption between 1969-1984.

⁸ See, for example, Robert Bothwell, *Canada and the United States: The Politics of Partnership* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1992), 104.

⁹ Michael Bliss, "American Investment," in Norman Hillmer, ed. *Partners Nevertheless: Canadian-American Relations in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1989), 269.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the motive power of communities see: Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, California, 1975), 97 and 178; and E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past & Present* 50 (1971), 76-136.

APPENDIX 1

**CERTIFICATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS REVIEW
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA**

This is to certify that the Faculty of Arts Research Ethics Committee has examined the research proposal by *Steve High* entitled "*Redundant Spaces: Plant Shutdowns and Displacement in the Great Lakes Basin, 1969-1984*" and has concluded that in all respects the proposal meets appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University Human Research Ethics Committee and approved by the Senate of the University of Ottawa.

Faculty of Arts Research Ethics Committee

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position held</u>	<u>Department</u>
Céline T. Allard	Lawyer	Private Practice
Chantal Beauvais	Student	Département de Philosophie
Jocelyne Guilbault	Professor	Département de Musique
Daniel Lagarec	Professor	Département de Géographie
Marielle Simon	Professor	Faculté de Éducation
Nicole St-Onge	Professor	Département de Histoire
Dominic Manganiello	Professor	Département de English

17/12/97
Date



Committee Chairperson
Robert Major
Associate Dean (Research)
Faculty of Arts

Name:

Date of Birth:

Family:

Where were your parents born? What did they do for a living? What do you remember about your childhood? What kind of neighbourhood did your family live in? Was it a close-knit area? Did everybody's parents work at the same place? Did you want to work there when you grew up?

Work History:

What jobs have you worked in over the years? What did you do? Could you describe the plant (exterior and interior)? Did you like your job? Was it a safe place to work? Did you ever see any accidents? Did you ever see any discrimination against women or people of colour? How did you get along with management? Were there many layoffs at your workplace before the final closure?

Union:

Was your workplace unionized? What was the name of the union? Were you active in the union? What were meetings like? Did the union do a good job? How did it affect work? Did you ever go out on strike? What do you think of the union?

Recreation:

Did people socialize after their shift? Were there any recreational activities planned by the company or the union?

Closure:

Did you anticipate the plant shutdown? Please describe the day that the announcement to close the plant was made? Why did it happen? Who was to blame? Could it have been avoided? Did you get severance pay? A pension? Health benefits? How did your family react to the news? How did the union respond? Was there any attempt to save the plant? Did the community or union help your family through the crisis or were you pretty much on your own? How was the town's economy at the time? Did you have any friends leave town to find work? Where did they go? Why? Did you ever think of leaving too? Why did you stay?

Aftermath:

How has life changed since the plant closed? How has the town changed since those days? Do you feel a strong attachment to your city? Did your wife/husband work before the closure? Did that change afterwards? Did your children follow you into the plants? Do you still see your old friends from the plant?

Conclusion:

Has your opinion of the closure changed since your last shift in the plant? Is there anything else you would like to add before we end the interview?

note: my style of interviewing tends to be informal so this guide represents only a general reference to the range of possible questions and themes in an interview.

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