

LESSON 15



SHUTDOWN! CONFRONTING PLANT CLOSURES

The era of union growth, followed by stability, that began in the 1930s is ending. Despite today's decline in union membership, however, there are indications of new issues and new coalitions arising. Out of them will come the labor movement of the next period in U.S. history.

In this lesson, students grapple with one of the difficult and unresolved issues of the present: plant closures. For some, they will be drawing on their own experiences or the recent past of their own community. Depending on the choices students make, they will be using much of what they may have learned in previous lessons about cooperating among themselves, restructuring work, and seeking potential allies outside the labor movement.

Goals/Objectives

1. Students will understand some of the personal and community consequences of closing facilities that provide employment.
2. Students will enhance their ability to think about public policy and evaluate appropriate means and ends.
3. Students will learn some of the limits to any choice that unions and workers in a particular facility may make in response to a closure.

Materials Needed

- A large sheet of butcher paper.
- **Student Handout #15-A: Plant Closures Fact Sheet.**
- **Student Handout #15-B: First Responses.**
- **Student Handouts #15-C through 15-F: Option Sheets.**
- **Student Handout #15-G: The Action Is Today!**

Time Required

- Three and one-half class periods.



Procedure: Day 1

1. Pick a large employer in the community, one that students are likely to know about through their own or their parents' jobs, and ask students to imagine the consequences were it to shut completely and permanent-

ly. The example could be a store, hotel, government bureau, or office, as well as a factory. Where the community has experienced a recent real-life instance of a major shutdown, draw on it.

2. Ask students how they themselves might be affected. Some questions include:

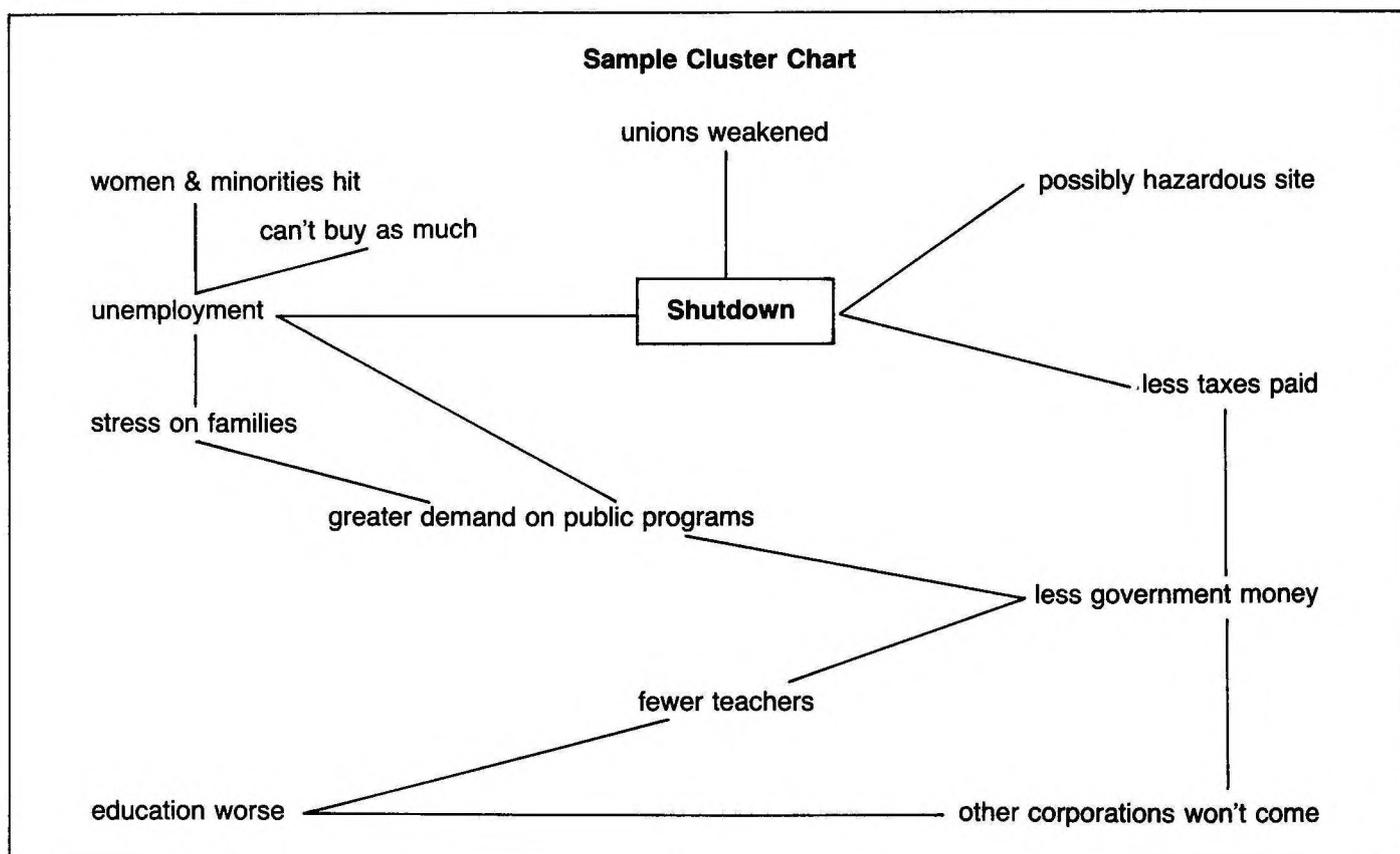
- Have any of you experienced layoffs yourselves or among your families or friends?
- What would it feel like to be laid off? What if you were a major wage-earner in the family?
- What might be some consequences for life in the family?
- What would be some of the effects on the whole community of a large number of people losing their jobs?
- Are places where students typically work likely to be affected by a shutdown elsewhere in town—if, for instance, there is less money available for shopping or eating out?
- How would school or community programs be affected?

3. Post a sheet of butcher paper. Using the same example of a hypothetical or recent shutdown in your community, have the students brainstorm a network of the shutdown's consequences. Write the conse-

quences on the butcher paper, drawing lines to indicate which factors interconnect with which others. The network of these interconnections forms a *Cluster Chart*. (For example, if students point to increased tensions at home—say depression or spouse abuse—you might ask what additional consequences follow. The need for more social services, then, would intersect with fewer public resources available because of the lower tax base due to the shutdown. See the sample *Cluster Chart*.) Save the *Cluster Chart* for later use.

4. When the brainstorming has slowed down, distribute **Student Handout #15-A: Plant Closures Fact Sheet**. Encourage students to use this to suggest any additions to the *Cluster Chart*. In particular, ask what groups in the community might be affected by the shutdown.

5. Explain to students that they are to imagine themselves as workers in a factory that is about to close, and that they will work together in small groups to plan their response. Distribute **Student Handout #15-**



B: First Responses. For the remainder of the period, they should read over this description of the community and how work-

ers first responded to news of the imminent shutdown. If there is time, they may begin the homework that accompanies the reading.

Procedure: Day 2

1. Remind students they are workers in the factory that is going to close. You are the elected president of their local union and you call the union meeting to order. Play this role as a good union officer would: responsive to the membership, encouraging democratic processes.
2. Tell students that this special meeting has been called to figure out the union's response to the shutdown announcement. The meeting will form subcommittees to investigate various alternatives. There will be information on how other workers in comparable situations have acted.
3. Put up the *Cluster Chart* from Day One. Before weighing the alternative strategies, the meeting might want to consider whether there are any allies who might join in actions to oppose shutdowns. To think of possible allies, members may draw on the *Cluster Chart*, as well as on their knowledge of the community. (Since the discussion at this stage is speculative, students may fill in the gaps in their knowledge of the community by drawing on what they know about their own community and by using their imaginations.) Ask the following:
 - Other than the workers, who else might be affected by a shutdown?
 - Would workers or their families be members of community groups that might have a stake in opposing the shutdown?
 - What are the ways we could gain support from the groups we've identified?
4. List the following alternatives on the board:
 - Plant closure legislation.
 - Government relief for the company.
 - Take over the plant and run it ourselves.
 - Persuade or force the company to stay.
5. Inform the meeting that these alternatives, or some mix of them, have been workers' responses in situations similar to our own. The union will form committees to investigate each of these alternatives and report back to the meeting for a discussion and vote. Give brief summaries of each option, drawing on the introductory paragraphs of the option sheets. You might also want to point out some of the general differences among the options: i.e., which accept or reject in principle the right of the company to close, which permit the workers to keep more initiative in their own hands, and which leave initiative more with the company or government.
6. Divide the meeting into four committees, distributing the appropriate **Student Handouts #15-C, 15-D, 15-E, and 15-F: Option Sheets** to each member (each committee is to receive only the option sheets for the alternative it is investigating). If the committees are too large for full participation in discussing the questions, they should be divided in half.
7. Tell students that each committee must respond to every question on its handout and that it will be questioned by the other groups. Each group may decide the best way to make its presentation. Remind the committees that they need not favor their assigned alternative, only investigate it. Tell them, in fact, that it is likely that some of the groups will end up opposing the choices they are exploring. Give them a few minutes to read the sheets before the committee discussions begin. (*Note:* Committees may

or may not choose to have chairpeople to facilitate their discussions.)

8. If the committees have not finished their work by the end of class, encourage stu-

dents to continue individually overnight. Committees also may choose to apportion overnight responsibility for specific questions to individual members.

Procedure: Day 3

1. Once the committees have finished their work, tell students it is time for the groups to report to the larger union meeting, following which the entire meeting will vote on a course of action.
2. Ask one of the groups to give a summary of its investigation and conclusions, then open the meeting to questions and reactions. Encourage questions that are not only informational but that may challenge the committee's conclusions. Continue until each of the groups has reported and been questioned.
3. Announce that the meeting is now open for motions on adopting particular alternatives or combinations of alternatives. With each motion, permit discussion pro and con. As president, you may certainly question whether the union has sufficient resources for the alternatives proposed.
4. Once the meeting has voted for a particular course of action, it is time to consider possi-

ble community support in greater depth. The specific discussion will depend on how much the issue was dealt with during the discussion of alternatives. Make sure, however, that the following questions are answered:

- In light of what we've decided about how to oppose the shutdown, what community groups might we approach as possible coalition partners?
 - What could we as workers offer these groups that would be in their interest and in ours to get them to join a coalition? Make this discussion as concrete as possible, i.e., what specific support would be possible on what issues of concern to each of the potential partners?
5. Adjourn the meeting and distribute homework: **Student Handout #15-G: The Action Is Today!** If time permits, you might want to read or have a student read aloud the main speech in that assignment.

Procedure: Day 4

1. Debrief the students about their participation in the role play and their conclusions. The appropriate questions will depend in part on what was and was not covered in the discussion during the union meeting. You might ask:
 - Were the conclusions of each committee questioned effectively by other groups? Were there grounds for question or challenge that weren't raised?

- Was there a clearcut choice among the alternatives, one that had no or few limits or disadvantages?
- If the course of action chosen were to be successful, would it prevent shutdowns in the future in this workplace? Would it prevent shutdowns affecting workers everywhere in the country?
- In your opinion: What are the limits on what could be accomplished by only one

union? By unions acting together but without support from other community groups? How big a change in the whole society would be necessary to solve the problem of plant closures?

2. Depending on the choices students made, both among the possible responses to the shutdown and in how they worked together, this can be a good occasion to remind them of past lessons. Some possible questions:

— When we did the **Organic Goodie Simulation**, one of the issues was whether or not we thought people were able to get together,

based on their common interests, to change a bad or oppressive situation. Do your conclusions in **Shutdown!** show that you've changed your minds about that possibility? Why or why not?

— In both the **West Coast Longshore Strike** role play and earlier in **Lawrence, 1912**, enlisting the support of the community was crucial to the outcome. Could we have done more of that to oppose the factory closure? Why didn't we do more of that? What more could have been accomplished with community support?

STUDENT HANDOUT #15-A



PLANT CLOSURES FACT SHEET

What are Plant Closures? Plant closures are the complete or partial shutdown of business operations, permanently or indefinitely. They may occur in offices, factories, mills, retail stores, hotels, supermarkets, or other businesses.

For the Laid-Off Workers, Closures Often Mean:

- Little notice or warning and no severance pay.
- Loss of pensions and health benefits.
- Increased medical problems and life-threatening diseases:
 - (1) an increase in ulcers, a greater likelihood of future heart ailments, greater hypertension and other illnesses sensitive to stress, such as diabetes and asthma;
 - (2) a suicide rate thirty times the national average;
 - (3) mental health problems stemming from a loss of self-esteem and feelings of uselessness; increased admissions to mental health institutions;
 - (4) increased alcohol and drug abuse.

For the Families and Communities:

- Increased instances of child abuse, malnutrition, battered wives, and divorce.
- Higher rates of serious crime, both as victims and perpetrators.

- Greater demand for public benefit programs and services and fewer tax revenues to pay for the programs.
- Lost purchasing power in the community, leading to additional lost jobs in retail business, wholesale, transport, services, as well as among the suppliers of the plant being closed.
- Family and community life broken up as husbands, wives, or families leave to search for work elsewhere.
- A possibly hazardous site left behind.

When new jobs can be found, they often are in lower skilled, lower paying industries.

Why Plant Closures Happen:

There is no single reason. Closures used to happen primarily in economic hard times. Now the business being closed is often still profitable. The corporation may be moving to an area of the United States or of the world where it can pay lower wages or avoid unions. U.S. tax laws provide incentives for businesses to relocate, even overseas. Sometimes corporations use the *threat* of closure as a way of bargaining with employees to lower wages or reduce protections in a union contract.

STUDENT HANDOUT #15-B



FIRST RESPONSES

It was just one week ago that you first heard about the closure and you're still in a state of shock. Supervisors gathered groups of workers together during first shift in the steel mill where you work and announced that the mill would soon be closing. You've worked there for fifteen and a half years. Your father works there. So do some of your cousins and many of your neighbors. Some families have three generations working there at the same time.

"It's not as if it's a complete surprise," says the owner of the grocery where your family shops. For years she's let you buy on credit. Now she and other storeowners are asking customers to pay in cash. "We've heard about other mills being shut, and the company threatened to close last time you were in negotiations."

That's part of what upsets you. Your union has a history of fighting for improvements in working conditions. Last negotiations, the union agreed to give up work rules that it had gained years ago. You're now doing your own maintenance on equipment that breaks down instead of waiting for a maintenance person to come and fix it. And the members accepted a contract with no increase in pay. In exchange, the company agreed to try to keep the mill open.

When you graduated from high school you didn't think twice about a different career. Steelmaking was hard work and it was dirty. It made the community around the mill dirty too. But the mills had been running for decades. It seemed like they'd go forever. By this time, steelmaking is most of what you know. "What other kind of job can I do?" you think to yourself. "Is there other work available? Where will I have to move?"

Your kids are still a little young to have to decide about jobs, although they're old enough to earn some spending money in the summers. They've bounced baseballs off your steel-toed boots and breathed the red dust and walked with you around the mill. When they were smaller, one of them bragged to her friends that you personally had "made the steel that's in our car." You've not encouraged them one way or the other, but until now it wouldn't have surprised you if one or both of them had ended up working alongside you in the mill.

That day after work, some of the men were so



Rob Engelhart

angry that they smashed their hardhats against the wall. Most didn't feel like talking. They seemed to be asking themselves how they were going to break the news to their families. If their response was anything like yours, they also were blaming themselves: "How are we going to keep up the house payments? What am I good for if I can't bring home a paycheck any longer?"

The supervisor read a letter from the president of the company. It said that the mill was closing because other mills were making steel more cheaply in countries like Korea and Brazil. Although the mill was still profitable, it couldn't make enough money while there was "unfair competition" from abroad. The letter also said that the mill was old and that laws about pollution were becoming stricter. It would cost too much to install new scrubbers in the smokestacks to reduce pollution.

Within a couple of days, somebody had written a petition: "We, the undersigned, ask the President and Congress to restrict imports of steel, to relax environmental standards, and to permit the American steel industry to EARN A FAIR PROFIT." Thousands of people, both workers and community residents, signed the petition, and it was sent off with a caravan of cars to Washington, D.C. The President, however, did not meet with the petitioners. After marching around the White House for a few hours, they returned home, the petition undelivered.

Some of your friends have had second thoughts about the petition. "Why make demands on the government?" they say. "It's not the government that decided to close our mill. Anyway, those demands are just what the company wants." These friends are talking about more direct action against the company. Can the company be persuaded or forced to keep the mill open?

Others, especially some of the older workers, are reluctant to rock the boat. After decades of work, they don't want to take actions that might threaten their pensions. You've noticed that the union's health and safety committee has suddenly become less active. They seem to think that if the company gets less pressure from workers, management might reconsider and

stay open. You've got to keep working there for now, however, and you're becoming uneasy about worsening conditions.

Even some of the younger workers don't feel any urgency. "There's plenty of financial aid available," they say. The union has already scheduled workshops on how to apply for unemployment compensation and for the layoff benefits in the contract with the company. You know those benefits will quickly run out. You're also worried about divisions that are developing between older and younger workers, those with different financial stakes and different understandings of who's to blame.

Somebody you know has printed bumper stickers that say "IF YOU LOSE YOUR JOB, BLAME IT ON AN ENVIRONMENTALIST." You took some to distribute, but are now uncertain. You've always loved the outdoors, and you know the air and water, the woods and the wildlife, have been hurt by pollution from the mill.

Within the past week, various community groups have become involved. "This isn't only a problem for the millworkers and their families," one of the local ministers says. "The whole community will be devastated." Women's groups, religious organizations, organizations of minorities, all are talking about the situation. Public employees have already been told that some of them will be laid off if the mill closes, because there won't be enough tax revenues to continue some public programs. And the teachers' union has sent a message of support to your union, saying they know the quality of education is at stake as well as their own members' jobs.

Assignment

Everybody seems to have a different idea for what should be done. Write an interior monologue of your own first responses, your feelings as well as your ideas. How have your thoughts changed in the week since you heard the bad news? Why?

STUDENT HANDOUT #15-C



PLANT CLOSURE LEGISLATION Option Sheet

A number of European countries have laws that limit a company's right to close a business operation. U.S. companies are present in all these countries and operate under their laws. Usually these laws apply only to companies that employ a certain number of workers, more than two hundred, for instance. All of them require that the company give advance notice of any shutdown, sixty days, for example, or one year, so that workers will have time to look for another job or that unions and governments will have time to try to keep the operation open. Some of the laws require severance benefits, payments by the company to workers who are being laid off. Some require the company to pay money into a community assistance fund. Other features that appear in some of the laws include: paid leaves for workers to look for new employment; government assistance to employee efforts to buy the plant and keep it running; the right of workers to relocate to other operations of the same company. The following questions investigate the idea of plant closure legislation.

Note: You are under no obligation to support this option, only to investigate it fairly. You may even end up opposing it.

—If we were to support a plant closure law, what feature should it contain. Some of those above? All of those above? Others in addition?

In some states where there have been campaigns for plant closure laws, people have sent thousands of pre-printed postcards to the legislature. In some, full-time union officials have lobbied legislators, taking them to lunch, promising to support them on other issues in ex-

change for their support on this. In Montana, there was an initiative campaign. Thousands of workers discussed the issues in union meetings, then went door-to-door talking with their neighbors, collecting signatures. If they had been successful, the initiative would have appeared on a statewide ballot for everyone to vote on instead of going to the legislature.

- There are different strategies behind each of these plans. Some methods try to educate people; some trust the unions to get their members active. Others rely more on government and union officials. What would be the best way or ways to work for a law?
- A group of local businesspeople is very opposed to plant closure legislation. They say that if we pass that law in our state, new businesses won't locate here. How would we respond to this argument?
- We are confronted by a group of workers who say that large severance benefits may discourage workers from looking for any alternative to a shutdown. Are they right? Explain.
- The Wall Street Journal*, a national newspaper primarily for businesspeople, has editorialized that plant closure laws take away the rights of companies and may even force them to lose money. They want to know why some people should be allowed to take away the rights of others.
- What questions do we still have about whether or not plant closure legislation is a good idea?

STUDENT HANDOUT #15-D



GOVERNMENT RELIEF FOR THE COMPANIES Option Sheet

Even though ours is called a “free enterprise” economy, government assistance to companies is quite common. In the United States, government is a major buyer of products. Much of the research in developing new materials and products is done with government support. Local, state, and national governments play roles in training people to be workers. This assistance happens, of course, through the use of taxes that individuals and companies pay.

There also are many instances of government aid to companies having economic difficulties: tax reductions or allowing the company not to pay local property taxes; loans at low interest rates; freeing the company from having to comply with environmental standards; restricting imports that compete with the company’s products. Here we investigate the option of government assistance.

Note: You are under no obligation to support this option, only to investigate it fairly. You may even end up opposing it.

- We’ve already been part of a petition campaign that asked the national government “to restrict imports of steel” and “to relax environmental standards.” Do we still think that these are good requests? Are there additional kinds of government relief we could request?
- After the petition campaign, a lot of union members began to believe that it was a mis-

take to join forces with the company. They say that accepting the company’s program prevents us from fighting to change the shut-down decision. What do we think about this argument?

- A lot of our members and community people are feeling that they can’t affect what happens, that the company holds power. Asking the government for aid simply puts everything in the government’s hands. Is it possible for us to develop a campaign for aid that doesn’t just leave all the power with the government? If so, how?
- In a number of instances, companies have simply taken advantage of government relief. Playskool, a Chicago manufacturer of educational toys, received a lower tax rate and a loan from the city. It promised to stay open and to hire new workers. Instead, it used the money to bring in equipment replacing workers. Then it transferred its operations to another state where it could pay lower wages. Any government agency that we approach will want to know how this kind of abuse can be prevented. If we favor government relief, what can we suggest?
- What questions do we still have about obtaining government relief for the company?

STUDENT HANDOUT #15-E



TAKE OVER THE PLANT AND RUN IT OURSELVES Option Sheet

When a large aerospace company in Britain decided to close one of its plants, workers came up with a way to keep it open. “If the old products aren’t selling well,” they said, “we’ll use our knowledge and skills to develop new products and keep our jobs.” Based on the same technologies that had been creating products for the military, the unions at Lucas Aerospace set up committees among their members to design products and processes that would be both socially useful and ecologically sound. They were so successful in their ideas that unions in other large companies adopted the same approach to threatened closures. Ultimately, the management of the companies kept control and the workers’ ideas were not carried out. Their struggle, however, showing the possibility of staying open, did prevent some of the announced shutdowns.

In one Ralston Purina plant that made animal food in the United States, there was so much resistance to management by the workers that the company agreed to an experiment. They removed all management, all supervisors, all foremen, and let the workers organize production and run the plant themselves. Productivity steadily increased; so did the company’s profits. The experiment was such a success that the company ended it, fearing to lose control of this plant and other plants. Here are some questions about this option.

Note: You are under no obligation to support this option, only to investigate it fairly. You may even end up opposing it.

—Consultants in situations similar to ours have suggested that there are many ways a takeover could occur. Our own pension funds could be used for an “employee stock ownership plan.” Local government could use the

“right of eminent domain,” paying a fair market price and forcing the company to sell the plant. The federal government could lend money, keeping some sort of public ownership. Pension funds from other unions could invest in the mill. Which of these plans seems to offer the most hope? Why? What further questions do we have?

- If we somehow were in a position to run our mill without the company, how would we organize production? Would we still have supervisors? What kind of management might we need or want? How would these decisions be made?
- Would we still have the union or would it no longer be necessary?
- The company has been unable to make a profit it considers acceptable. Would our needs for profit be the same as those of the company? (Remember that there would still have to be money coming in not only for paychecks but to repair or replace expensive equipment.)
- Some of our members who support a takeover see the goal as having a steelmill that can compete effectively with other steelmills. Other supporters see the goal as showing workers everywhere a better way of working together. For them, the process of fighting for the takeover and developing the vision of a mill run by the workers is a way of overcoming the powerlessness that many feel. It may not be possible to accomplish both goals. What differences do we see between them, and how would we respond to each group?
- What questions do we still have about taking over the plant and running it ourselves?

STUDENT HANDOUT #15-F



PERSUADE OR FORCE THE COMPANY TO STAY Option Sheet

Unions have adopted very different tactics in trying to prevent a threatened shutdown. In some instances they have granted concessions, agreed to accept lower wages or benefits or to change the work rules in favor of management. Sometimes concessions have been given in exchange for shares in the company or a share of future profits. There also have been times when companies used the money they had gained from concessions to expand their operations elsewhere or even move equipment to other locations before shutting the original plant.

Note: You are under no obligation to support this option, only to investigate it fairly. You may even end up opposing it.

- In our last negotiations, we had to grant concessions on work rules and wages. Clearly these weren't enough. If the company were willing to consider keeping the mill open in exchange for further concessions, what might we offer?
- What would we expect or demand in return?
- Even at the last negotiations, a lot of our members opposed concessions. They argued that if we lowered our wages or weakened our work rules, workers in other mills would have to do the same in order for their mills to stay competitive. We would just be competing with other workers in an endless cycle of lowering our living conditions. At the first mention of concessions, these members are likely to raise the same argument. Are they right or wrong? Why?
- In other instances unions have refused to

give concessions and have tried, sometimes successfully, to force the company to stay open. In Minneapolis, a coalition of church, farmer, and labor groups joined to boycott Northrup King's seed company and other products, such as Ovaltine and Ex-Lax, made by its owner. In Chicago, the union got a court order stopping U.S. Steel from tearing down a plant until there was a chance to explore alternatives. Morse Cutting Tool in Massachusetts asked for concessions, then used them to begin moving machinery to another plant. The union refused additional concessions, went on strike, and mounted a campaign showing how the health of the entire community would be threatened by a shutdown. Seniors' organizations, clergymen, university faculty, and other unions all joined together. When the company tried to bring pressure, for example to cut off insurance to the strikers, solid community support forced the company to back down. Eventually, with the threat of a takeover by the city using the right of eminent domain, the company sold the plant to another company that has kept it open. What kind of pressure can we put on the company to keep it open?

- Many of our members feel that there is little we can do, that the big decisions are up to the company or the government. Are there actions we could take that could be effective and might also inspire rather than demoralize members?
- What questions do we still have about trying to persuade or force the company to stay?

STUDENT HANDOUT #15-G



THE ACTION IS TODAY

Along with your family and neighbors, you're attending a community rally in Youngstown, Ohio. Two major steel mills in town have already been closed. Your friends and relatives who worked in them tried everything: lawsuits and lobbying, demonstrations and delegations. Now U.S. Steel has announced it is shutting another mill.

The first speakers are politicians, there to get your support for new legislation or to take credit for their opposition to shutdowns. Someone gives a talk on welfare benefits. The crowd is restless. Then the president of a local, most of whose members have left the union because their mill was shut, begins to speak:

"I'm not interested in calling a lot of people together and just talking to them and going home. I think we've got a job to do today. And that job is to let U.S. Steel know that this is the end of the line. No more jobs are going to be shut down in Youngstown.

"You've got men here, you've got women here, you've got children here, and we're here for one purpose. Not to be talked to about what's going to happen in Congress two years from now. What's going to happen in Youngstown today? There's a building two blocks from here. That's the U.S. Steel headquarters. You know the whole country is looking at the voters, the citizens. What are you going to do? Are you going to take action, or are you going to sit and talk and be talked to?

"The action is today. We're going down that hill, and we're going to let the politicians know, we're going to let U.S. Steel know, we're going to let the whole country know that steelworkers in Youngstown got guts and we want to fight for our jobs. We're not going to fight for welfare!

"In 1919 the fight was on for the eight-hour day and they lost that struggle and they burned

down East Youngstown, which is the Campbell steel mill. Now I'm not saying burn anything down, but you got the eight-hour day.

"In 1937 you wanted a union and people got shot in Youngstown because they wanted a union. And everything hasn't been that great since you got that union. Every day you put your life on the line when you went into that iron house. Every day you sucked up the dirt and took a chance on breaking your legs or breaking your back. And anyone who's worked in there knows what I'm talking about.

"Now I don't like to read to people but in 1857 Frederick Douglass said something that I think you ought to listen to: *Those who profess to favor freedom and yet discourage agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its waters. This struggle may be a moral one [and you've heard a lot about that] or it may be a physical one [and you're going to hear about that] but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Find out what people will submit to and you will find out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them. And these will be continued until they are resisted with either words or blows or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those they oppress.*

"This was said in 1857 and things haven't changed. U.S. Steel is going to see how much they can put on you. And when I say 'you' I mean Youngstown, you know. We've got lists. We've got an obituary of plants that were shut down in the last twenty years. When are we going to make a stand?

"Now, I'm going down that hill and I'm going into that building. And anyone that doesn't

want to come along doesn't have to, but I'm sure there are those who'll want to. And one thing we're going to do when we get in there, we're going to stay there until they meet with the president of the local."

When he finishes, the president of the union that called the rally speaks briefly: "Like Ed told you, there's no free lunch. You've got to fight for what you want. We've been trying to talk to U.S. Steel. They won't listen to us. We've been trying to talk to the president. He won't talk to us. We have to make these people listen!

"If U.S. Steel doesn't want to make steel in Youngstown, the people of Youngstown will make steel in Youngstown! We're going down that hill!"*

*From Staughton Lynd, *The Fight Against Shutdowns: Youngstown's Steel Mill Closings* (San Pedro, CA: Singlejack Books, 1982).

Assignment

Complete one of the following:

1. Imagine that you are the main speaker quoted above. You attended the "union meetings" held in class. Write a letter to class members explaining your reaction to the decisions they reached. Include in the letter your reaction to the way they arrived at their decisions.

or

2. Staying in your role as a union member, write a letter to the main speaker explaining in detail your response to the action proposed above. What are the advantages or disadvantages that you see in that action?