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1935

United Auto Workers Formed

August 26, 1935, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) officially chartered the United Auto Workers (UAW) in Detroit, Michigan. Francis Dillon was its first president. The UAW was among one of few labor unions to organize African Americans. It's constitution called for uniting all the workers "into one organization, regardless of race".

The UAW made their presence and intentions known by striking wherever they felt they were needed. Their main goal was to gain recognition from the major automotive companies: General Motors, Chrysler, and Ford.

The UAW now encompasses the International Union, Aerospace, Agricultural Implement Workers as well as the United Automobile Workers. With 390,000 members the UAW reaches Canada and Puerto Rico. The success of the UAW's bargaining table has not only upheld worker's rights but has maintained these rights throughout history.

¹ Walter P. Reuther
Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, ID 658

² Before Battle of the Overpass
Walter Reuther Library, Wayne State University, ID 11621

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Credits:

Meier, August and Rudwick, Elliot. *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW*. New York: Oxford University, 1979. Print.

Keywords/Topics:

Race Relations, Work/Jobs

Questions:

1. Why did the UAW form?
2. What was its purpose?
3. Do you know anyone that is a member of the UAW?

Links to Internet Websites:

<http://www.local600uaw.org/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Auto_Workers

<http://uaw.org>

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Walter Philip Reuther was born in West Virginia to a German socialist brewery worker. He moved to Detroit and worked at Ford Motor Company until the Great Depression cost him his job. He and his brothers, Victor and Roy Reuther, moved to Russia(Soviet Union) to work in an auto plant. Unhappy with communist Soviet Union, he returned to Detroit to work for General Motors and became an active member of the UAW. He led several strikes and became president of local 174. The Battle of the Overpass made Reuther a well known union leader and in 1946 he became president of the UAW. He remained the UAW's president until his death in 1970.

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Two hours before the infamous “Battle of the Overpass”, Walter Reuther distributed packets of leaflets to members of the UAW Women’s Auxiliary Brigade for distribution at the Ford Rouge Plant. These pamphlets were intended to inform people about the UAW and its mission.