

Left Nationalism and Global Solidarity: Strategy, Identity, and the Fight to Save GM
Oshawa

by

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Abstract

The effects of globalization on working people and their organizations in the Global North have been the subject of a great deal of research over the past thirty years. Unions face increasing pressure to reduce labour costs under the threat of mass job losses, as production has been increasingly relocated to the Global South in search of greater profitability. In that context, a number of union strategies have emerged for confronting global capital, broadly belonging to one of two categories: left nationalism and global solidarity. This paper studies a 2016 campaign by an autoworkers' union local to save the General Motors facility in Oshawa, Ontario. I set the campaign in conversation with the union's Global Solidarity policy, and argue that a number of contradictions exist in the union's current strategy, connecting those contradictions to the union's collective action frame, and assessing the prospects for a more effective strategy moving forward.

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Abbreviations

AFL	American Federation of Labor
ATU	Amalgamated Transit Union
CAW	Canadian Auto Workers
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations
CLC	Canadian Labour Congress
CUSFTA	Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement
EPZ	Export Processing Zone
GM	General Motors
GFA	Global Framework Agreement
GLS	Global Labour Studies
GUF	Global Union Federation
IMF	International Metalworkers' Federation
IPEL	International Political Economy of Labour
NAALC	North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NAO	National Administrative Office
SEIU	Service Employees International Union
SJF	Social Justice Fund
SWE	Supplemental Workforce Employee
UAW	United Auto Workers
USW	United Steel Workers

Chapter One

Introduction

At the outset of the 2016 round of negotiations between unionized autoworkers in Canada and the big three U.S.-based auto manufacturers, autoworkers at the General Motors assembly facility in Oshawa, Ontario felt that the writing was on the wall; that the corporation was planning to shutter its flagship Canadian operation after over one hundred years of production.¹ Faced with the threat of a jobless future, local leadership and rank-and-file activists began a campaign under the banner of “GM Oshawa Matters,” aimed at building political and community pressure on the automaker to secure a footprint for Oshawa’s future by investing in the plant.

The campaign relied heavily on appeals to the value of “Canadian jobs” and the deservingness of Canadian workers, who were perceived as losing jobs to workers in other countries. Workers took to local highway overpasses carrying banners that read “Keep Good Jobs in Canada” and “GM Sending Jobs to Mexico, China” in protest of the corporation’s unwillingness to guarantee investment in the plant before bargaining began. They also emphasized the fact that it was Canadian tax dollars that had bailed out the automaker following the collapse of the global economy in 2008, wearing t-

¹ General Motors technically began its operations in Canada in 1918, but the McLaughlin Carriage Company it purchased had been manufacturing motor vehicles in Oshawa since 1908, and horse-drawn carriages since the 19th Century. For more information, a detailed history can be found on General Motors Canada’s website at <http://www.gm.ca/gm/english/corporate/about/ourhistory/detail>.

shirts emblazoned with a picture of the Mexican flag and text reading “Canada didn’t bail out GM for Mexico.” The campaign was hailed as a success when General Motors agreed to invest \$500 million in the facility, securing its future for at least another round of bargaining. However, any illusions that this was a success in strictly Canadian terms were dashed less than six months later, when the news broke that hundreds of workers just down the highway in Ingersoll, Ontario would be losing their jobs, as production of the GMC Terrain moved to Mexico later in 2017. Despite the flag-waving, this was a success not for Canadian workers, but for workers in Oshawa.

At the same time, Unifor—the national union representing the autoworkers at both facilities—was becoming involved in the Canadian government’s approach to renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Donald Trump, a right-wing, anti-worker billionaire elected President of the United States in 2016 on a platform of economic protectionism, had recently opened up the NAFTA to a new round of negotiations. Canadian labour leaders, including Unifor President, Jerry Dias—who had once described Trump as “racist, sexist, anti-immigrant, and a foolish person in so many regards” (McGillivray, 2016)— seized on the opportunity to push the Liberal Government of Canada to adopt a more worker-friendly version of trade. In its current form, free trade constitutes a significant change in the structure of the political economy in which these auto workers and their union have historically operated, and it is distinctly to the advantage of employers like General Motors. The constant threat of plant closure can be easily mobilized to break or prevent strikes, and the competition for well-paying, unionized jobs creates an added incentive to accept concessions in

exchange for retaining the work. As Rebecca Johns argues, however; “it follows logically that if the production of certain kinds of space and spatial relations serves the interests of capital, labor too must find particular spatial arrangements preferable to others” (1998: 254). In this project, I explore this idea in greater depth, as it relates to these autoworkers in Oshawa and their union.

Unifor was formed in 2013 out of a merger between the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), to which the Oshawa autoworkers belonged, and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada. Before they were the CAW they belonged to the United Auto Workers (UAW), and their union was born out of militant local organizing, supported by an American organizer. They often worked in concert with, or drew inspiration from, their counterparts in the United States. During the middle decades of the twentieth century, in which the Canadian and American economies were characterized by protectionism in the form of high tariffs—and later, by content rules established by the Auto Pact—the UAW still saw fit to organize on both sides of the border wherever the common employers happened to operate. This program of international unionism ended in 1984, when the Canadian wing of the UAW broke off to form its own union, precisely at a time when the structure of the Canadian economy was changing and the Auto Pact was giving way to the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (CUSFTA).

In the succeeding decades, the CAW’s relationship with the international labour community became increasingly complex, characterized by both a higher degree of involvement in certain kinds of labour internationalism and, perhaps paradoxically, an

increasing reliance on nationalist rhetoric within its own ranks. The CAW played an important role in pushing the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) to participate in the international anti-apartheid campaign targeting South Africa in the 1980s (Nastovski, 2016), but at the same time it was beginning to build a movement of resistance to free trade along explicitly nationalistic lines. These dynamics are not unique to the CAW/Unifor, and the complex relationship between unions and global capitalism has become a subject of significant study over the past several decades. Much of this study belongs to one of two broad fields—Global Labour Studies (GLS) and the International Political Economy of Labour (IPEL)—and it is within this body of literature that I situate this research project.

GLS and IPEL

Seldom does the IPEL literature identify itself that way. The first attempt to engage directly with the concept of IPEL as a field or approach unto itself and to demarcate its boundaries (however flexible they may be) was in 2002, several years after one of the most important pieces of IPEL literature—Peter Waterman’s *Globalization, Social Movements, and the New Internationalisms* (1998)—had already been published. The 2002 piece, written by Jeffrey Harrod, gestured to some of the critical insights of his own earlier work and the work of Robert Cox, though for Harrod these were clearly predecessors rather than examples of IPEL proper. For Harrod, IPEL responds to the absence of explicit labour perspectives in most of the international political economy (IPE) literature. In contrast to IPE, which predominantly concerns itself with the study of subjects like global finance, trade, security, and international relations,

an IPEL approach would privilege production (labour) as the central lens through which changes in the global political economy might be understood. Thus, IPEL pushes the boundaries of an already interdisciplinary study, adding the sociology of work and the study of industrial and labour relations to the toolkit of conventional IPE, which generally consists of some combination of international relations and political economy.

Such an approach is crucial if we aim to understand the simultaneous and often contradictory deployment of nationalism and internationalism as strategies of the labour movement as it uniquely offers to explain the relationship of mutual influence between labour and the global political economy. "The basic idea of an IPEL is to place labour, or producers, and work, or production, at the centre of social, political and historical discourses and to see it as a prime dynamic of human history. An IPEL would be able to explain what happens to labour globally but also how labour affects and shapes global history and economy" (Harrod, 2002: 50). Taking a cue from Harrod, my intention is that this project reads as a study in the international political economy *of resistance*. Understanding the ways in which workers and their organizations resist changes in the global political economy (and thus their own working and living conditions), how they come to that resistance, how effective or ineffective their chosen modes of resistance are, the ways in which resistance shapes the ongoing uneven and combined development of global capitalism, and indeed every other contour of the relationship between workers and global capital are necessary components of a clear sociology of work, a complete IPE, and most importantly, more effective strategies of resistance for labour going forward.

At the same time, research is emerging from labour studies scholars that provides corroborating evidence for, and many similar insights to, IPEL, though it often arrives under a slightly different banner. “As the world of labor has changed, so has the world of labor studies. Three decades ago, the seemingly terminal crisis of the former challenged the explanatory power of the latter...Recasting labor studies in a global lens allows us to shed new light on the macro-sociological position of workers today“ (McCallum, 2013: 158-159).

For scholars of IPEL, the question is really about how we understand the global political economy, and the answer is drawn from an engagement with labour, whether as a process or as a social force. GLS scholars are, by contrast, concerned with labour (and generally, its organizations), studying it at the global scale on which it increasingly seems to operate. But while their subjective focus may differ slightly, their approaches and the conclusions therefrom drawn are very much in conversation with one another. One begins with the global political economy and drills down, the other begins with organized labour and drills up (or perhaps out), but they ultimately arrive in the same place.

Producing thoughtful and useful analyses of the tensions at work in the articulations and strategies of nationalism and internationalism in the labour movement requires a great deal of nuance. The transformative potential of unionism largely depends on the implementation of effective strategies that reflect both the goals and principles of the movement, and confront the unique demands of the global political economy in which it acts. In this project, I make use of some of the key insights of IPEL

and GLS with respect to global solidarity and inter/nationalisms, with a view towards assessing Unifor's current strategy for dealing with the problem of globalization.

Research Questions, Case Selection, and Methodology

The GM Oshawa Matters campaign demonstrates quite clearly that the union and its members are aware of a problem. The number of unionized jobs at the facility has declined from well over 16,000 in 1989 to little over 2,000 by 2016 (see figure 1 in Appendix B). Lessons from the IPEL and GLS literatures gesture to the value of global solidarity in the face of global capitalism (see Scipes, 2014, 2016; Nastovski, 2016; McCallum, 2013) and demonstrate the extent to which successful strategies of global solidarity rely on local action (see Nastovski, 2016; McCallum, 2013; Waterman, 1998; Scipes, 2016). Indeed, Unifor's own Global Solidarity policy confirms as much (see Unifor, 2016a), but what the GM Oshawa Matters campaign captures more than anything else is the sort of nationalistic thinking that pits workers against one another; certainly no one would characterize what happened in the campaign as reflecting some commitment to global solidarity. In this project, I provide a critical appraisal of Unifor's response to globalization. Guided by the importance of local action gestured to in the literature, and using the GM Oshawa Matters campaign as a case study, I seek to understand how globalization is problematized at Unifor Local 222. Does the current strategic toolkit of the Local include global solidarity in any meaningful way, as the policy seems to suggest that it should? If not, why not? What obstacles prevent such a strategy from taking hold, and what space exists to overcome them?

Though my primary focus in this project is an analysis of what occurs at the local level of the union, it is also necessary to explore how globalization is understood and addressed at Unifor National, because local unions tend to participate in the strategies of their national bodies and follow their examples. Where there are differences, comparing the two can also allow us to elaborate the state of internal democracy within organizations (the relationship between national leadership and rank-and-file workers), and the role that leadership plays in fomenting and disseminating ideas. In all of Unifor's strategies regarding globalization, there is a complicated mix of nationalist and internationalist sentiments, and the union's history of belonging to, and ultimately splitting from, an international union, is also of great interest as a result.

To answer these questions, I spent two days at the Unifor Local 222 union hall collecting documents, and conducted eight semi-structured interviews with rank-and-file activists, active autoworkers, and retirees. The analysis performed in this project includes a number of insights gained from the interviews, as well as a textual analysis of Unifor documents and articles from Unifor Local 222's *Oshaworker* newsletter published between 1985 and 2016. In the interviews, which I structured loosely to be as free-flowing and conversational as possible, interviewees were asked a series of questions designed to collect both empirical and thematic data. I was interested in learning as much as possible about the GM Oshawa Matters campaign, and about the orientation of the union to global capitalism. Many of the activists I interviewed spoke candidly and articulately about the challenges facing their union, the contradictions in its approach to solving them, and their visions for an alternative path forward. As much as possible, I

have endeavoured to tell the story in their own words, and for clarity, a copy of the questions that were used to guide the interviews is attached in Appendix A.

Organization

I begin in Chapter Two by outlining a theory of global labour solidarity against which Local 222's practices can be analyzed. Drawing on Immanuel Ness (2016) and Kim Moody (2017), I begin by establishing the effect of the global restructuring of production that has occurred over the past half century or so on the contours of class. I then draw on the large body of literature that has emerged over the past two decades about the prospects and obstacles for building global labour solidarity as a solution to the challenges posed by this restructuring. Peter Waterman (1998), Rebecca Johns (1998), Kim Scipes (2016), and Katherine Nastovski (2016) in particular provide the foundation I establish for exploring the contours of labour inter/nationalisms.

Understanding the cause of the specific contours that emerge throughout the history of the union—where different understandings of national and class interests come from, and how they translate into action—requires a framework for analysing the links between labour identities and strategies, and I draw heavily from Stephanie Ross (2008, 2012), whose research provides such a framework. Finally, I explore in some detail the role that unions play in shaping workers' self-understanding and how that affects the broader political economy of class struggle. Here, Friedrich Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, as well as Johns and Nastovski's work prove indispensable.

In Chapter Three, I explore the history of labour internationalism at Local 222. From its founding in 1937 until its eventual split in 1984, Local 222 was part of the UAW, a U.S.-based international union. The reasons for the split are complicated, but explanations generally centre on the lack of autonomy that the Canadian wing experienced, and the extent to which the American leadership of the UAW sought to impose strategic decisions on its Canadian members (see Gindin, 1989, 1995: 211-215; Hargrove, 2009: 149-154). The split institutionalized Canadian nationalism as part of the organization's collective action frame, and it did so at a particularly significant time in the development of capitalism; within ten years, the restructuring of the North American auto industry under the newly ratified NAFTA was well under way. This confluence of events would have profound implications for the character of Local 222's strategies in the following decades, as the union would come to rely on a largely nationalistic set of strategies in response to globalization.

In Chapter Four, I present my findings, based on an analysis of the interviews I conducted and of selected Unifor National and Unifor Local 222 documents. As in the chapter which precedes it, I try wherever possible to present the views and analyses belonging to the activists and workers I interviewed and whose articles and other published works I read in their own words. I begin by surveying some of the work currently undertaken by Unifor National through its Social Justice Fund (SJF) and its participation in the global union federations (GUFs) to which it is affiliated. Under its Global Solidarity policy (which I also explore in greater detail), Unifor commits itself to the struggle against global capitalism, and recognizes explicitly the need for local action

and rank-and-file participation. The interviews, however, revealed a different story. The activists I spoke to reported no direct worker-to-worker contact or other forms of rank-and-file participation in global solidarity. Based on the interviews, I explore some of the likely explanations for this inconsistency. Specifically, I highlight the existence of a crisis of mobilization within the union, a reliance on nationalism in the union's collective action frame, the limitations of business and social unionisms in the union, and the consequences of concession bargaining and two-tiered contracts on solidarity within the union.

In the closing chapter, I present my conclusions. I argue that social unionism, at least as practiced within Unifor, is an insufficient response to the pressures of globalization because it fails to mobilize the membership in any significant way, and because its framing is distinctly liberal, prioritizing national solidarity over class-struggle. Such a program of (non-)struggle against global capitalism limits the ability of the union to protect its membership from the forces of attrition that have severely diminished its numbers in the automotive sector. Rather than building a program of global solidarity to overcome international competition for work, the union has sought to fight for an alternative version of globalization, and to enhance its own competitiveness through concessions and the kinds of nationalist politics seen in the GM Oshawa Matters campaign. In stark contrast to the union's Global Solidarity policy, which directly names global capitalism as the source of the union's woes and recommits the union to an internationalist struggle adapted to this new terrain (Unifor, 2016a), its strategic toolkit is distinctly nationalistic. In practice, it almost exclusively frames workers as, first and

foremost, Canadians, rather than as members of the global majority of working people in desperate need of each other's support.

Where there do seem to be internationalist currents moving within the union, they largely remain the purview of the International Department, its officers, and the national leadership. Despite a recognition in Unifor policy that such programs require local, rank-and-file participation to be effective, I have found very little evidence that the union is making this a priority. At the local level, frames and strategies remain nationalistic at their core, and internationalist approaches are either abstractions, or seen primarily to be the work of the national body to coordinate or pursue.

Conclusion

I argue that, at the local and national level, Unifor has historically and continues to problematize globalization as fundamentally an issue of free trade and the associated staggering loss of membership, rather than a distinct stage in the development of capitalism requiring a distinct change in labour strategy, despite the nuance elaborated in Unifor's own Global Solidarity policy. I further argue that this failure to adapt has a number of causes, including a longstanding reliance on national identity as a frame for collective action, issues with internal union democracy, a crisis of rank-and-file mobilization, and the limitations of both business and social unionism. Finally, I argue that while Unifor has done little in the previous three decades to substantively challenge the forces of attrition affecting its dwindling membership in the auto manufacturing sector, there does exist some space for renewal, and that there is evidence that this

space is being taken by forces within the union's rank-and-file membership that seek to radically democratize the union and pivot to a class-struggle unionism with more transformative potential.

I contribute to the growing body of IPEL and GLS literature about global solidarity in two ways: I provide an empirical account of the GM Oshawa Matters campaign, complete with the perspectives of rank-and-file activists and local leaders who were involved in organizing and implementing it; and I elaborate a theory of global labour solidarity against which such campaigns can be examined, providing some additional reflections and more clearly exposing the links between strategy and identity as they affect the labour movement and its prospects for success. In this project, I present what I believe to be an important critique of one small part of the Canadian labour movement—though I suspect that much of what I describe will be familiar to many involved in the movement in Canada more broadly, and likely elsewhere as well. As much as those of us interested in the study of labour might want to protect unions from the sustained and pressing onslaught of right-wing, anti-union attacks at all costs, if we refuse to engage in our own internal critiques, we do so at our own peril. I hope that my deep admiration for these workers and activists—and the fact that my critique is ultimately rooted in a desire to see them succeed—carries through in this project.

Chapter Two

Theorizing Global Labour Solidarity

In this chapter, I elaborate a theory of global labour solidarity against which to analyze the GM Oshawa Matters campaign, and the strategic choices of Unifor and its Local 222 more generally. Many such theories have already been developed elsewhere. What I present here is a synthesis tailored to the central research question of this project. In elaborating such a theory, I attempt to answer a number of thematic and typological questions.

First, what is globalization and how does it change the contours of class struggle? What are the important elements that constitute globalization as a project, and what unique problems does it pose for labour, specifically in Canada? Any theory of global labour solidarity must first grapple with these questions. Second, what forms of labour internationalism or international unionism exist? Working class struggle—and the critical theories that seek both to analyze and propel it—has long wrestled with the international question, and strategies of inter/nationalism have fallen in and out of favour within the Canadian labour movement for its entire history in response to politics and changes in the structure of the national and global economies. Tracing this provides important clues about what to look for in a transformative approach to global labour solidarity in the present political and economic moment. What is the connection between global labour solidarity and local labour struggle? Are they competing or interdependent strategies? Certainly they compete for resources and attention in some

meaningful ways, but is it possible or effective for labour to pursue global labour solidarity without a solid foundation of local labour struggle? What does it actually mean for labour to “think globally, act locally” (Herod, 2002)? Third, what is the connection between labour identities and strategic choices? Last, but perhaps most important, what is solidarity? What forms of it exist, and what is its purpose? Most of the existing literature addresses at least one—and often, many or all—of these questions, and a complete review is well beyond the scope of this chapter. Here, I attempt only to provide the highlights that I find useful for answering the central research question of this project.

The Political Economy of Globalization

A scholarly interest in globalization has preoccupied many academics working in the field of political economy for the past several decades. Perhaps the central question in the field of international political economy (IPE) has been precisely this: what is globalization? The answers largely depend on underlying analyses of capitalism and the state. For some, globalization represents a ceding of nation-state governance to a new global, constitutional framework, established by free trade agreements, and global organizations such as the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (see Gill and Cutler, eds., 2014). For others, globalization represents a fundamental transformation of the dynamics of class struggle established during the post-war era in the global North through the emergence of a transnational capitalist class (see Robinson, 2004) and a global working class (see Ness, 2016). Owing to the uneven development of capitalism, however, the distribution of these classes

across an increasingly integrated economic world is not even. This has led some to recognize in globalization the emergence of a distinct form of U.S.-based, capitalist empire, backed by violent military force (see Panitch and Gindin, 2012; McNally, 2006), and a global apartheid regime under which the labour of production is increasingly the domain of disenfranchised and low-waged workers in the global South (see Ness, 2016).

Despite the differences in nuance and approach (and perhaps in the underlying understandings of exactly what the state is and what it does), most critical IPE analyses converge on a definition of globalization that recognizes the emergence of structures and organizations of global governance, and an ideological trend within those structures and organizations towards neoliberalism. However, from the vantage point of a class analysis, this general definition is missing a vital component, the transformation of production—and it is here that the mobilization of nationalist rhetoric is particularly at odds with the changing nature of class.

In the introduction to his 2017 book entitled *On New Terrain: How Capital is Reshaping the Battleground of Class War*, Kim Moody summarizes these changes in the global structure of production and what has been done to the working class in the global North as a result as follows:

for decades, employment in manufacturing has declined in most of the industrialized economies, while that in “services” has risen in both absolute and relative terms. With the onset of the neoliberal era, increased competition, deregulation, privatization, outsourcing, and lean production methods reorganized the production of goods and services. Production systems were disaggregated, manufacturing workplaces downsized, and existing working-class communities uprooted to such an extent that many have concluded that the working class has either dissolved entirely or at the

very least been so fragmented that whatever power for social change once attributed to it has more or less evaporated (2017: 7).

Marxist political scientist and labour activist Immanuel Ness counters this view that the working class has dissolved or fragmented, documenting the rise of working class resistance to the penetration of economies in the global South by transnational capital. For Ness, the working class has not declined in the face of technological advance or socioeconomic change, but has instead shifted substantially to the global South. In *Southern Insurgency: The Coming of the Global Working Class*, Ness writes that

while the right wing declared the working class dead and a false construct, leftist scholars were also challenging the legitimacy of the working class as a force for social equity and transformation. Yet, more than 40 years after the onslaught of the economic, political, and intellectual offensive against organized labor throughout the world, the working class has a heartbeat and is stronger than ever before despite the dramatic decline in organized labor (2016: 3).

For Ness, the coming of the global working class began when the relative strength of organized labour in the North and its effects on corporate profitability ultimately prompted capital to move production South in search of lower labour costs (ibid: 29-30). In turn, the desire (though often expressed as a need) to attract the investment of foreign capital has encouraged the development of export processing zones (EPZs) across the global South. EPZs aim to guarantee profit by providing partnerships between capital, contractors, and government that generate an oversupply of low-wage workers, encourage exploitation through the deregulation of wages and working conditions, and prevent the establishment of independent unions which might curtail the profitability of transnational capital (ibid: 181).

Confronted with the unique challenges of resisting a genuinely global capitalism and with the contradictions inherited from their respective colonial and authoritarian histories, labour movements in the South are adapting to the demands of the moment and abandoning or transforming the organizations of the old guard, especially where they have been coopted or otherwise compromised, fomenting new strategies of mobilization and struggle (ibid: 188-189). However, in stark contrast to the radical militancy seen in the global South, Ness notes that

an enduring feature of existing trade union leadership in the auto industry of Europe and North America has been opposition to investment in low-wage factories in the global South. Organized labor in the North has only sought to improve conditions in the South with a view to advancing its own organizational interests. Raising the cost of labor in the South has always reduced the propensity of capital to export production, and redounded to the benefit of union members in the North. Given the concentration of mass production in North America, Europe, and Japan during the 20th century, existing trade unions unfailingly aligned with big business in their industrial sectors to prevent free trade. These efforts to preserve industrial production in the North failed miserably, as trade unions typically became allied with national manufacturers to defend shrinking industrial turfs from further outsourcing of production to the South (2016: 31).

The globalization of production has not only thrown workers in the global North and the global South into competition with one another, displacing workers, undermining unions, and placing downward pressure on wages, but has also created competition between countries within the global South. “Global labor arbitrage”—a phrase coined by Stephen Roach, Chief Economist at Morgan Stanley to describe the relocation of production to take advantage of differences in labour costs—

creates competition not just between first and third world countries and workers, but also among those in the third world. Mexico has lost up to

500,000 jobs and hundreds of firms to China, for example. Wages on jobs outsourced from the United States to India are held down by competition from workers in Vietnam and the Philippines (Brecher et al., 2006: 10).

This means that attempts to raise wages and living standards in one country in the global South for the purpose of reducing the relative advantage it enjoys in attracting capital and production from countries in the global North without dismantling the underlying structure of global competition also necessarily has the effect of increasing the relative advantage of other countries in the global South that have not enjoyed the attention of unions in the global North. Thus, these workers are exposed to the same forces of attrition. Not only are workers in the global North no more likely to keep their jobs, but the competition between workers in the global South is enhanced. These forces of competition greatly enhance the power of capital to profit and to discipline workers by keeping wages down and rendering increasing numbers of workers disposable.

The Political Economy of Labour Inter/Nationalisms

Owing to the uneven development of global capitalism, and to the distinct cultural and ideological complements to unionism around the world, labour responses to the global restructuring of production have predictably varied widely. Though his work is primarily focused on unions in the global South, Mark Anner's typology of the two broad categories to which these responses belong is a helpful starting point. He writes:

from the remnants of old corporatist pacts between labor and the state, some labor groups are drawn to new forms of economic nationalism where domestic pacts are prioritized over broader class-based interests. Other labor unionists, influenced by a history of more militant activism and

international solidarity in the region, are often more inclined to pursue cross-national, class-based alliances (2011: 2).

Labour internationalism represents the reaching out of organized labour wherever it is located to build meaningful relationships of solidarity and cooperation with its counterparts across borders. International unionism is related, but distinct, and this distinction is significant, because it involves establishing or enhancing the power of international unions, often, but not necessarily, as a means of pursuing labour internationalism. When unions in Canada arrange material support for workers in the global South, they are engaging in an act of labour internationalism. When unions in Canada affiliate to GUFs, or when Canadian workers join international unions such as the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), they are engaging in international unionism. Labour internationalism can and does exist in the absence of international unions or GUFs, and it can be carried out in a number of meaningful ways by union locals or even individual rank-and-file workers. For example, a worker in Canada who refuses overtime that is being offered to make up for a production slowdown produced by a strike elsewhere in their employer's global network is engaged in a profound act of labour internationalism despite having never left home.

Similarly, international unionism does not necessarily represent labour internationalism, but can in fact be used to advance the nationalist goals of one participant over another. Kim Scipes (2010, 2014) documents the extent to which the American labour movement—and particularly, the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)—has engaged in what he calls “labor

imperialism,” engaging in labour internationalism with a view towards dominating other labour movements in service of the perceived interests of American workers. The view that this was ultimately the aim of American labour leaders in the UAW is an important part of why the Canadian wing of the union broke off on its own in the mid-1980s (see Gindin, 1995: 211-215). Not all forms of labour internationalism are necessarily an expression of global labour solidarity.

Waterman’s “thirteen propositions on a new labour internationalism” (1998: 71-73) are too long and detailed to be worth recounting in full, but from them several key principles can be synthesized. First, international solidarity should be driven by rank-and-file workers, and while it should avoid bureaucratization and embrace a horizontalist politics, it should not abandon what Waterman calls “the traditional formal terrains” (ibid: 73) of internationalism—by which he means the existing international departments and delegations—but rather make use of them. Second, it should not be top-down in the global sense either, requiring participation and the exchange of material and political supports in all directions, including between the global South and North. Third, it should start at home, attacking the local causes of international exploitation and oppression, and embracing a politics that confronts “national, racial, political, religious, ideological and gender discrimination” (ibid: 72). Finally, it should move beyond verbal declarations to provide tangible support in recognition of the needs and capacities of all workers involved.

To this set of propositions, Kim Scipes adds a conceptualization of the different “levels” of solidarity, and a list of concrete examples that help to elaborate the different

types of solidarity work that labour movements around the world practice (2016: 43-47). For Scipes, labour internationalism can exist on three connected levels: (1) the level of worker-to-worker solidarity across borders, (2) the level of fighting for positive social change across borders, and (3) the level of fighting for positive social change at home to produce a domestic politics more conducive to global solidarity (ibid: 43-44). Across these different levels we have seen, and should continue to look for, coordinated efforts to prevent free trade, establish and maintain unions (both global and domestic), resist militarism and imperialism, combat oppression, and agitate and organize against common transnational corporations (ibid: 46-47). From all of this, Scipes elaborates a theory of global labour solidarity, and it reads as follows:

global labor solidarity is an act, or an ongoing set of actions, by workers, their organizations, and their allied organizations, as well as by writers, artists, and other activists, to support workers across political community borders in their efforts to enhance workers' lives, wages, working conditions, and sometimes, their very existence as *determined by those affected*. To strengthen the power and well-being of workers globally, workers must develop solidarity across political community borders *in addition* to developing solidarity with workers of their own country; global labor solidarity does not undercut solidarity by workers in the same country but instead develops the power, well-being, and knowledge of workers globally (2016: 45, emphasis in original).

But how does this theory of global labour solidarity deal with questions of nationalism?

Though we encounter a global terrain of increasing economic integration, the nation-state remains a central site through which politics are expressed, and so there continues to be scholarly disagreement over how labour ought to orient itself to the so-called "national question."

In contemporary popular discourses, nationalism is often treated as the realm of the political right, owing perhaps to the tendency for nationalisms to be politicized and mobilized in support of imperialism, closed borders, and other primarily right-wing projects. However, the political left has its own complicated relationship with the concept of nationalism. Left nationalisms have included various strategies and goals over time, including “direct support for the interests of one’s employer, blocking immigration, promoting corporatism, working to improve the social welfare state, fighting US imperialism, and developing a national industrial plan with the aim of nationalization” (Nastovski, 2016: 71).

There is a clear distinction to be made between right and left variants of nationalism, especially in terms of stated goals with respect to the imagined communities they invoke, but we should also ask: how useful is this distinction, analytically and politically? Beneath the explicit appeals to “keep good jobs in Canada,” “invest in Canada,” and “buy Canadian,” is the implicit claim that Canadians should care more about the livelihoods of their neighbours than those of workers in the global South, and this is not fundamentally different than the arguments made by anti-immigrant groups, supporters of imperialism, and the various nationalist arguments of the right and far-right more generally. These arguments seek to invoke or engender a sense of responsibility to a principle of national solidarity. Prioritizing solidarity on the basis of nationality above solidarity on the basis of class is a dangerous strategy for labour, as it sows fertile ground for alliances which are in every other respect counter to the labour movement’s goals. We can see this pernicious link between left and right

nationalisms in the early embrace of U.S. President Donald Trump by the American labour movement, and months later, the support the Trump Administration received from American labour—particularly, the United Steel Workers (USW)—for the introduction of a global tariff on steel (Fox-Hodess, 2018).²

In addition, Katherine Nastovski outlines several ways in which left nationalism obstructs the prospects for union internationalism and global solidarity. First, it “undermines/exists in tension with internationalism as a goal by privileging the national terrain;” second, it tends towards collaboration with capital and the state; third, “it reinforces the border, thereby functioning to sustain the global division of labor shaped by practices and legacies of colonialism and imperialism;” and fourth, it obscures class, limiting the revolutionary or transformative potential of left political projects more generally (2016: 72).

On the other hand, it has been argued that internationalism actually depends on nationalism, as internationalism represents an exchange between nations. This basic position has been advanced with respect to internationalism and the CAW by Sam Gindin, the union’s former Research Director. In his book, *The Canadian Auto Workers: The Birth and Transformation of a Union*, he argues that a meaningful union

² It is worth noting, as Fox-Hodess does, that the USW, which has members in Canada as well as the United States, supported the steel tariff, but also called for an exemption for Canada.

internationalism can only be built atop a strong and secure foundation of what he calls “progressive nationalism” (1995: 205). For Gindin, it is clear that

if Canadians and American autoworkers could resist their employers’ attempts to speed up the line, Volkswagen workers in Mexico would face less pressure to work at a pace that forced forty-year-olds into involuntary retirement. If Canadians could challenge the logic of competitiveness (rather than try to compete with fellow workers in other countries), then workers in South Africa would feel less isolated when they also resisted that logic (205).

To make his case, Gindin points out that the presence of a generally weak labour movement anywhere precludes its meaningful participation in labour internationalism.

“New kinds of international solidarity,” Gindin writes,

are not compatible with a reality that includes an American labour movement that has been unable to organize its own ‘South;’ a Mexican labour movement in which workers at different auto plants within the same company can’t even communicate with each other; and a Canadian movement that can’t organize the fastest-growing sectors (private service)” (203-204).

Certainly, it is the case that labour internationalism—as with any other strategy or action labour might choose to undertake—requires a tremendous amount of worker power and coordination on the ground. A movement that cannot even rely upon meaningful expressions of solidarity between workers in the same country (or in the same factory) can hardly be relied upon to demonstrate the same with workers so much further away, with whom a common interest may be much more abstracted, and therefore difficult to see or feel. Gindin’s point is well-taken, but he runs into two problems. First, he mistakes the need for class-struggle unionism with a need for labour

nationalism, and second, he misses the opportunity that labour internationalism presents for mobilizing a disengaged and disillusioned rank-and-file membership.

To the first point, what is really at issue for Gindin is not the need for militancy and mindful solidarity among rank-and-file *Canadian* workers, but rather, among *rank-and-file workers* who happen to be in Canada—or anywhere else for that matter. Far from effectively illustrating the need for an effective labour movement at the national level, Gindin’s argument is actually a powerful illustration of the need for an effective labour movement at the local level and on the shop floor. It is not clear why, for Gindin, the ability of workers to “challenge the logic of competitiveness” or to “resist their employers’ attempts to speed up the line” relies on nationalism, rather than what we might call ‘provincialism’ or ‘municipalism.’ Fundamentally, Gindin’s argument is that you must stand in solidarity with the worker next to you before you can stand in solidarity with the worker on the other side of the border, and certainly this is true, but might we not also simply extend that argument to conclude that you must stand in solidarity with the worker next to you before you can stand in solidarity with the worker on the other side of the country, or the other side of the province, or even the other side of town? Certainly, we should also recognize the severe limitations of one obvious logical extension of this argument: that a unionized autoworker in Oshawa *must* stand in solidarity with a unionized prison guard in British Columbia *so that* she can then stand in solidarity with an autoworker in Mexico.

Gindin’s argument is powerful insofar as it recognizes that autoworkers in Oshawa and Windsor could not possibly maintain the worker power required to support

a meaningful labour internationalism if they were constantly pitting themselves against one another, but this is a far cry from substantiating the claim that “progressive internationalism can only be built on a strong and progressive nationalism” (205). There need not be anything distinctly nationalistic about the character of cooperation between autoworkers in Oshawa and Windsor. All that is required is that the autoworkers in Oshawa work together so as not to undermine their counterparts in Windsor, and vice versa.

Such a unionism—engaging workers in a solidarity that is sensitive to the struggle of the other workers beyond those factory walls—is class-struggle unionism, and that sensitivity must extend from Oshawa to Ramos Arizpe and Lordstown just as surely as it must extend from Oshawa to Windsor. I return to a discussion of class-struggle unionism in a later section, but for now, it is sufficient to conclude that the fundamental issue that Gindin gestures to is not a national one, but a local one. Case study research into successful campaigns of global solidarity confirm that this is the case, demonstrating that the successes of labour’s global strategies depended on “reciprocity between the global and local spheres of action” (McCallum, 2013: 146) and were often “spearheaded by rank-and-file members and local union leadership” (Nastovski, 2014: 212).

This link between the global and the local has also been explored by Andrew Herod, whose analysis focuses on two case studies which, taken together, suggest that global capital can be meaningfully contested with both transnational solidarity and highly-focused local organizing, depending on what the specific occasion calls for

(Herod, 2001). Herod challenges what he sees as the suggestion that global solidarity is the only strategy for resisting global capital by bringing attention to the utility of the local campaign. While his argument that this is an apparent paradox is perhaps not the most convincing—it is not clear in the way he seems to suggest, for example, that local campaigns inherently contradict global solidarity because, as Jamie McCallum and Katherine Nastovski both suggest, local work is an essential component of global solidarity—he does raise an important point about the connection between the global and the local: workers united in a common struggle but separated by national borders occupy fundamentally different locations in production, affording them unique opportunities for meaningful resistance (Herod, 2001: 104). Reflecting on the place-specific opportunities for resistance afforded to different workers in their collective struggle is also an important part of building a transformative global labour solidarity.

Meaningful labour internationalisms require building and maintaining worker power on shop floors everywhere before they can be linked together in a struggle against global capital, which brings us to the second point: that Gindin misses the opportunity that internationalism presents for mobilizing a disengaged rank-and-file membership. In her research on the Canadian labour movement's engagement with strategies of international solidarity with the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa in the 1980s, Nastovski tells the story of workers across many different occupations and workplaces coordinating direct action to confront South African apartheid. The activists—including postal workers, longshorepersons, and telecommunications workers—placed their own livelihoods on the line by actively disrupting transportation

and communications between South Africa and Canada for an entire week in March 1986 (Nastovski, 2016: 59). We can never know how effective such acts of solidarity were in bringing about the eventual fall of the apartheid regime, but for Nastovski, the extent to which this work enhanced the capacity of the locals involved—building worker power—is undeniable. “The emphasis on worker self-activity highlights the way solidarity efforts can also be sites of strengthening the local by building capacities for resistance” (ibid).

Nastovski’s research reveals the emergence of what she describes as a transformative form of solidarity in the 1980s, led primarily by grassroots, ‘worker-to-worker’ action and organizing, and a more radical form of class-struggle unionism (ibid: 55-57). The benefit of grassroots labour activism is that bottom-up struggle meshes with the unique economic and political environment more organically than top-down strategies which often take a one-size-fits-all approach. However, there are practical limitations to effective, transformative international solidarity work: the scope of the work necessitates tremendous capacity beyond that possessed by few organizations in the labour movement; the competition of many possible strategies for limited resources with which to operationalize them; “hegemonic ideas of race, white supremacy, patriarchy, and nationalism; and...the opportunism, careerism, and co-optation of union leaders, members, and staff” (ibid: 70).

The relationship between nationalism and internationalism as either competing or reinforcing strategies for labour under globalization is a complicated one. Clearly, union strategies that are premised on the idea that some workers are more deserving

than others, or that there is some national interest in which workers and bosses alike are invested to such an extent that class struggle should be abandoned or put on pause hold little promise in terms of providing a basis for meaningful class struggle. At the same time, strong internationalisms cannot be built in the absence of meaningful local struggle, where working people actually are, and where their particular positions relative to production, consumption, and accumulation under global capitalism give them particular leverage. Additionally, “the governance structures of global commodity chains signal to labor the sources of economic power and leverage, while labor identities and worldviews shape how labour chooses to target those structures of power” (Anner, 2011: 167). To that end, a theoretical examination of the relationship between identity and strategy in the labour movement is in order.

The Political Economy of Identity and Strategy

Labour studies literature identifies several distinct forms of unionism, and though they go by many different names depending on the author, they belong to one of three basic categories: business unionism (service unionism, corporatist unionism), with a narrow, economistic set of goals and tactics embodied by an emphasis on securing better working conditions through collective bargaining; social unionism, with an emphasis on securing better working *and* living conditions through concerted political efforts within and beyond the workplace; and class-struggle unionism (solidarity unionism), with an emphasis on building working class power as a transformative social force.

Stephanie Ross makes use of the insights of social movement theory to analyze the Canadian labour movement's engagement with these modes of unionism. Her framework involves three components of unionism: collective action frames, or the shared basis upon which unionists self-identify and organize; strategies and repertoire, or the tactical toolkit unionists use to pursue their goals, as established by their action frames; and internal organizational practices, or the structure of decision-making and executive function within the union (Ross, 2008: 131-132).

Business unionism begins with a shared identity rooted in the specific job, and an interest not in contesting capitalism as a whole, but rather in securing short-term economic or otherwise material gains (Ross, 2012: 35-36). As a result, strategies tend to be restricted to those that work in service of these narrow interests, with a strong emphasis on collective bargaining. Political activity is generally restricted to advocating for pro-union reforms that might enhance the union's strength at the bargaining table. Business unionism is also frequently associated with bureaucratic or otherwise hierarchical internal organizational practices for several reasons. First, there is the tendency to run the union itself like a business; to try to maximize revenues and minimize expenses, to rationalize financial processes, and to mirror the organizational practices of the corporations they counter by centralizing power at the top where the bargaining happens (ibid: 38). Second, there is a strong commitment to maintaining the semblance of organizational legitimacy conferred by responsible leadership. "As part of the class compromise which made the legal entrenchment of unions' rights to organize,

bargain and strike (under certain conditions) possible, union leaders' place at the table was premised on their provision of 'responsible union leadership'" (ibid: 39).

By comparison, social unionism is premised on a more broad collective action frame that recognizes the social context in which the employment relationship exists, and as a result, employs a much wider range of strategies, suited to achieving a wider set of goals. Former CAW president, Buzz Hargrove, describes social unionism as "the idea that the labour movement's moral credibility rests on its claim to speak for all working people, not just its dues paying members" (Hargrove, 2009: 45). In this sense, social unionism dispenses with the sectionalism of business unionism tied to a specific job or workplace. So too does social unionism move well beyond the economism of business unionism by recognizing and attempting to combat the myriad forms of oppression that members face inside and outside of the workplace, including sexism, racism, ableism, transphobia, and homophobia (Ross, 2012: 41).

However, while social unionism broadens the scope of collective action, both in terms of framing and in terms of strategy, it does not necessarily involve either the democratizing of internal practices or the centring of class in any revolutionary or necessarily transformative way. Unions in Canada have engaged and continue to engage in struggles well beyond their own immediate sectional and economic interests, including opposing privatization and the sale of military equipment to human rights abusers and advocating for the expansion of universal healthcare to include universal pharmacare. However, as Ross points out:

There is significant variation within the social unionist collective action frame over the roots of these problems, and in particular on the stance that unions should take with respect to capitalism as a system. While social unionism is united by a general commitment to social change beyond the workplace and beyond the unionized working class, there are importance ideological differences over the causes of the social injustices being fought, the type of social change being pursued and the particular content of workers' broader interests and identities (ibid).

The social unionist frame is sufficient to mobilize action in support of broader struggles for social justice, but it is not necessarily class-based or anti-capitalist in its outlook. Further, Ross (2008) demonstrates that social unionism in Canada has not generally involved the meaningful democratization of the labour movement through the direct participation and leadership of rank-and-file members.

Business unionism is parochial, economistic, and often involves explicit class-collaboration. Social unionism is broadly political, but not necessarily democratic or anti-capitalist. In fact, it is often political only in the most liberal sense of the word, encouraging members to take an interest in politics outside of the labour movement, rather than clearly articulating the labour movement as a political movement unto itself. Class-struggle unionism breaks with both the narrow economism of business unionism and the liberal reformism of social unionism, and “encompasses various forms of union organization aimed at challenging capitalism and capitalist social relations” (Nastovski, 2016: 56). Class-struggle unionism places class at the centre of the collective action frame, and it involves strategies that emphasize building class consciousness and the capacity for militant and direct action. To that end, a key principle of class-struggle unionism is worker self-activity and rank-and-file participation (see Ness, 2014), and this

is in fairly stark contrast to the top-down bureaucratic management of business and social unionisms.

The next question to deal with is this: is a transformative program of global labour solidarity practicable within the confines of business or social unionism? To take one example of the relationship between business unionism and internationalism, Anner describes the response of business unions in Argentina—which had a collaborative approach to dealing with both employers and the state in the protectionist era—to the restructuring of the automotive sector as follows:

these unions have their roots in corporatist labor traditions where labor was seen as a partner with the state and employer organizations, unified in a goal of national development. Class conflict was shunned in favor of class collaboration. As the economies moved away from protectionist, national development policies and shifted towards market-oriented reforms, the old macrocorporatist pacts entered into disfavor. Yet the inclination of these labor groups to respond to new challenges via cross-class collaboration remained; what would change would be the form of that collaboration (2011: 164).

Because business unionism is characterized primarily by an economistic logic that takes the underlying social relations of capitalism as a given rather than challenging them in any meaningful way, the kinds of transformative internationalisms imagined by Johns, Nastovski, Scipes, and Waterman are effectively precluded outright. Such unions are likely only to contest globalization for the narrow reasons described by Ness (2016: 31), and only to the point that the bargaining power they enjoyed under protectionism is restored.

The prospect of building transformative internationalisms within a social unionist paradigm is by comparison far more complicated to explore. To the extent that social unionism places labour struggles in the context of the broader social world, it certainly makes space for concerns of global justice that are not immediately or obviously connected to the struggle for better wages or working conditions in a specific workplace. However, it is not clear that social unionism necessarily involves taking that space for that purpose. Social unionism can be premised on an explicitly nationalistic collective action frame, in which case the prospects for building transformative global solidarity may be limited.

In her exploration of grassroots internationalisms in the labour movement in Canada, Nastovski discusses what she refers to as “worker-to-worker solidarity” practices, which focus on building solidarity with anti-imperialist, anti-repression, and revolutionary struggles around the world by building meaningful connections between workers across borders (2016: 55). Her interviews reveal a conscious link between the worker-to-worker form of internationalism and the principles of class-struggle unionism. She writes:

These counter-hegemonic practices of the worker-to-worker model, which derive from class struggle models of union action, are what make this model transformative... Critical to the transformative potential of this model of solidarity is the way it operates to support the goals and strategies of different international struggles that challenge the status quo of the global division of labor (and the particulars of the global socioeconomic status quo based on the legacies of colonialism and both past and existing imperialism) (Nastovski, 2016: 57).

Class-struggle unionism is premised on a fundamentally different collective action frame; one that is based on class, rather than occupation, workplace, or nationality. In that sense, it is far more likely to engage in transformative strategies of internationalism and global solidarity. But what does it mean to struggle as a class? What is the relationship between labour movements and class under capitalism and within the contemporary moment?

In *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, Friedrich Engels traces out the emergence of unions as organizations of class-struggle in England during the Industrial Revolution. “The revolt of the workers began soon after the first industrial development,” as workers found themselves in squalor and immiseration while the ‘rich idlers’ accumulated great wealth and contributed relatively little (Engels, 1845, 1993: 221). But the power of individual protest or crime as an attempt to ameliorate the suffering of the worker proved limited, and so

in all branches of industry Trade Unions were formed with the outspoken intention of protecting the single working man against the tyranny and neglect of the bourgeoisie. Their objects were: to fix wages and to deal, *en masse*, as a power, with the employers; to regulate the rate of wages according to the profit of the latter, to raise it when opportunity offered, and to keep it uniform in each trade throughout the country (ibid: 223).

Under capitalism, individual workers must compete for work and, subject to the rules of supply and demand, this competition has the tendency to keep wages low, provided the supply of labour is higher than the demand for it. Unions are generally understood as an attempt to improve wages and working conditions by taking them out of competition through collective action and struggle. If worker demands for better wages and working

conditions are refused, the collective withholding of labour in the form of a strike is a powerful tool for negotiation, idling capital and eliminating its profitability. However, the strike is always limited insofar as there exists a pool of replacement workers (“scabs”—or as Engels referred to them, “knobsticks”) who can be called in to keep production moving. Engels also argued that this effect is worse when a strike is partial rather than general (Engels, 1845, 1993: 224). For Engels, general strikes occur when all of the workers in a given trade withdraw their labour simultaneously.³ Partial strikes, then, occur when only one factory or one employer is affected. This carries particular significance under globalization, because it means that unless strikes can be coordinated so that every facility producing the same commodity is idled at once, strikes remain partial, and thus limited in their effect.

For Engels, unions and strikes are powerful precisely because they build solidarity between workers. He writes: “what gives these Unions and the strikes arising from them real importance is this, that they are the first attempt of the workers to abolish competition. They imply the recognition of the fact that the supremacy of the bourgeoisie is based wholly upon the competition of the workers among themselves” (ibid: 226). The important conclusion to be drawn here is that globalization dramatically expands the scope of solidarity necessary if workers are to break the partial strike effect and exert real class power.

³ This is distinct from the way we use “general strike” to refer to the complete withdrawal of labour across sectors in a specific place, as in the case of the Winnipeg General Strike, for example.

When we explore the relationship between identity and strategy in the labour movement, it is important to recognize the extent to which class is both ideational and material. It is a definite social location that refers to a position relative to the production and accumulation of capital, but it is also an identity—and that identity does not necessarily align with material class position. A 2016 study by D.W. Livingstone and Antonie Scholtz, captures this problem clearly, demonstrating a substantial gap between what is materially true about class within the relations of production and how workers identify with respect to class in Canada. It reads:

Overall, the proportion of the employed labour force identifying as working class was nearly 40 percent in 1982 and declined to under 20 percent by 2010. The highest incidence of working class identity is consistently among industrial workers, but this declined from over 50 percent in 1982 to just under 30 percent in 2010. The pattern is similar among industrial workers in general and in the private goods-producing sectors (Livingstone and Scholtz, 2016: 483).

As “schools of war,” (Engels, 1845, 1993: 232), unions have a central role in fomenting class consciousness among workers and teaching them how to struggle as a class (Nastovski, 2016: 59). Livingstone and Scholtz’s findings demonstrate that labour has a lot of work to do in terms of challenging the ideological ascendancy of neoliberalism—which individualizes workers and treats economic outcomes as individual failures or successes, deconstructing the very idea of class in the process—even within its own ranks. Constructing a collective action frame around the idea of class requires a shared understanding within the union as to the class position of its members, and it requires that this shared understanding accurately reflect the material conditions of the organization of work if strategies of collective action are to be effective.

Solidarity begins with this shared understanding, and its purpose is to advance and defend the interests of the class by building connections and other means of mutual support. Solidarity for the working class includes all of the strategies and actions that enhance worker power. Acts of solidarity that are common in the labour movement include: writing letters of support and providing material resources for striking workers, refusing to do work that belongs to a striking worker, refusing the overtime and production speed-ups that employers use to break strikes, visiting picket lines to show support and boost morale, and indeed, much more. Solidarity may not improve things for the individual engaging in it in an immediate or obvious way, but it improves the capacity of the group to struggle collectively, and so the individual shares in the benefits just the same.

In the real world, the motivations behind appeals for solidarity range from the purely altruistic to the purely self-interested (Scipes, 2016: 38-39). Acts of solidarity premised on pure altruism are rare, and they depend largely on how great the cost associated is perceived to be. Calls for solidarity premised on pure self-interest do not build meaningful relationships that can be relied upon for the future. “Mutual solidarity suggests that we will each present our views of the situation, including honestly recognizing our own self-interest and deciding that we can gain more—including developing feelings of satisfaction through having helped someone else while helping ourselves—by working together for our mutual benefit” (Ibid: 39).

The distinguishing feature between acts of solidarity and those which undercut solidarity is the extent to which they build or reduce the power of working people as a

class to resist exploitation and constitute a transformative social force. Rebecca A. Johns (1998) theorizes the differences between transformative, and what she terms “accommodationist” forms of solidarity, and the complex relationship between national and class identities which underpin them.

Johns elaborates her own “levels of solidarity” (1998: 259-260), but in contrast to Scipes (2016), whose levels of solidarity are spatial levels, Johns advances a framework for thinking through the extent to which solidarity is potentially transformative of global capitalism. For Johns, the first level—which she describes as level zero—is the level of pure protectionism and class collaboration. “This level is not solidarity at all...labor defines itself in an emphatically geographic manner: workers are American. United States unions align themselves with United States capital, building a nationalist (and sometimes xenophobic) sentiment among their ranks. The enemy in the struggle is foreign competition (both workers and capital)” (Johns, 1998: 259). At level one, solidarity is seen as an instrument for re-establishing the advantage of American workers within the global economy. Workers still view themselves as principally American, and while they may pursue collaboration with workers abroad, the aims of such collaboration are to reduce the incentive capital has to relocate, thus protecting American jobs. This is the level of solidarity demonstrated in the Ness quote referenced earlier (2016: 31), and it is distinctly “accommodationist” according to Johns, in that it accommodates both changes to the global structure of production in the form of free trade and the underlying social relations of capitalism (1998: 256, 260).

The second level of solidarity views the interests of workers around the world as distinct by nation but overlapping. Workers still identify with some national interest, but work to build solidarity on the basis of class with an aim toward challenging the uneven development of capital that undermines working class power. At the third and final level described by Johns, workers identify as members of the international working class and carry no significant national allegiance, striving to “assist workers in organizing and uniting wherever they may be, with the goal of eliminating capital’s spatial advantage over labor, building international working-class power, and transforming global capitalism in fundamental ways” (1998: 260). These last two are levels of transformational solidarity for Johns, at least in theory, and they are so precisely because national identity has lost its preeminent position within the collective action frame, replaced or superseded by class identity and interests.

Conclusion

To summarize, the theory of global labour solidarity developed in this chapter contains several connected components. Global labour solidarity recognizes the structural changes in production that uses borders to make partial strikes the rule, and thereby reduce worker power. It also recognizes the need for local action, on our shop floors and in our communities, and not merely in abstraction or restricted to the top strata of the labour bureaucracy. By extension, there is a clear need for grassroots leadership and rank-and-file democracy in conceiving, developing, and engaging in acts of global solidarity. As strategies for challenging global capitalism, acts of global solidarity must also be directly linked to a critical analysis of class power. They must go

beyond philanthropy, prioritizing projects that build worker power and the capacity of working people on all sides of every border to struggle as a class. Finally, global solidarity must overcome the inherent limitations of business and social unionism. Unions and labour activists must recognize the relationship between a coherent collective action frame rooted in a class analysis and a transformative strategic repertoire of global labour solidarity.

Meaningful acts of global solidarity are those that build worker power to overcome the spatial advantage afforded to capital by a world of globalized production. They require substantial participation at the local level, and they are motivated by neither altruism nor selfishness, but rather a genuine recognition of the common struggle of all working people. In the context of globalized production, this means engaging in solidarity strikes, slowdowns, and plant occupations; carrying out informational pickets and other kinds of public campaigns that highlight the treatment of workers in the Global South to consumers in the Global North; fomenting and encouraging aggressive movements for worker-friendly trade agreements in all relevant countries; and critically, building the kinds of worker-to-worker connections that make these kinds of acts possible and enhance their effectiveness. Ultimately, it means resisting the urge to frame the deservingness of workers along national, rather than class, lines.

This is the theoretical framework through which I explore Unifor Local 222's current toolkit of global solidarity strategies and repertoire. First, however, I explore the history of Unifor and its Local 222, emphasizing key developments in its orientation to

labour inter/nationalisms. I highlight the connections between changes in the structure of the economy and in the kinds of inter/nationalisms expressed by the union, and establish the historical context from which both current contradictions and openings for new strategies emerge for the union. I also present an empirical summary of the GM Oshawa Matters campaign.

Chapter Three

From an Internationalist Foundation, a Nationalist Turn

On January 17, 2018, the Canadian labour movement was plunged into crisis when Unifor, the country's largest private sector union, representing more than 300,000 members, announced that it was leaving the CLC over a lengthy dispute about Article 4 of the CLC constitution, which explicitly forbids the raiding of one affiliate by another. This crisis in the house of Canadian labour caught many off guard, and it unearthed a number of tensions that had been festering within Unifor and within the labour movement more broadly for many decades, particularly with respect to labour nationalism and international unionism in a time of increased and increasing global economic integration.

Raiding—the practice of “organizing the organized”—is widely seen as a drain on resources and a form of anti-union behaviour, because it involves convincing already unionized workers to leave their current union and join another. In the case of the Unifor-CLC split, two separate attempts at raiding were implicated. The first, in January 2017, saw Unifor publicly accused of colluding with the president of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 113, representing transit operators in the city of Toronto, Ontario, in an attempt to have Local 113 ditch its U.S.-based international union and join Unifor (Savage, 2018). The president of Local 113 ultimately resigned and the membership of the union remained with ATU, but a long battle between the CLC and Unifor began over the CLC's application of the justification process contained in Article

4, which recognizes the right of workers to leave one union and join another, provided they do so democratically and have a reasonable justification for doing so (Canadian Labour Congress, 2014: 4-10).

This battle finally came to a head in January 2018, when Unifor announced that it was leaving the CLC over Article 4 and immediately began organizing the already organized Toronto hotel workers of UNITE HERE Local 75. As of February 8, 2018, workers at 21 hotels in Toronto had voted on the question of leaving UNITE HERE and joining Unifor. In all but four workplaces, workers voted to stay with UNITE HERE (The Canadian Press, 2018).

In both the ATU Local 113 and UNITE HERE Local 75 cases, the targets were locals of international unions headquartered in the United States, and in its public attempts to explain its actions, Unifor argued not just that those unions were being run in an undemocratic way, but that Canadian workers need to be guaranteed autonomy when they belong to an international union. In a fairly brief statement explaining why Unifor decided to leave the CLC, reference is made to “U.S.-based unions” a total of six times (Unifor, 2018a). Unifor’s appeals to the importance of membership-driven democracy in this instance were further complicated by the fact that the decision to disaffiliate from the CLC was criticized by some rank-and-file activists for two reasons: that it had been done without the consent or meaningful consultation of Unifor’s membership, and that it would likely mean that Unifor activists would no longer be able to participate in the activities of local labour councils of the CLC, the grassroots

organizing and coordinating hubs of the Canadian labour movement (Mutimer and Weir, 2018).

These tensions around inter/nationalism and union democracy are not new for Unifor. If we want to understand the present state of inter/nationalism at the union and its implications for a coherent response to globalization, we must begin by understanding the history of Unifor's relationship with international unionism. Sam Gindin's *Canadian Auto Workers* is an indispensable guide to the history of the union, from its early militancy, through the break from its American counterpart, and into the early years of the free trade era. In the summary that follows, I sketch out some of the contours of the inter/nationalisms at play throughout the history of Local 222. I have relied heavily on Gindin's work, as well as some archival material belonging to the Local itself. Much more could certainly be said, but in this section I focus on the organizing drive and historic strike of 1937, the CAW/UAW split in late 1984, the developments of the free trade era, the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent restructuring of General Motors, and finally, the 2016 round of bargaining and the GM Oshawa Matters campaign.

1937: Oshawa's United Auto Workers

In the decades prior to the Great Depression, auto manufacturing had become a key economic force in Canada and the United States, and while there was a high tariff and some content rules to protect and incentivize Canadian production, the industry had still become highly integrated across the Canada-U.S. border (see Gindin, 1995: 14-

16). And just as automotive capital had found its preferred spatial arrangement in the so-called “branch plant” system, so too was a new spatial arrangement for the labour movement in North America emerging, in the form of industrial international unionism.

The work inside GM’s Oshawa facility in the 1930s was well-paying by the day’s standards, but the seasonal nature meant that many workers struggled to get by, working only six or seven months each year (Sarnovsky, 2002: 7). Under those circumstances, many workers feared permanent layoff in retaliation for resisting line speed-ups or raising concerns about their working conditions, and so after a series of sporadic work stoppages failed to yield meaningful improvements, they elected a committee of workers to bring their concerns to management. When General Motors flatly refused to address their complaints, they reached out to the emerging UAW—which had several months prior won historic gains with its sit-down strike actions in the United States—for help. The emergence of the UAW was a significant development in the North American political economy of the 1930s, growing out of a wave of militant industrial unionism that characterized the unions belonging to the new CIO, founded in 1936 in the United States and to which the UAW belonged.

On February 19, 1937, UAW organizer Hugh Thompson arrived in Oshawa with his wife and his daughter. Thousands of members signed cards, and on March 2, Local 222 received its UAW charter. It did not, however, receive recognition from General Motors. After several weeks of negotiations failed to secure it, GM Oshawa’s 3,700 workers walked off the job, and on April 8, 1937, one of Canada’s most historic strike actions began.

“In early 1937, GM announced wage cuts for the fifth time in five years. While output per worker was up and profits were now approaching predepression levels, actual wages were twenty per cent below where they were in the twenties. This discrepancy remained even after adjusting for the large decline in prices in that period” (Gindin: 1995: 60). General Motors saw keeping the union out of Canada as one way to retain this profitable discrepancy, and it was emboldened in its strategy of forcing a strike over the issue of recognition by the particularly anti-union animus of Ontario’s Premier, Mitch Hepburn. Ontario’s mining sector was a great source of provincial revenues and the Canadian economy relied heavily on natural resource extraction, and Hepburn’s concern that the CIO would eventually organize the mines if they secured a foothold in Ontario’s auto industry prompted him to pursue military intervention in the strike (ibid: 61). The Premier sent a detachment of over 60 RCMP officers to Oshawa, and when his request that Ottawa send 100 more was ultimately denied, he recruited a 400 man militia to supplement the force, consisting mostly of World War One veterans and university students. This force was never deployed, however, and when the RCMP finally was dispatched to Oshawa, the mayor refused to allow the officers to enter the city (Sarnovsky, 2002: 8).

On April 12, Homer Martin, president of the UAW, visited Oshawa in support of the strike, addressing a rally of 5,000 workers and community members, and promising support in the form of funds for strike pay and solidarity strikes in the United States, neither of which he was authorized to offer (Gindin, 1995: 63). In the end, strike funds from the CIO never arrived, and eight days into the strike, on April 16, Martin met with

GM executives in Detroit and agreed that the strike should end without recognition. The membership initially rejected the tentative agreement, but when it became clear that no financial support or solidarity strikes were coming to help, the leadership convinced the membership to accept the offer. On April 23, the strike was settled. The membership voted 2,205 to 39 to accept the agreement, which included seniority language, a grievance procedure, wage increases, and a commitment not to discriminate against union activists when they returned to work (Sarnovsky, 2002: 8-9).

Though the workers secured their first collective agreement, the company refused to recognize the union as the legitimate representative of the workers until 1942. Membership in the local declined precipitously as workers returned to the job.⁴ The union was not allowed to collect dues on company time, and by 1939, less than 1000 of the workers at GM in Oshawa remained as dues-paying members (ibid: 9). Despite the decline in membership—which would rebound over the course of the Second World War and ultimately, with the advent of the Rand formula—the foundation had been set.

It is worth briefly returning, as Gindin does, to the distinction between labour internationalism and international unionism. Gindin writes that

the Oshawa strike was organized and ultimately won in Canada. The American UAW was too new and distracted by the events exploding in its own country to offer support by way of strike pay, cadres of organizers, or

⁴ This was prior to the Rand decision of 1946, which made membership in the union compulsory for members of unionized bargaining units.

sympathy strikes. Yet the Americans did the most important thing they could do: they acted decisively in their own country. This action created the space and led the way for Canadians to do the same. The union had internationalized the struggle not because of any formal cross-border institutions, but by way of the solidarity of Canadians and Americans taking on, within their own spheres of activity, the common enemy (1995: 67).

Gindin asserts that even though the UAW sent the organizer responsible for organizing Local 222, sent leaders to visit the striking Oshawa workers and boost morale, and certainly played a part in inspiring the militancy and the confidence of the workers to struggle by the example set by their own actions, local action was the significant component, rather than membership in a particular international institution. Institutions aside, however, it is important not to downplay the significance of international coordination, as Local 222 clearly benefitted from both material (in the form of an organizer) and ideational (in the form of inspiring tactics and victories) support from American workers and unionists. We might also imagine that even greater success in the form of recognition might have been achieved far earlier had the strike funds from the CIO arrived. At any rate, the organizing of UAW Local 222 stands as a significant example of the benefits of labour internationalism in the face of multinational capital, and over the succeeding decades, substantial gains were made on both sides of the border. By the 1970s, and after a series of strikes, autoworkers in Canada had achieved wage parity with their American counterparts.

1984: Oshawa's Canadian Auto Workers

Over the course of the 1970s and into the 1980s, the relationship between UAW members and leadership in Canada and their parent union deteriorated substantially,

and there are a number of reasons for this.⁵ The late 1970s and early 1980s saw the global economy plunged into recession, and this created the context in which the Big Three automakers demanded concessions from workers in order to save their jobs. While the UAW was generally ready to accept that argument and concede, the Canadian leadership was not. This was further complicated by the fact that all Chrysler workers in Canada and the United States were covered by a single, international collective agreement—and when the UAW accepted concessions in exchange for bailout money from the U.S. government during the recession, those concessions ultimately applied to Canadian workers as well (Gindin, 1989: 74). Though the membership in Canada—with the exception of one bargaining unit—voted to accept the concessions, their frustrations with the process and the direction of the American UAW brought about the end of the international agreement with Chrysler, and future concessions were condemned at the 1981 meeting of the UAW Canada Council (ibid: 75). However, concessions became a routine part of bargaining in the early years of the 1980s.

In the spring of 1982, the American UAW agreed to enter negotiations with GM early and accepted a number of concessions, including postponing cost of living adjustment payments, eliminating paid personal holidays, and surrendering future wage increases. In Canada, the UAW refused early bargaining and managed to secure an

⁵ It is beyond the scope of this project to explore the split from the UAW in all of the detail possible. Included here is a summary of some of the important points, but for those interested, Gindin's 1989 article about the split and his 1995 book about the CAW are both excellent sources for further detail on the subject.

agreement in the fall of 1982 that included more new money, though the paid personal holidays were also lost, and this is significant because they were intended to pave the way for a four-day work week (ibid). Later that year, Chrysler workers in Canada also rejected the pattern set by their American counterparts. While the Americans believed that a strike might bankrupt the corporation, the Canadians believed that any such threat actually gave them tremendous leverage, and so against the wishes of the American leadership of the UAW, the Canadian wing went out on strike. That strike lasted six weeks, and the workers ended up with a significant bump in their hourly wages for their efforts.

This dynamic played out once again in 1984—this time, at General Motors—and Local 222 members spent 17 days on the picket lines. The Chairperson of the GM Shop Committee at Local 222, Phil Bennett, described the 1984 round of bargaining as follows:

The Bargaining Committee's expectations, along with the membership's expectations were naturally very high, given the profits that the corporation had made in the last year. The UAW across the border chose to go down the road of a scaled wage increase in the first year of the agreement, lump sum payments vs. actual wage increases in the second and third year, profit sharing, among other things, and after a ten-day strike, they reached an agreement with GM in the U.S. The road the UAW chose to walk down in the U.S. is their business and if that is what they wanted to do, so be it. However, I do know that by them going down that road, it made it extremely difficult for the UAW in Canada to deviate from the U.S. agreement and to take into account Canadian priorities at the bargaining table. The main thrust at the bargaining table became the issue of the union in Canada accepting lump sum payments vs. wage increases in the second and third year of the agreement (Bennett, 1984, 2012: 79).

Still, the UAW in Canada held its ground, and after 17 days the strike ended with an agreement that, by the end of it, would see Canadian GM workers earning \$1.14/hour more than their American counterparts by rejecting the lump-sum payments in lieu of wage increases the American UAW had accepted. Bennett also reported that they experienced significant interference in the negotiations from the leadership of the UAW, and by the end of 1984, the divergence in priorities had become too significant to ignore.

On December 14, 1984, a special meeting of the Canada Council moved to begin the process of separating from the UAW. Throughout the 1970s, the UAW had actually taken a number of steps to enhance the autonomy (however partial) of its Canadian wing. The head office was moved to Toronto from Windsor, further from Detroit and closer to the centres of political power in Canada and Ontario, and the Canadian UAW established its own research department, its own national magazine, and began sending its own national delegation to the International Metalworkers' Federation (Gindin, 1989: 70). On September 22, 1986, after a founding convention and subsequent name change, Local 222 received its CAW charter. Full financial autonomy was achieved in October of that year, when the CAW received a \$43 million cheque from the UAW (Sarnovsky, 2012: 80).

At the Local level, the split was generally well-received, at least among the activist core and the local leadership of 222. Activists cited the class collaboration apparent in the American UAW's approach to ostensibly job-saving concession bargaining and the needs of Canadian workers to chart their own course without

interference as reasons to celebrate this new development (see Leah, 1985; Rak, 1985; Whalen, 1985).

The nationalist sentiments that emerged leading up to and throughout the process of splitting from the UAW were not the cause of the split, but rather a consequence of it, and there was actually some concern among the Canadian leadership that nationalism within the new organization might engender the scapegoating of American autoworkers and otherwise unproductive tendencies (Gindin, 1989: 77). Still, the distinct contours of the labour markets of the United States and Canada played a substantial part in generating the divergence in strategy. American autoworkers earned significantly more than the average American worker, in large part because of a generally weaker labour movement and a more reactionary political culture, while in Canada the gap was much smaller (ibid: 65). The United States was also struggling to assert its continued dominance in the Cold War world, and concessions from the autoworkers were framed by some as therefore necessary to the national interest. The Canadian national interest was understood somewhat differently, and Gindin notes this in the different responses to Chrysler's requests for bailout funds in the late 1970s; while the U.S. government demanded concessions from the workers in exchange for help, the Canadian government demanded that Chrysler guarantee jobs for Canadian workers (ibid: 66).

For better or worse, the CAW-UAW split institutionalized Canadian national identity as a formal component of the union's collective action frame, and while this was historic unto itself, it also coincided with substantial changes in the political

economy in which the union operates, and it was greeted by auto executives, who relished the opportunity to pit workers in Canada and the United States against one another (McNally, 1991: 245-246). Within the next ten years, the North American auto manufacturing industry would go from one of substantial protectionism, in the form of the Auto Pact, to one of substantial competition for work across borders with the implementation of the CUSFTA, and eventually, the NAFTA. But while the CAW was formally rejecting its institutional attachment to its mother union in the United States, it was not shirking the call of labour internationalism and global solidarity.

As nationalism within the U.S. labour movement grew in tandem with the growing economic power of U.S.-based multinational corporations, the newly-patriated CAW embarked on a strategy of building alliances with unionists in the global South, particularly in Brazil and South Africa (Anner, 2011: 120). Mark Anner notes the emergence at that time of a strategy of worker-to-worker solidarity between CAW Ford workers and unionists at Ford in South Africa, but there does not appear to have been a similar strategy in which GM Oshawa workers participated with their counterparts in Mexico. Additionally, David McNally notes the lack of a meaningful strategy of solidarity from the CAW for the 1990 Ford strike in Mexico (1991: 246).

At Local 222, union activists engaged in a number of projects dedicated to international solidarity. On March 28-29, 1985, Phil Bennett attended a meeting of the International Metalworkers' Federation in Austria on behalf of the Canadian GM-UAW Council. Bennett reported back to the members of Local 222 on the activities of the conference, which passed resolutions targeting both the corporations and their own

unions on a number of issues (1985: 5). The workers called on General Motors to respect independent trade union rights in every facility regardless of jurisdiction, and to develop a coherent and uniform system for disclosing relevant information to the unions and giving them a voice in decision-making. They also called on their own unions to make eliminating the massive disparities in pay and working hours between workers in different countries a priority, and to organize more international coordination. On the importance of meeting with other workers directly, Bennett wrote:

The conference was very informative, but the fact that really hit home for me was that the struggles of the workers are the same worldwide. It is one thing to read about workers and their struggles in a newspaper, or a book, but it is another thing to learn firsthand from these people, especially from South Africa and Mexico, just to mention a few (ibid).

In September 1993, the union's recently established Social Justice Fund co-sponsored a delegation of two women, one Palestinian and one Israeli, who were visiting to learn about organizing unions, particularly for women. In the November issue of *Oshaworker*, Women's Committee Chairperson, Natalie Halay, reported to the membership of Local 222 on the work of the Women's Studies Centre in Jerusalem, informing members about the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and the state of working conditions for women in the occupied territory (Halay, 1993). Local 222 activists also attended a CAW Human Rights Conference in the summer of 1993 at which the "importance of Canadian trade union solidarity with the Palestinian people" was discussed (Rak, 1993: 31), and a CLC Women's Conference, at which members workshopped strategies for international solidarity (Dolan and Halay, 1993).

Though CAW Local 222 remained committed to the call of international solidarity, the late 1980s and early 1990s was a period of substantial nationalism in the union, particularly as the Canadian government began to consider free trade with the United States, and eventually, Mexico. Following the split from the American UAW, the leadership at Local 222 dedicated a great deal of time to making the case to the membership for the union's opposition to free trade, and the CAW emerged as a central force in the anti-free trade movement in Canada. CAW President, Bob White, became a key figure for the opposition in the public debate over free trade, and on the shop floor in Oshawa, workers sold t-shirts carrying the slogan "FREE TRADE?" in large, bold print, complete with a cartoon of an American eagle assaulting a Canada goose.

For CAW members, the threat of free trade was also understood within the context of the openings, or scheduled openings, of foreign-owned Honda, Toyota, and Hyundai assembly plants in Canada, as well as the founding of a joint venture between General Motors and Suzuki in their NUMMI facility in California and the implementation of Japanese production methods and ways of organizing work (see White, quoted in Sinclair, 1986). Characterized by some as an "invasion," workers warned that these new production methods were premised on a "uniformist Japanese psychology" that would be incompatible with the individualistic style of North American thinking (Hannah, 1986: 7), and that "if [Bob White, CAW President] allows the Japanese to implement their work standards here in Canada in a new plant, then it sure won't be long until the big three will be demanding the Union allow them to rape us of our Canadian standards" (Bergeron, 1986: 8).

Resistance aside, the CUSFTA came into effect in early 1988. By the early 1990s, the effects of the agreement were already being experienced by workers in both countries, and talks of expanding the free trade zone to include Mexico were now underway. The CAW and members of Local 222 continued to warn of the risks, now armed with their observations of the first agreement's effects.

We have lost over 500,000 jobs since the inception of the Free Trade Deal in 1988. The CAW has lost 240 locals. Plant closures are increasing at rapidly growing rates as factories close up and move to Mexico... As our very nation is in peril and life as we know it in Canada will cease to exist, it is absolutely mandatory that we, as organized labour, lead the fight against the neo-conservative agenda and all of their "deals." As these multinational corporations want to "harmonize" the laws of participating countries, you can be sure that the rights we have won will be simply negated. We must protect our sovereignty, our jobs, our resources, and the health and welfare of our people (Robinson, 1993: 18).

On May 15, 1993, 800 members of Local 222 joined as many as 75,000 unionists and activists from around the country for a protest in Ottawa against the proposed NAFTA (Field, 1993: 13).

Amidst the nationalistic (and at times, outright racist) rhetoric about the threat of free trade, some activist members of Local 222 were careful to avoid the scapegoating of workers in other countries, laying out a vision of international solidarity to combat multinational capital and consistently underscoring that workers around the world were not the subject of their enmity. Writing in the *Oshaworker* in 1992, Education Committee Secretary, Rick Reid, wrote:

If we organize the workers with proper unions they could get safer workplaces and environments, better wages and a higher standard of living. It is better to help them raise their standards than fight here to keep our

standards from dropping. GM Mexico is asking for concessions to [stay] competitive in the world market. They are trying to put them down deeper just as they are trying to do with us. We must never let workers fight against workers if we expect to survive (18).

Testifying before an Ontario cabinet committee studying the Agreement, Art Field, Chair of the Local's Political Education Committee and member of the Executive Board, echoed those sentiments and summarized Local 222's opposition to NAFTA as follows:

This will put workers in my community in competition with Mexican workers where the minimum wage is \$3.30 per day and 20 to 25% of those workers have no access to running water and 40% have no sewage access. In addition to the cheap and abundant labour, there is also lax environmental laws and repression of trade unionism... Please do not feel that we are against the Mexican worker. Our record with working people around the world is clear. What we do object to is the lack of respect and repression of those workers by their government and multinational corporations (Field, 1993: 14).

As with the CUSFTA before it, the resistance of the union was for naught, and the NAFTA came into effect on January 1, 1994. Between 1989 and 2007, the number of unionized workers employed at GM Oshawa fell from 16,688 to 9,795, a decline of over 40% (figure 1 in Appendix B). This decline was the result of general layoffs and outsourcing, attrition achieved through retirements, and the closure of the North Fabrication Plant in 1997 and the Battery Plant in 2005.

2008: Bailing Out General Motors

Over the course of 2008 and 2009, the North American auto industry was in crisis as the result of a deep global recession, and General Motors was in talks with governments in both the United States and Canada to secure bailout money and avoid

bankruptcy. Having just concluded negotiations with General Motors less than one year prior, the union was forced back to the table and told that bailout money for their employer would be contingent on concessions from the workers. Unlike the Chrysler bailout of the early 1980s, a guarantee to protect Canadian jobs was no longer a priority for the Canadian government, nor a condition for its help. Instead, the Canadian government went looking for concessions from the workers, in lockstep with the U.S. government and the UAW.

In May 2008, the CAW had agreed to early bargaining with General Motors, and had come to an agreement that they believed would save hundreds of jobs in the Oshawa facility's truck plant, by bringing in rotating shifts in lieu of layoffs (Buckley, 2008a; Carlyle, 2008). The sense of relief was short-lived, when the workers in the truck plant were called to a meeting under the canopy and told that truck production in Oshawa would cease altogether. Though the union was concerned about the financial state of the corporation and ultimately decided against a wildcat strike in retaliation, they did take action, and on the morning of June 4, 2008, established a blockade outside of the General Motors of Canada headquarters (Buckley, 2008b). For twelve days the workers held their ground, disrupting normal business operations at the office and rallying public support for their cause.

On June 12, 2008, thousands of workers and supporters marched past the GM Oshawa facility wearing t-shirts that read "Made in Canada Matters" and carrying a banner that read "World Class Quality + World Class Productivity = Our Jobs to Mexico. Thanks GM." In the end, GM succeeded in obtaining an injunction to break the

blockade, though the judge chastised the corporation for deceiving the workers in order to induce concessions, and granted the workers three more days to protest before the injunction would take effect (see Salmers, quoted in Sarnovsky, 2012: 104). Though the blockade ultimately failed to stop the closure of the truck plant, a plant closure agreement was negotiated, which included some enhanced retirement incentives “designed to soften the significant impact” of the job losses (Sarnovsky, 2012: 105).

The collective agreement came into effect in September 2008, but it was only in place for a few months before the union agreed to emergency renegotiations as General Motors faced potential bankruptcy and was looking to secure a bailout from governments in the United States and Canada. The first round of renegotiations ended in March 2009, when the members of Local 222 were presented with a tentative agreement, unanimously recommended for ratification by the CAW-GM Master Bargaining Committee though it contained concessions characterized by Ken Lewenza, President of the CAW, and Chris Buckley, Chairperson of the Master Bargaining Committee and President of Local 222, as “painful” (Lewenza and Buckley, 2009a: back cover). Despite the painful concessions and the agreement of the corporation, the Union was once again forced into bargaining just two months later.

Bargaining with GM this time around was unlike any previous round of negotiations we have had. Government has been a key player at the table, and kept shifting the goalposts through this process. Every time we got close to a deal, we were confronted with a new demand. After all, CAW members just ratified a cost-saving deal with the company in March. U.S. President Barack Obama then ripped up the GM restructuring plan, and our governments followed. They demanded more concessions. And then the goalposts moved ever further. For example, on the morning of May 16 we initialed agreements with GM on all issues except one: pensions. That same

afternoon, government officials demanded much more in pension and retiree health concessions, after we had already reached the overall deal. Faced with such offensive interference at the bargaining table, it was tempting to just walk away. But we never lost sight of our overarching goal: to do whatever we could to keep this company in business (Lewenza and Buckley, 2009b: 1).

This is significant, because it clearly exposes a principle contradiction of unionism: that unions develop a sense of vested interest in the survival of particular workplaces, particular occupations, or even capitalism more broadly. As Gindin warns: “a focus on job creation usually gets translated into the need to strengthen the companies so they will retain or expand jobs. This strategy is often only a stone’s throw away from weakening the workers and introducing concession bargaining” (1995: 263). The militant refusal to accept concessions in exchange for job security demonstrated by the CAW in the 1980s had, by 2008, all but evaporated. In times of crisis, it is easy to see how quickly this way of framing the relationship between workers and bosses can undercut worker power and lead to concession bargaining. As Lewenza and Buckley reported:

That was our responsibility to the more than 25,000 retirees, and 9,000 active members and their families. If GM had liquidated, our pensioners would get only 39 cents on the dollar and lose their health benefits altogether. Our active members would lose their jobs. Families and communities would be destroyed... We have fought hard to preserve the things that matter most. We have stuck together as a union. And we have lived to fight another day (2009b: 1, 7).

It is also significant because, time and time again, ‘living to fight another day’ is cited as the driving impetus for union strategy; without jobs, there is no union, and so any other goal is secondary out of necessity. Yet the evidence clearly demonstrates that this is a losing strategy. Concessions do not keep global capital from relocating in search

of the highest rate of profit, but they do ensure that capital is more profitable in the meantime, and depending on the specific nature of the concessions, they can severely limit the future capacity of the union to engage in a meaningful struggle for gains.⁶ In this case, the May 2009 tentative agreement was ratified, the public bailout money was delivered, and General Motors of Canada avoided bankruptcy. After all of the concessions and their willingness to compromise, Local 222 lost 3,300 jobs with the closure of the Oshawa truck plant. Only 5,600 unionized jobs remained in the facility by the end of 2009, down from over 16,600 just two decades earlier (see figure 1 in Appendix B).

The bailout of General Motors had profound implications for the union heading into the next decade, both materially and in the way they would eventually frame their struggle. Materially, the closure of the truck plant and associated provisions of the collective agreement regarding retirements meant that many senior workers and activists retired. One activist characterized the result as follows:

In 2008 they offered many incentive packages to leave. I would say that that actually had a tremendous impact on the kinds of leadership that we had in the plant as well because it was like a really big vacuum of people that left with thirty-some-plus-years, some of the most militant people we had in the local—and good representatives—all left (Interview 7).

⁶ One clear example that emerged in my research was the introduction of temporary part-time or supplemental workforce employees (SWE) at General Motors in Oshawa and the extent to which it undercut solidarity within the bargaining unit. I discuss this in greater detail in the next chapter.

Additionally, the concessions that the union made in order to secure bailout money from the Canadian government and save General Motors from bankruptcy made the subsequent job and product losses feel that much more like a betrayal. In 2016, General Motors moved production of the Camaro from Oshawa to Michigan, and the number of unionized jobs left at the facility fell below 2,500, down nearly 75% since 2008 (see figure 1 in Appendix B). For the union, the fact that General Motors appeared to be abandoning its Canadian operations despite being bailed out by the Canadian government—and despite the union’s own willingness to agree to concessions in order to keep the corporation afloat—became a call to rally.

2016: GM Oshawa Matters

By the start of the 2016 round of negotiations, union plant population had fallen from the high mark of near 20,000 in the 1980s to less than 3,000 active members (Interview 3). Media reports in late 2014 had suggested that the plant could close as early as 2019, with Oshawa slated to lose production of the Chevrolet Camaro, Impala, and Equinox by the end of 2016, the same year GM’s commitment to maintain 16 percent of its production in Canada—made as part of the 2008 bailout agreement—was set to expire (Peterborough Examiner, 2014; CBC News, 2014). In 2015, a study was commissioned by Unifor and conducted by the Centre for Spatial Economics, which determined that, in addition to the direct effects of closing the GM Oshawa plant—which at the time, would amount to 4,100 layoffs and a loss of \$1.1 billion worth of GDP associated with production—Ontario could see a loss of over \$5 billion in GDP and 30,000 jobs by 2017 as the effects spread through the community and through the parts

supply chain (Somerville, 2015: 1-2). General Motors would not commit prior to bargaining to maintain its current operations or to invest any new money in the facility, and the sense of many of the activists I interviewed was that this would be Local 222's last round of negotiations with General Motors (Interview 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8). As a result, the leadership decided that there would have to be a campaign to save GM Oshawa.

That campaign, called "GM Oshawa Matters," ran for three months over the summer of 2016, and contained several related strategies geared towards building public support for the workers and putting pressure on General Motors to invest in Oshawa. First, there was a public demonstration component, which involved the workers hanging large banners over a local stretch of busy highway at the end of their shifts. The first banner—which read "GM Sending Jobs to China, Mexico"—was conceived of and purchased for the Local by members of the Retiree Chapter (Interview 7). A second banner, reading "Keep Good Jobs in Canada," was later purchased by the Local and added to the demonstrations.

At the initial meetings the idea was raised of getting some banners made and having our members stand on bridges over the 401 with them, and we proceeded with that. One of the messages was about preserving good jobs in Canada, and then the other message was about GM taking jobs to Mexico. There's a couple of bridges over the 401, close to each other in the centre of Oshawa, and we started getting rank-and-file members to go at the end of shift, several days a week, and stand there, and it actually was a wonderful visual. And it was also engaging rank-and-file members and it got a huge amount of public attention—there's thousands of people driving on the 401 at that time and everybody was seeing these signs (Interview 5).

These public demonstrations—which also occurred in locations other than just the highway bridges—were bolstered by handmade picket signs, on which workers and

community members wrote personal messages of support for keeping the plant open. Additionally, the campaign circulated a petition online, which would automatically forward directly to local members of provincial and federal parliaments, provincial and federal industry ministers, the Prime Minister, and the Premier of Ontario. The Retirees Chapter in particular was active in attending city council meetings and speaking with councillors to get their support (Interviews 5, 6, and 7). All of this was coordinated through social media platforms, and at its peak, the monthly reach of the Facebook page alone was 900,000 users (Interviews 5 and 7).

At the beginning, the campaign was largely managed by a small group of activists, rather than a standing committee, and some concerns were raised early on about the lack of input that the general membership of the unit had in the planning and implementation (Interviews 1 and 2). As a result, two meetings were scheduled at which rank-and-file members were invited to discuss the campaign, the strategies, and the possible avenues of escalation the union could consider.

Ultimately, the union failed to secure a guaranteed product for GM Oshawa, but some semblance of job security was won when the corporation committed to investing \$500 million in the facility. However, to frame it as a success in strictly Canadian terms would be difficult, because within six months, news broke that as many as 600 workers at the GM CAMI facility in Ingersoll, Ontario would be laid off when production of the GMC Terrain moved to Mexico (The Canadian Press, 2017). Whether or not the campaign was ultimately successful in “keeping good jobs in Canada,” it had a demonstrable effect in mobilizing rank-and-file members to get involved in the union.

There was also some discussion throughout the campaign amongst some of the workers involved about the extent to which the messaging of the campaign was unfairly scapegoating workers in other countries, and if so, the extent to which this was useful.

Our target was GM. Our target was not Mexico, or Mexican workers. There was some discussion amongst people who were activists in the campaign about that issue, and different points of view on it. And I and certainly some other people are not comfortable with creating a public perception that Mexico or Mexican workers is the problem. And I think that, as much as we had influence over it, that issue was directed at whether or not GM has any obligation to workers in Oshawa, or to the community of Oshawa (Interview 5).

Clearly, the intention of these activists was not to scapegoat Mexican autoworkers or sow divisions between them and their Canadian counterparts. Still, the extent to which the campaign leaned on Mexico, including the use of the Mexican flag on some of the campaign materials, was cause for some reflection for some activists.

For me, often when you had conversations with people, they would talk about Mexican workers taking the work, you know, "it's going to the Mexicans," those kinds of overtly racist intentions people are making by separation by nation. And it's pivotal when we're doing these kinds of campaigns that that kind of sentiment doesn't start to creep into our campaigns (Interview 7).

In September 2017, workers at CAMI went on strike in hopes of securing the position of lead producers of the Chevy Equinox, which is also produced in two facilities in Mexico. The workers ran a very similar campaign, and even borrowed Local 222's banners to hang on the fence outside of the facility (Interview 7). As the strike entered its fourth week, General Motors notified the union that it was prepared to begin ramping up production in Mexico. Local labour leaders speculate that GM was within a

week of shutting down the facility for good, as the work stoppage was costing the corporation \$5 million every day, and GM had begun to issue instructions to suppliers to prepare to start shipping to Mexico instead (De Bono, 2017). Within a day of GM's statement, the union had accepted a tentative deal with no guarantee of job security—though the corporation did agree in writing to pay a penalty of \$300 million in the event that the plant is closed permanently (Ibid). The ability of the corporation to simply increase production of the same vehicle in another plant—and in another country—severely undercut the ability of the workers to leverage their collective power. Building the willingness and capacity of workers in other facilities to stand in solidarity and resist those production increases and overcome the partial strike effect should be a top priority.

Conclusion

The history of Unifor Local 222's orientation to labour inter/nationalisms is complex, and this has had profound implications on the ways in which its members at GM Oshawa understand themselves as unionists and the kinds of strategies they engage in as a result. The Local was organized with the support of the UAW-CIO in the United States, and it belonged to the international union for nearly fifty years, throughout a period of substantial economic protectionism by the Canadian and U.S. states. In the recession of the early 1980s, the big three automakers faced some financial challenges, and an inability to agree over whether or not the workers should accept concessions to save their employers exposed deficits in the international union's ostensibly democratic structure. Though the split that followed was not for nationalistic reasons, it had the

effect of unearthing and legitimizing nationalist sentiments within the union, and throughout the period of trade liberalization that followed, CAW strategy focused heavily on its opposition to free trade, though some links were forged or strengthened with unions outside of Canada. In 1989, there were over 16,000 unionized positions at the GM facility in Oshawa. By the time the 2008 global recession struck, the plant had shed nearly 8,000 unionized jobs.

As a condition for providing public bail out money to General Motors, the Canadian Government demanded that CAW members make substantial concessions, and though the CAW did not believe they were at fault for the crisis, they accepted on the grounds that saving the corporations and their jobs was the top priority. By 2016, less than 2,500 unionized jobs remained at the plant. Some of this work went to the United States, but most went to Mexico.

Stung by a sense of betrayal following the bailout and faced with the prospect of a potential plant closure, Local 222 launched the GM Oshawa Matters campaign in advance of the 2016 round of bargaining in hopes of putting pressure on the corporation to invest in its Oshawa operations. Though the union secured a \$500 million investment without resorting to a strike, the flow of jobs out of Canada continued, albeit elsewhere. The rhetorical materials developed for the campaign relied heavily on the argument that Canadian workers were owed some job security in return for the Canadian Government's bailout money and the union's willingness to cooperate with the concessions. The sting of the betrayal is unlikely to be forgotten, and it should serve as a reminder of the futility of class collaboration.

Long gone is the militant refusal to concede from which the CAW-UAW split emerged, as the increasing pressure of competition, threat of plant closure, and staggering loss of work became too much to stare down. In 1982, the Canadian UAW were told that a strike would bankrupt Chrysler, but they struck anyway, and they won. The Canadian UAW was again warned of the risks of striking in 1984 at General Motors, but they did it again, in defiance of the corporation and their own union leadership. The stakes are undoubtedly higher now, as Local 222 has watched thousands of jobs disappear in the decades since free trade began—but as much as it captures the severity of the situation, the loss of thousands of jobs lost also reflects the need for a new strategy.

Chapter Four

Nationalism and the Crisis of Mobilization

The case of GM Oshawa Matters calls attention to a number of contradictions in the political orientation of Local 222 and its national union to global capitalism. These contradictions have implications for the Local's strategic choices, and ultimately, the transformative potential of those strategies. There are several possible categories of response to the international competition for work and the partial strike effect normalized by free trade: challenge the structure causing the competition through some program of anti- or alter-globalization; reduce the effects of competition by building global solidarity; or enhance your own competitiveness by reducing the cost of your labour (concessions) or creating some added incentive (through "buy domestic" campaigns). In 2016, Unifor adopted a Global Solidarity policy to reflect its ongoing commitment to building a global labour movement to counter global capitalism, and the policy explicitly affirms the importance of rank-and-file participation in any meaningful strategy of global solidarity. However, my research has found that the policy is primarily implemented not by rank-and-file participation, but through the work of the GUFs to which it is affiliated, and of Unifor's SJF, which functions largely as a charity for anti-poverty and various other forms of social justice work in the Global South. On the shop floor, unionism remains a strategy for protecting jobs and collectively bargaining for gains, and the success of those strategies is appraised against decidedly nationalistic measures.

But what is the cause of this apparent disconnect? Are local activists and rank-and-file members simply not aware that such a policy exists? My research indicates that while this is most likely true, this does not mean that they are not aware of the importance of building global solidarity. As described in the previous chapter, a number of *Oshaworker* articles written by local leadership and activists demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the challenges they face, and some advocated strongly for an internationalist response, even in the context of the recent patriation of their union. Rather than an inability to recognize the importance or unwillingness to engage in the work of global solidarity, the interviews revealed a number of obstacles. The activists are facing a crisis of mobilization in their bargaining unit, and not only does this mean that human resources for projects of global solidarity are scant, but it also produces a context in which nationalist arguments are the easiest way to appeal to a broad number of members and get them engaged. But in its reliance on national identity as the principle frame through which members are engaged, the union continues to produce contradictions that make rank-and-file involvement in meaningful global solidarity work more difficult to conceive of and facilitate. Instead, the conditions are laid for class-collaboration in service of the 'national interest.' In turn, concessions made before and during the 2008 recession on the basis of this national interest undercut solidarity within the unit, further contributing to the crisis of mobilization. All of this demonstrates the overriding importance of how workers and unionists see themselves and understand the terrain on which they struggle.

The current framing and set of strategies that characterize Local 222 represent some combination of business and social unionist approaches, and they pose some limitations for global solidarity work as described in the policy and in the literature. Overcoming those limitations to build a mode of unionism premised on class-struggle is necessary to implementing a more transformative project of rank-and-file-driven global solidarity.

Unifor and Global Capitalism

Unifor has been opposed to free trade for as long as the question has been debated, but it would be incorrect to label Unifor as anti-globalization. Unifor supports an alternative vision of trade that places workers, people, and democracy first, and so their position is more accurately described as “alter-globalization.” In a position paper published in September 2014, Unifor affirmed and outlined this position under a section entitled “Reframing the debate on trade: moving past ‘No’,” which argues that

the global chorus that said “No” to corporate-led trade agreements have been brandished by its powerful opponents as “anti-trade” and “protectionist,” both of which are great misnomers. If anything, this so-called ‘anti-globalization’ movement is more accurately defined by its pro-development, pro-justice, pro-sustainability, and pro-democracy spirit and values. But years of relentless campaigning against constantly evolving, far-reaching and twisted approaches to freeing capital from investment regulations has kept progressive forces on the defensive. “No” might not be what we want to say, but it has been the most appropriate response to the challenges we face (Unifor, 2014: 9).

Despite the explicit rejection of protectionism above, the union continues to engage in the “buy Canadian” protectionist rhetoric that first emerged in the 1980s, and the GM Oshawa Matters campaign clearly demonstrates this fact. However, the vision Unifor

outlines for a more fair trade future is worth exploring, because it truly would be transformative of the current iteration of global capitalism in some important ways.

First, Unifor's fair trade agenda (Unifor, 2014: 10-11) is premised on the values contained in its commitment to social unionism, to which I return later in this chapter. Fairness, transparency, inclusiveness, and mutualism should be promoted and protected by trade agreements, rather than undermined (points 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively). Trade agreements should contain explicit and enforceable protections with respect to Indigenous rights (point 10) and the environment (point 11). Second, trade agreements should respect the political and cultural autonomy of participating nations and their right to self-determination (points 7 and 12). Third, trade agreements should restrict the power of capital by protecting public services from privatization, by encouraging social development, by eliminating the right of investors to sue governments over lost profits, and by enhancing workers' rights (points 5, 6, 8, and 9, respectively).

The goal of securing new trade agreements that enhance and protect workers' rights is of particular importance, as it could go a long way towards taking wages out of global competition and reducing the partial strike effect, as well as building the global labour movement, and thus the capacity of global labour to struggle as a class. Global labour solidarity will be an essential strategy in service of that goal, and there are important lessons to be learned in that respect from previous successes in establishing more worker-friendly international agreements.

In 1993, Canada, the United States, and Mexico negotiated the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation (NAALC), which committed each of the three states to enforcing their own national laws with respect to eleven subject areas, dealing mostly with minimum employment standards like minimum wages, equal pay, occupational safety and workers' compensation, and non-discrimination, and with union rights such as freedom of association and the right to collectively bargain and strike (Compa, 2001: 452). The NAALC established a unique complaint mechanism, which requires aggrieved unions, unionists, or allies to file complaints with the National Administrative Office (NAO) of one of the other participating countries. A complaint against the Mexican state, for example, must be filed with the NAO of Canada or the United States.

In his analysis of a number of successful complaints filed under the NAALC, Lance Compa demonstrates the importance of the new international alliances that have coalesced around this unique complaint mechanism in making the agreement effective. In 1997, a coalition of labour and human rights organizations in the United States and Mexico filed a complaint with the U.S. NAO over the widespread practice of pregnancy testing in Mexico's maquiladoras (ibid: 455). Following a report that confirmed the involvement of U.S.-based corporations in the practice, including General Motors, several firms announced an end to the practice. That same year, telecommunications workers in Mexico and the United States filed a complaint with the U.S. NAO over the Mexican government's refusal to certify an independent union at an electronics factory in Sonora, Mexico. Two days before a scheduled hearing just across the border in

Tucson, Arizona, the union and the government settled, and the certificate was granted (ibid).

In addition to making some gains through inter-state agreements like the NAALC, unions have also had some success in negotiating global framework agreements (GFAs), which involve a multinational corporation agreeing in writing to respect a certain set of minimum employment standards across their global networks, and in some cases to working with suppliers in pursuit of the same.

In *Global Unions, Local Power*, Jamie McCallum describes the long struggle of UNI (a GUF) and the SEIU (an international union, headquartered in the United States) to win a GFA with G4S, a global security firm and the world's second largest employer. Though GFAs are only a small step in the effort to hem in the power of global capital to whipsaw, drive down wages, and break strikes, McCallum argues that they are an important step, because they provide disparate unions and organizations a common benchmark and a common framework for struggle (2013: 37-38). Among the many compelling insights McCallum draws from his research is the conclusion that "reciprocity between the global and local spheres of action is a necessary condition for building global unionism. The case studies show the intricate ways in which local struggles were woven into the global effort" (ibid: 146).

Pressuring the Canadian government to pursue a fair trade agenda is important work, but it will not be enough in the absence of a concerted effort by labour movements in each country to persuade their own governments to do the same. For

this reason, it will require a substantial mobilization of rank-and-file members on the ground. Exploring Unifor’s current approach to global solidarity, and the amount of member and activist participation that occurs at the local level reveals gaps, contradictions, and great promise, all of which need to be examined in greater detail.

Exploring the Current Approach

Global Solidarity Policy

As of March 25, 2016, global solidarity is the official policy of Unifor National. From the outset, the policy presents a class analysis of globalization, arguing that “globalization represents the internationalization of capital. Global solidarity represents the engagement of organized labour as a counter balancing and progressive force in a globalized world” (Unifor, 2016a: 1). The policy is aimed primarily at participating in international unionism, by affiliating to global union federations, and union-to-union forms of union internationalism, by coordinating efforts with similar trade unions around the world on the basis of common interest. The policy affirms Unifor’s commitment to supporting the negotiation of global framework agreements, participating in global union networks and international solidarity campaigns aimed at strengthening worker’s rights and building worker power, and making use of the Unifor Social Justice Fund to promote and support “efforts to strengthen democracy, promote equitable development, and contribute to poverty reduction, social justice and education reform” (ibid: 4).

Under this policy, in August 2017, Unifor signed a bilateral cooperation agreement with the American-based United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America union, formally launching a cross-border solidarity project based on “mutual interests in organizing and bargaining with General Electric and other manufacturing companies” (Unifor, 2017a). The policy also includes an explicit commitment to “support trade union rights and the building of an independent, democratic labour movement in Mexico” (Unifor, 2016a: 3), as well as a recognition that a meaningful policy of global labour solidarity must actively involve rank-and-file unionists, stating that

Unifor national officers and members of the National Executive Board represent the national union and participate in international solidarity. However participation in the global trade union movement is an activity for the whole union, and also includes the participation of officers, staff, local union leaders and members. Worker to worker exchanges are an essential component of building genuine global solidarity of workers (ibid: 1).

However, there is little evidence that worker-to-worker solidarity exchanges constitute a meaningful component in the overall strategy at present. One rank-and-file activist had this to say on the subject: “I would be surprised if there was a personal connection between any worker in that plant today and a worker in Mexico. You know, we have this lofty, instructive policy paper, but it just does not translate into real, local action” (Interview 1). The lack of any meaningful communication or collaboration between GM workers in Oshawa and Mexico was echoed by every single Local 222 activist who was asked (Interview 2, 3, 5, 7, and 8).

The activists further communicated a sense that most workers on the shop floor are probably unaware that such a policy even exists, or as one activist clarified: “the

workers on the floor would probably not be surprised to hear that a policy like that exists, but I don't think it that it actually has any practical meaning to them" (Interview 8). It may be argued that, despite the absence of meaningful worker-to-worker connections across borders, the policy may still serve to influence local decision-making in a way that fosters or at least does not undercut global solidarity, but in the words of another rank-and-file activist: "I don't think it does at the local levels. I think, certainly, there's people that work for the national office that are in contact with other international unions and through conventions or other large gatherings of workers throughout the world, but in terms of having any kind of connection, like local plant to local plant, there isn't" (Interview 7). Local President Colin James confirmed that at the present time, worker-to-worker and other forms of local participation in global solidarity work are not a part of the Local's strategy; "no, and when it comes to that kind of work, internationally, we usually rely on our national union to take the lead, and then it trickles down" (Interview 3).

Unifor Social Justice Fund

According to Unifor's Global Solidarity policy, the SJF is the "primary expression of Unifor's international solidarity" (Unifor, 2016a: 3). The Fund is a registered charity administered by a Board of Directors, which consists primarily of members of Unifor's National Executive Board, as well as a few prominent Canadians, including a former Liberal Member of Parliament, and a former Chair of the Metro Toronto Police Services Board. It is funded by employer contributions obtained through collective bargaining, typically in the form of a few cents per hour worked or a lump sum. "In this way,

workers signify that social justice is a key priority and that by working collectively we can make a difference not only here in Canada but around the world” (Unifor, 2018b). Local unions can make applications to access the funds, and in the case of Local 222, this is traditionally a task that falls to the president and the financial secretary (Interview 3). Typically, money accessed in this way is given to charitable causes in the local community, leaving the work of international solidarity and charity to the Fund’s Board.

According to Unifor, the SJF is an expression of the union’s commitment to the principles of social unionism, and this is reflected in its six areas of focus: promoting stronger human rights, protecting and promoting labour rights, empowering women to take on leadership roles in their unions and in their communities, promoting peace and security by strengthening democratic institutions and civil society, providing humanitarian aid to victims of wars and natural disasters, and working within Canada to provide support for oppressed and marginalized groups in our own communities (Unifor, 2015: 6, 12-16). With respect to protecting and promoting labour rights and building worker power and global solidarity,

the SJF lends support to emerging unions and facilitates union-to-union exchanges, working with global union federations, emerging workers associations, independent trade unions and community-worker organizations. Examples of our work with partners includes: rehabilitation of child labourers; trade union renewal in Palestine; training women trainers to identify sexual harassment among sugar workers and help women to develop locally appropriate ways of tackling it in South Africa and Kenya; technology support for unions in Tanzania; education projects with maquila workers in Central America; providing safety for journalists in Mexico; supporting campaigns for workers’ right to freedom of association in Bangladesh; and the list goes on (ibid: 12).

According to filings with the Canadian Revenue Agency, in 2016, the Fund spent \$2,938,688 on charitable activities of its own, and contributed a further \$1,859,259 to other organizations (Unifor, 2017b). This included: \$68,700 to Horizons of Friendship, a charity committed to eliminating the root causes of poverty and injustice in Central America and Mexico; \$25,000 to Mining Watch Canada; \$100,000 to Canadian Feed the Children; \$107,893 to Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief; \$40,000 to Amnesty International; \$75,000 to the Cooperative Development Foundation of Canada; \$50,000 to Oxfam Canada; and \$50,000 to Inter Pares. Using some of its bargaining power to get corporations to contribute to causes like these is certainly in keeping with Unifor's commitment to social unionism, and there is an important point to be made here: the union is not facilitating the charitability of the corporations. It is using some of its leverage at the bargaining table to finance its own charitable work rather than securing slightly higher wage increases or benefits enhancements. "It's kind of a point of contention with some members, too, because a lot of members don't think we should be involved in that kind of thing and be focused more upon on ourselves" (Interview 2). But while the activities of the SJF are clearly part of a unionism for a better world rather than just a unionism for a better workplace, there is some concern that its activities are less clearly linked to the goals of building global solidarity than they could be:

to me it operates more like a charity than a solidarity-driven objective. It's set up so that it generates tax credits, it's a registered charity, and the money tends to go to that kind of effort which is seen as charitable. I'm not saying that's bad, but it's not—it doesn't seem to me that it's driven by "what can we do that will enhance solidarity between workers in other countries?" Some of the projects are more progressive than others, but it doesn't lead to more than "here's some support, here's some financial

support” and maybe a few people go and meet the people who are receiving the support (Interview 5).

IndustriALL Global Union, World Works Groups, and Global Framework Agreements

There is one final component of Unifor’s global strategy worth mentioning, though it is perhaps the most detached from rank-and-file participation. As part of its Global Solidarity policy, Unifor members are affiliated to the relevant GUFs, including the International Transport Federation, for transport workers; Union Network International, for workers in telecommunications and media; the International Federation of Journalists; and the IndustriALL Global Union, for workers in manufacturing, pulp, paper, energy, mining, and related sectors (Unifor, 2016a: 2). The IndustriALL Global Union, to which Unifor Local 222 belongs, formed in 2012 out of a merger of several smaller GUFs, including the International Metalworkers’ Federation (IMF) (IndustriALL Global Union, 2018).

IndustriALL takes an approach that is alter-globalization, rather than anti-globalization, fighting for “another model of globalization and a new economic and social model that puts people first, based on democracy and social justice,” and it aims to do this in part by “building union power to confront global capital” (ibid). The strategy for accomplishing this has two principle components: organizing worldwide workers’ councils and seeking official recognition by the corporations they organize, and negotiating GFAs with employers to establish minimum global employment standards for workers. U.S.-based automakers, including GM, have resisted the establishment of worldwide workers’ councils and the signing of GFAs (Anner, 2011: 134). In 2012, Ford

Motor Company signed a GFA with the IMF, agreeing to: a ban on forced and child labour, respect for union rights and no discrimination against workers for engaging in union activities, and to seek out suppliers whose practices are also consistent with the agreement (Ford Motor Company et al., 2012). General Motors and Fiat-Chrysler have yet to sign such agreements.

On the Prospect of Building Class-Struggle Unionism

An approach to the problem that centres class rather than national identity or an attachment to a specific workplace or job will actually be essential in advancing Unifor's goal of replacing the current regime of free trade with a system of trade that places workers and people first. Further, such an approach makes possible strategies that build worker power whether or not attempts to establish fair trade are successful, and are therefore beneficial for their own sake as well. But what are the prospects of a turn to class-struggle unionism at Unifor?

Building rank-and-file-driven class-struggle unionism at the global level is a very tall order. Earlier configurations of capitalism allowed for highly effective labour coordination because grappling with the strength of General Motors, for example, meant collaborating and building solidarity primarily with workers who shared a common language and were fairly tightly geographically concentrated. With global automotive supply chains now spanning many countries, many time zones, and many languages, there are a great many barriers to rank-and-file participation in corporation-wide or industry-wide efforts of collaboration, and it stands to reason that this work

remains largely restricted to the purview of international departments, national trade union centres like the CLC, and GUFs. Overcoming these obstacles is no simple task, and it will require a substantial investment of time and resources, but with modern communications technologies it is certainly not impossible. Before that work can even begin, however, there are substantial obstacles to fostering the necessary appetite or enthusiasm for such a strategy at the level of the rank-and-file itself.

A transformative strategy of global solidarity at Unifor and its locals, to be used alongside and in support of Unifor's alter-globalization strategy of organizing against free trade, requires reframing the basis of collective action within the union to be centred on class, and there are several reasons for this. First, class-struggle unionism holds more transformative potential than business or social unionisms in its own right, in that it actually seeks to change the structure of economic society, rather than simply win a more equitable distribution of power within the existing structure. Further, a collective action frame premised on nationality or a particular workplace lends itself to strategies of class collaboration that entrench the competitive forces of global capitalism and drive down bargaining power. The prospects of building class-struggle unionism at Local 222 are complicated by a continued emphasis on national identity, but there are also some key opportunities that are worth exploring in more detail. First, however, I explore the current modes of unionism practiced at Unifor Local 222 and how they are framed and understood by members of the core group of activists.

The Limits of Business and Social Unionisms

Both labour studies scholars (see, for example, Ross, 2012: 35-37) and workers have elaborated critiques of business unionism. Business unionism is often premised on a collective action frame that focuses on workers' shared occupation or place of work, and this limits the prospects for the transformation of economic society, because it weds the survival of the union to the survival of the workplace and the employer. For this reason, the strategies and tactics tend to be fairly narrow and economistic, focused on collective bargaining, and those activities that may enhance the power of the union at the bargaining table. Business unions also tend to take on internal structures that mirror those of the corporations with which they bargain. Power tends to rest with a small cadre of elected leaders and paid staff, and it tends to be distributed hierarchically, with national presidents and executives commanding more control than local leadership, who in turn wield more power than the rank-and-file members.

Social unionism, though it often remains very bureaucratic and hierarchical, adjusts the collective action frame so that unionists are not just workers, but citizens and members of their communities, and in doing so, expands the window of what is possible strategically. To that end, and in recognition of Unifor's ongoing commitment to the principles of social unionism, Article 2(10) of the Unifor constitution reads:

Our goal is transformative. To reassert common interest over private interest. Our goal is to change our workplaces and our world. Our vision is compelling. It is to fundamentally change the economy, with equality and social justice, restore and strengthen our democracy and achieve an environmentally sustainable future. This is the basis of social unionism — a strong and progressive union culture and a commitment to work in common cause with other progressives in Canada and around the world (Unifor, 2016b: 5).

Among the activists I interviewed, the extent to which the principles of social unionism are borne out in the actions of the union is matter of some question. Often, the lines between categories of unionism are less than clear, and in Unifor's case, there is a strong argument that some of its practices continue to reflect a business unionist approach. "When you have people from leadership saying 'we don't want to scare away investment, we have to keep the company competitive to ensure that people still have to work'...there's just no real class analysis involved in that" (Interview 1). Further, some activists emphasized the reliance on a kind of service-based model to unionism, where the day-to-day activities of the union are largely restricted to responding to members' problems, rather than actively organizing or mobilizing the membership:

There's not a formal kind of—making the rounds, keeping people up-to-date, building that kind of workplace power. What there really is, is more of a servicing role. And I'm not entirely sure when-about that started, but it is a mentality that people think that the members are just apathetic and don't want to participate. And the fact is that they do, but they're not ever approached, so they just simply become: "I put a call in for my committee person, they come down, they service the call, and that's the extent of my involvement in the union" (Interview 7).

Nationality as a Collective Action Frame

In his 2001 interview with Mark Anner, Hassan Yussuff (a CAW leader who would later go on to serve as president of the CLC) spoke candidly about the importance of labour internationalism and avoiding what he called "the nationalist trap":

We don't do this to feel good or out of charity. We do it to build international solidarity around the world. For this to work, we need to build a common understanding and a strategy where we all benefit...It's about the kind of world we subscribe to. Brazilian workers are not our enemies; they

are our allies. We must avoid the nationalist trap. (Yussuff, 2001 cited in Anner, 2011: 120).

Despite this, Canadian identity continues to play a central role in the collective action frame at Unifor. The GM Oshawa Matters campaign relied heavily on appeals to the national interest and national identity, particularly in its use of the argument that “Canada didn’t bail out GM to invest in Mexico.” Workers wore t-shirts emblazoned with the Mexican flag in an attempt to build community support by tapping into Canadian identity and framing it as deserving, set in contrast to the less deserving “other.”

A collective action frame premised first on nationality and only second (if at all) on class presents a substantial challenge to overcome on the path to class-struggle unionism. In an era of globalization in particular, nationalism can encourage or sustain class collaboration. Rather than contesting the competitive forces that pit workers against each other and drive down bargaining power, organized labour affirms the structure of competition and then openly participates in the competition for work at all costs by aligning with domestic capital. On September 20, 2017, members of two Unifor Locals staged a walkout at a Toronto Bombardier production facility, in a strange act of protest aimed not at their bosses, but at a foreign corporation. Boeing, a rival, U.S.-based aerospace manufacturer, had filed a trade complaint against Bombardier, alleging

that the Canadian government was subsidizing the corporation, effectively allowing them to sell aircraft in the United States well below cost, in violation of trade rules.⁷

Strategic decisions such as this represent a deep and abiding commitment to the idea that Bombardier workers have a vested interest in the corporation's continued success within the competitive terrain of global capitalism. Of the protest, Local 222 President Colin James had this to say: "I think we're going to see more and more of that. So, a prime example, the GM Oshawa Matters campaign. We know the management inside General Motors Oshawa supported us a thousand percent because it impacted their jobs. It impacts their families and their livelihoods" (Interview 3).

James makes an important point, and it is worth unpacking. In deciding the priorities for the 2016 round of bargaining, the membership was surveyed, but on the sheets that they were handed, the top two priorities had already been filled in; securing product, and getting the Supplemental Workforce Employees (SWEs) into the collective agreement (more on this later) (Interviews 1, 2, 8).

So securing product investment for future production actually became our main bargaining priority, which—I don't think you should ever be bargaining for your job. I think you should be bargaining for things like wages and working conditions and things like that, but that kind of became the central focus of it...And any time someone was critical of it, the argument would get thrown around that, "well, none of these other things matter if we don't have product, so that needs to be our number one goal" (Interview 1).

⁷ On January 26, 2018, the U.S. International Trade Commission ruled 4-0 against Boeing's complaint. (<https://www.cnbc.com/2018/01/26/boeing-loses-trade-case-over-bombardier-passenger-jets.html>).

Rather than building the kinds of solidarity required to overcome capitalism's competitive forces, the "jobs first" approach deepens the effect of competition. Here, the argument that meaningful internationalism requires strong national unions—that unions could not possibly engage in global solidarity without first maintaining their memberships by protecting jobs—leads to an embrace of competition; an unfortunate paradox, because the job-centred, "made in Canada matters" approach has been the preferred strategy for the entire free trade era, and in that time, GM Oshawa has lost about 85% of its unionized workforce.

Another perceived obstacle to international solidarity with Mexican workers as a strategy for confronting global capitalism is the perception that many of Mexico's unions are not truly independent. During NAFTA negotiations in Mexico, Jerry Dias, Unifor President, promised that "there will not be an agreement until the Mexican bargaining team agrees to free collective bargaining, the elimination of so-called yellow unions that are dominated by employers, and fair wages for Mexican workers" (Unifor, 2017c). For at least one of the activists I interviewed, this is a problematic position to hold:

One of the problems I have with the way that our National leadership talks about unions in Mexico is that they decide who they think are good unions and bad unions—and they do have some ties with some unions that they call "independent" and they are extremely critical of unions that they say are tied in with the official governing structure in Mexico—but to me that's a very harmful approach because I'm sure that people from outside of Canada could look at Unifor and say, "your leadership's tied in with the Ontario government, the federal government—which are Liberal Party governing, capitalist parties—so we won't have anything to do with you." That doesn't benefit anybody. It doesn't benefit workers in Mexico to say, you know, "ninety percent of the unions, we just write them off, we're not going to

have anything to do with them, we'll only deal with somebody if we think they're independent." You know, at this point I don't think it's helpful (Interview 5).

So how is it that GM Oshawa Matters took on this particularly nationalistic character in spite of such criticisms from some of the Local's core activists, some of whom were quite involved in organizing the campaign?

Expedience and the Crisis of Mobilization

Interviews with some of the core rank-and-file activists at GM Oshawa confirmed that there is a general crisis of mobilization within the bargaining unit. Between bargaining rounds, a unit membership meeting of more than fifty would be large, and considering the size of the unit, which contains 2,000 active members, this clearly captures the difficulty of getting the membership to take ownership of its union (Interview 8). Getting people out to meetings can be difficult, and the strategy around the 2016 round of negotiations required a substantial mobilization of the membership and broad community support to put pressure on General Motors to invest in its Oshawa operation. In such a circumstance, it is hardly surprising that the attachment of the workers and community at large to a sense of Canadian identity and the importance of "keeping good jobs in Canada" would emerge as the primary means of affecting mobilization. One activist characterized the need for an expedient strategy as follows:

The great divide in the world, I feel, is between those of us who work for our money, and those people whose money works for them...And that's what's in the essence of this problem. Now, I could stand on a bridge with a banner that says all this, and people would drive by and go "[what] the hell is he on about?" Or I can say, "jobs matter, you know, Canadian jobs matter." You

know what I mean? And that's what people respond to. Messaging is like that (Interview 4).

Not only does this crisis of mobilization have an effect on the kinds of messaging the Local chooses in constructing campaigns like GM Oshawa Matters, but it also produces a lack of capacity to build worker-to-worker solidarity with their Mexican counterparts. When I asked one activist about the prospects of making connections with the autoworkers in Mexico who are building the same models as Local 222 members, they responded by saying that "there's certainly been some discussion about, and I think that people struggle with how to make that happen. Without a few people to take the lead on stuff like that, then otherwise, most people wouldn't know where to start on it" (Interview 7). However, Nastovski demonstrates that engaging in worker-to-worker solidarity can have the effect of getting more rank-and-file members involved in the union (2016: 57), and so it may be the case that if even just a few activists made it a priority, worker-to-worker solidarity could be a solution to, rather than a consequence of, the crisis of mobilization.

It is also important to note that the crisis of mobilization is not a new or unique phenomenon facing the Local. As previously discussed, the union had great difficulty keeping members engaged following the ratification of its first collective agreement, and prior to the arrival of the Rand formula, the union resorted to establishing various social clubs in an effort to keep the workers paying dues. Outside of key moments like collective bargaining and striking, keeping members engaged is a constant struggle. This means that mobilization is most often a reactive process, rather than a proactive one.

This can be seen in the mobilization of hundreds of 222 members who marched against NAFTA in Ottawa in May 1993, or in the union's blockade outside of GM headquarters following the announcement of the truck plant closure. Finding useful rhetorical devices with which to mobilize members at significant moments like these is important, but it fails to address the underlying, long-term problem. Focusing on creating opportunities for members to get involved in worker-to-worker projects of global solidarity in between these significant moments and building a more sustained mobilization of rank-and-file members would not only make more meaningful acts of global solidarity possible, but may also reduce the need for nationalistic or otherwise expedient mobilizing rhetoric in the future.

Solidarity and the Two-Tier Contract

Gindin (1995: 205) suggests that meaningful labour internationalism cannot be built without a strong foundation of "progressive nationalism," and while there are a number of problems with the suggestion that nationalism is—without any other qualification—the necessary factor, Gindin's underlying point is well-taken; meaningful solidarity across borders cannot happen in the absence of solidarity with the workers on your shop floor and in your community. Certainly, labour internationalism is impossible in the absence of solidarity within the very unions that would attempt to practice it. An overall appraisal of how solidarity is understood and practiced within the union provides valuable insight into the prospects and obstacles for building transformative global labour solidarity in the union.

Beginning in the 2000s, General Motors hired a number of temporary, part-time workers (SWEs). These workers received lower wages and benefits, had no seniority rights, and were kept outside of the structure of the bargaining unit. This had a profound effect on the prospects for building solidarity within the union (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8). As with the reintroduction of the partial strike by distributing production across a number of plants and a number of countries, negotiating a two-tiered contract is yet another way for employers to get around the collective bargaining power of a union, by agreeing to sustain the gains made by existing and previous workers in exchange for the union agreeing not to extend those gains to new hires. The 2016 round of bargaining marked a clear attempt to correct the situation, and the SWEs were ultimately brought into the collective agreement. This was a significant step towards building the kinds of local solidarity that make global solidarity possible. However, some members were critical of the deal and debated the extent to which it made the second tier of workers whole; the SWEs are faced with a substantial wage grow in, and their seniority rights only apply from day one of the agreement, regardless of how many years of service they had put in before the agreement came into effect, for example (Weir, 2016).

The Unifor Solidarity Network

Following the outcome of the 2016 round of negotiations, several rank-and-file Local 222 activists launched the Unifor Solidarity Network, a website and social media presence aimed at bringing together rank-and-file members and local leadership from Unifor locals across the country. The network is founded on the importance of three

objectives for change within the union: working class politics, bargaining for solidarity, and rank-and-file democracy (Unifor Solidarity Network, 2018). To that end, the Solidarity Network promotes union political action that advances the interests of the working class rather than “support for parties that act for the corporate class,” an approach to bargaining that builds “unity amongst our members by reducing inequalities in wages, benefits and pensions, not increasing them,” and internal practices focused on “real debate, membership engagement, a culture of activism and militancy, not self-advancement and self-enrichment” (ibid). Several rank-and-file Local 222 activists write and post on the network under pseudonyms out of fear of facing reprisals from local and national leadership (Interview 1), and so the goal of fostering a culture of rank-and-file democracy is of particular urgency. Creating the conditions where members feel like they can speak their minds without fear of reprisal, even when those opinions are critical of the leadership or direction of the union is a vital part of creating a healthy union democracy.

Activists involved in the Unifor Solidarity Network recognize the obstacle that nationalist framing places in front of efforts to build meaningful global solidarity. One activist involved in the network elaborated that position in our interview, summarizing the eventual goals of the network with respect to rank-and-file internationalism and class-struggle by describing global labour solidarity as

a labour movement where nationalism is not even part of the equation. Because, really, it shouldn't be. All it does is hinder global solidarity. It's protectionist nonsense that really creates an unnecessary barrier, which I'm sure GM loves. When GM sees us all waving flags and t-shirts with like, 'we didn't bail GM out for Mexico,' their corporate executives have to be just

fucking laughing. Because they're like, "great they're pissed at Mexican workers, this is perfect, this is our design, this is exactly what we need to continue down this road." So what it looks like is a labour movement without nationalism at all. And like, real, meaningful connections between workers in different countries, not just, like I said, superficial soundbites or policy papers. I need to be able to talk to someone that builds cars in Mexico, or in China. We need to have some sort of mechanism in place to be able to have those conversations. And I think down the road the Unifor Solidarity Network could be a part of a broader conversation or a broader meeting place for those conversations to take place (Interview 1).

Recognizing the importance of global solidarity, Network activists also played an important role in the drafting and passing of a motion in support of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions campaign, which opposes apartheid in Israel, at the 2016 Unifor Canada Council (ibid).

A Note on Race and Gender

In this project, I have mostly neglected considerations of race and gender, largely because those questions are beyond both my own expertise and the scope of what is practicable in a project of this size, but there can be no doubting the importance of such considerations. Of the eight Local 222 activists I interviewed for this project, seven were white, and seven were cis men. There is probably good reason to suspect that this is generally reflective of the overall demographics of the Local's activist core and the bargaining unit membership more broadly, but for this analysis to have any general applicability beyond Local 222 and the auto manufacturing sector, a more nuanced approach that directly engages with the role of race and gender in the formation of labour identities and strategies is necessary. Future research should draw on the work of feminist labour scholars and critical race theorists to explore the ways in which

gender and race further complicate the relationship between class and national identity. However, by way of a cursory analysis, there are a few things that can be said.

First, the GM Oshawa Matters campaign made little to no reference to the United States, despite the fact that the most recent wave of job loss prior to the campaign had occurred when GM moved production of the Chevy Camaro from Oshawa to Michigan (CBC News, 2015). Because the campaign's use of nationalism as a mobilizing tool required explicitly othering one or more out group, the absence of references to the United States, intentional or not, is significant. According to at least a few of the activists I interviewed, race was likely a factor in the focus on Mexico and China and not the United States (Interviews 1, 2, and 7). "My guess would be that people look at the United States as a much closer ally, in terms of similarities in perhaps background and such. And then I honestly think that there are forms of racism that definitely play into not understanding workers at an international level and not making that connection with the membership" (Interview 7).

Many of us—well, not many of us—some small minority of us raised this issue. Why are we lambasting the Mexican flag over all of these things when the Camaro went to Lansing in Michigan? We used that direct example, because we experienced that exact phenomenon in 2015, and we said, "why?" "Oh, you know, we didn't think of it, we got the flag made, it got printed—" it's like, come on. You're pandering to people's racism (Interview 1).

Second, the union continues to wrestle with issues of equity in its internal organizational practices. One activist spoke candidly about the concern that some members raised about the establishment of a committee for Aboriginal workers and

workers of colour, struck jointly with neighbouring Local 1090; in particular, that it excluded white members (Interview 8). At the national level as well, an attempt to promote the involvement of equity-seeking groups in the activity of the National Executive Board by bringing a motion to 2016 Canada Council sought to establish additional equity chairs for several groups not already represented—including LGBTQ+ workers, young workers, and workers with disabilities—was voted down. During a debate on the resolution, a member drew on the theme of the convention, “It’s Time,” to say “it’s not time for this” (Interview 8). In terms of solidarity-building and affirming the union’s commitment to social unionism, there certainly remains some work to be done.

Conclusion

In the years following its split from the UAW in 1984, the CAW/Unifor faced increasing pressure in the form of international competition. Throughout the 1990s, the protectionist rules which had protected Canadian jobs in the auto industry for decades vanished. In response, the union embarked on a set of strategies designed to overcome the new rules of international competition. For a union that had come to define itself by its national identity following its split from its international parent, the emerging problem was most readily understood in national terms. The threat was to Canadian jobs, rather than working class power; though, the class power that had allowed the Canadians to achieve wage parity with their American counterparts through international coordination vanished just the same.

As global solidarity emerged as one in a set of strategies to deal with the problem, it emerged within a context of nationalist rhetoric which complicated its implementation. Though the union's Global Solidarity policy makes explicit reference to the need for global labour to counter balance the growing power of global capitalism, the kind of class-struggle unionism that would make such a thing possible is far from realization. Unifor's collective action frame and its strategic repertoire continues to reflect a commitment to forms of business unionism that centre around identities derived from occupation, workplace, and nation and a strategic focus on collective bargaining to secure largely economic goals. Its commitment to social unionism falls short of explicit anti-capitalism, encouraging its members to take an interest in politics and in their communities but without a clear frame or repertoire for understanding or contesting the class-struggle inherent in adversarial labour relations and the societal context in which they operate. It is under this social unionist mode that Unifor implements its Social Justice Fund, which is meant to be the "primary expression of international solidarity," but in fact operates more like a charity than a vehicle for building working-class power around the world. And though the policy also explicitly recognizes the importance of rank-and-file participation and local action in support of global solidarity, my research revealed that little such work actually occurs. At the local level, the membership is predominantly concerned with keeping their jobs, and worker-to-worker connections with their counterparts in the United States, Mexico, and around the world are virtually non-existent.

Part of this is the result of the historic centrality of national identity for the union, and certainly part is the rational desire not to be unemployed—especially during a period characterized largely by austerity—but part of it is also the crisis of mobilization the union confronts at the local level. Nationalism is an easy way to get even the more conservative members of the union to show up to a demonstration. But where nationalism lends itself to class collaboration, solidarity-breaking concessions like the implementation of two-tiered contracts, and even an embrace of far-right politicians and their xenophobic, anti-immigrant rhetoric, it is also exceedingly dangerous soil for a union to till. Faced with a crisis of mobilization, where human resources are scant, building global solidarity through worker-to-worker relationships may seem like less of a priority, but as research has shown that this kind of work can have the effect of engaging new members (Nastovski, 2016), the exact opposite is true.

The connection between empowering rank-and-file members and turning to a class-based, internationalist approach to confronting global capitalism has long been noted at Local 222. In 1989, Paul Goggan, Vice Chairman of the local's GM unit wrote that "the lie begins with the proposition that the interests of labour and management are in basic harmony," when in fact, their interests are inherently antagonistic (3). Labour relations are, at their core, class conflict, and unions exist to assert and defend the class interests of the workers. For this reason, they are dysfunctional unless internally democratic, and to that end, Goggan went on to say the following:

Equally false is the idea that we can save our unions by adopting the competitive norms of our employers. Unions are formed precisely to reduce or eliminate competition among workers. When workers compete, whether

through concessions or cooperation with management goals, they lose. A key in the fight to save our unions is democracy. Bureaucratic unions are demobilized unions. Union democracy is more than the right to vote for leaders every few years. It means membership rule in policy formulation and constant accountability by leaders. Above all, union democracy is a means of taking power away from the employer. Unions were the first democratic intrusion into management's sacred prerogatives, both at the bargaining table and in the workplace (ibid, emphasis removed).

And finally, connecting this to the need for global labour solidarity, Goggan wrote:

The major players in the game of global competition are the multinational corporations. While we are taught to think of those who work for the same corporation in other nations as "the competition" or as "cheap labour", they are our potential allies in taming these corporate giants. New democratic unions are taking on the same multinational corporation that we work for. They reject their status of "Cheap Labour" and the sort of enterprise unionism that many of our leaders advocate here. Increasingly, the weak link is not abroad, but right here at home. It is a common point of reference that Canadian Labour has lost its bearing and is taking a wrong turn. What defines this wrong turn more than anything is the rejection of unionism's most sacred trust, its duty to defend the interests of working people against those of the employer (ibid).

Goggan weaves together an impressive analysis of global capitalism, drawing out the need for global labour solidarity and union democracy at a time of increasingly globalized production. He sees the refusal to recognize GM workers in other countries as competitors as a vital part of the union's struggle, and he cautions strongly against both collaboration with the corporation and the bureaucratization of the union for the same reason. Hierarchical control of the workplace is what the union exists to resist, and so workers need to resist hierarchical control of their union just the same. For Goggan, union democracy is not the election of a representative leadership, but the right of the membership to take control of the

direction of the union. Only by empowering the rank-and-file and framing other GM workers as allies rather than competition does the union stand a reasonable chance of “taking power away from the employer” (ibid).

Conclusion

Global Solidarity: Rank-and-File Internationalism, Union Democracy, and Building

Worker Power

In this project, I set out to learn how Unifor Local 222 understands globalization and the threats it poses, and how the union strategizes to counter it. This has also meant exploring how Unifor, as the national union to which they belong, orients itself politically to the world outside of Canada. I have analyzed all of this against a framework constructed out of a review of some of the key research in the GLS and IPEL literatures and the insights of Stephanie Ross's social movement theory of unions. I connect how these workers, activists, and union leaders understand themselves in their collective struggle to the ultimate shape their strategies take, highlighting the importance of the union as a "school of war," and the great responsibility it has to its membership to advance an analysis that is accurate, honest, and rooted in class. In this final chapter, I briefly review key insights from the previous chapters before concluding with some reflections on where to go from here—both for researchers who study unions, and for union activists learning to resist in an age of global capitalism.

Solidarity for the Global Age

The theory of global solidarity I put forward in this project has several connected components, each of which is worth briefly recounting. First, there is a theory of globalization, because of course, it is the globalization of production to which the autoworkers in Local 222 were responding (and attempting to counter) in their

campaign to save the GM Oshawa plant. Globalization is viewed through a class lens, and understood as a set of processes that change the scope on which economic activity (production and consumption) occurs. Prior to globalization, tariffs and content rules meant that at least substantial portions of the automobiles consumed in one country must also have been produced there. Through globalization—and in particular, the passage of the NAFTA—tariffs and content rules were gradually abolished in favour of free trade, and automobiles produced anywhere in North America can now move duty-free between Canada, Mexico, and the United States, provided they satisfy certain continent-wide content rules. As a result, the spatial scale of class struggle moved beyond national boundaries, as workers in all three countries were thrown into competition for work. This put tremendous pressure on the unions representing autoworkers in Canada and the United States, who were now faced with the constant threat of plant closure and mass job losses. Those unions engaged in a number of different strategies to respond to this changing spatial configuration of auto capital.

Second, there is a theory of labour inter/nationalisms that makes it possible to analyze those union strategies that have emerged in the face of globalization. Theoretical treatments of labour internationalism gained popularity through the late 1990s to the present, as many academics and union activists came to view it as a logical extension of the globalization of production (and of class struggle). Labour internationalism is a very broad category of actions, and so to be as clear as possible, it is essential to note that labour internationalism does not necessarily mean international unionism (joining or forming unions that operate in more than one country), nor is

labour internationalism necessarily an expression of global solidarity. Labour internationalism has often been used to advance the interests of labour in one country over another, and the internal politics of international unions can easily involve the domination of one group of workers by another. Scipes (2016) also reminds us that pure self-interest can motivate even the most explicit appeals for solidarity (global or otherwise), and so even when a form of labour internationalism arrives under a banner of global solidarity, it may not actually function as such. Labour internationalisms also do not always involve strictly international actions. Often, labour internationalisms are carried out locally, and in many cases, this is necessary for their success (see McCallum, 2013; Compa, 2001; Nastovski, 2016).

Third, there is a theoretical understanding of the relationship between identity and strategy. Drawing on social movement theory, Ross (2008, 2012) develops a framework through which unions can be analyzed, based on three categories of information. Collective action frames (or the ways in which workers and union activists understand their collective struggle) and internal organizational practices (or the ways in which decision-making and authority are organized within the union) are both directly connected to the kinds of strategies unions undertake. Using this framework, three basic types of unionisms can be identified and explored: business unionism, social unionism, and class-struggle unionism. Business unionism generally involves a collective action frame based on a specific occupation or workplace, and thus prioritizes collective bargaining as a strategy with the goal of securing better wages, benefits, and so on. Social unionism expands the frame through which collective action is understood to

include the political world beyond the workplace. These unions often engage in political action and maintain links to the communities around them with the goal of building a better world, rather than just winning a better contract. Business and social unionism alike have historically tended towards a fairly hierarchical internal structure, with power concentrated at the top among the elected leaders and hired professional staff, rather than among the rank-and-file members in any meaningful sense. Further, both unionisms tend to accommodate or even protect capitalism, rather than challenge it. Class-struggle unionism, by contrast, is premised on a collective action frame derived from a critical analysis of capitalism; unions are understood to exist for the purpose of countering the class power of the owners of capital.

Global solidarity begins with a recognition that the spatial arrangement of capitalism dictates which groups of workers are tied together in struggle. In periods of significant protectionism, national solidarity is sufficient to counter the class power of domestic capital.⁸ In the age of transnational capital, when corporations have been given the power to shift (or even just threaten to shift) production from one country to another in order to extract concessions or break strikes, national solidarity alone is no longer sufficient. With more than one plant producing the same product at any given time, a strike at one plant—or even at every plant in one country—is by definition a partial strike, so long as capital can rely on workers elsewhere to pick up the slack. The

⁸ Even when national solidarity alone may be sufficient to counter the class power of domestic capital, global solidarity still has an important human rights function in contesting militarism, imperialism, and colonialism.

power of the strike can only be restored by overcoming global capital's spatial advantage, and this requires substantial international coordination. This kind of coordination requires a collective action frame that puts class above nationality, because nationalistic union frames so readily collapse into class collaboration, affirming rather than contesting the competition for work that underlies the normalization of the partial strike. Acts of global solidarity are those that enhance the capacity of workers in different countries to struggle with one another in pursuit of a common goal.

Global Solidarity and Unifor Local 222

The restructuring of production that has accompanied the ascendancy of free trade as a fixture of the global political economy has provoked a sharp reaction from the unions whose members it most directly affects. In Oshawa, where automobiles have been built for over a century, a once-central industry in the local economy has been reduced to a few thousand unionized jobs. And though the autoworkers' union was among the loudest warning of the threats that free trade posed, thus far a coherent strategy with which to resist has yet to coalesce. Rather, there is a set of fairly disparate strategies, and linking them all together into one, consolidated response to globalization is no easy task.

As a national body, Unifor has a Global Solidarity policy that it says is vital to resisting global capitalism (Unifor, 2016a). Under this policy, Unifor recognizes the need for local action and rank-and-file engagement in global solidarity projects, and the union advances a vision that is distinctly class-based. The document makes no mention of

“Canadian jobs” or “Canadian workers,” and so it seems to be completely disconnected from the union’s alter-globalization agenda and its “keep good jobs in Canada” rhetoric. Clearly, the two need to be reconciled towards a more coherent strategy.

As part of its Global Solidarity policy, Unifor raises and distributes resources through its Social Justice Fund. Unifor describes this as the primary expression of its international solidarity work, but it is not clear how this work is linked to enhancing working class power. This is not to say that charity is not important, nor is it to say that Unifor has not done incredible work improving conditions in the Global South. Through the SJF, Unifor has forged important connections with civil society groups working in communities around the world, and demonstrated the importance of “thinking globally” to its members. However, in keeping with the vision laid out in its Global Solidarity policy, where “global solidarity represents the engagement of organized labour as a counter balancing and progressive force in a globalized world,” (ibid) a more direct approach to building class power is in order, and Unifor could also be using the connections they have forged to help build worker power in these communities. By using their resources to facilitate communication and exchanges between workers in shared sectors and at shared employers in different parts of the world, the union would create more space for rank-and-file activists to get directly involved in the work of global solidarity and forge meaningful relationships between workers. It is this kind of global solidarity that has the greatest chance of overcoming the partial strike effect, as well as building the kind of global movement necessary to convince governments around the world to shift to the kind of worker-friendly trade agreements that Unifor supports.

Despite the nuance put forth in its Global Solidarity policy, the union continues to conceive of globalization as primarily a problem to do with free trade and the international competition for work it has engendered. Faced with such a challenge, two avenues of resistance have clearly emerged, and though they are not necessarily contradictory, the way that each is framed complicates the other. In the first, the union struggles against the change in structure and contests free trade, as can be seen in Unifor's alter-globalization activism and lobbying. In the second, the union attempts to negate the effects of international competition by expanding the scope of the work that unions already do, as can be seen in Unifor's Global Solidarity policy. The union's very function is to eliminate competition between individual workers through collective action—through solidarity. Overcoming international competition between workers requires building international solidarity in precisely the same way. To present, Unifor has pursued both of these strategies, though with far greater emphasis on contesting free trade. In addition, the union also engages in strategies to enhance its own competitiveness; encouraging consumers to “buy Canadian,” accepting concessions, engaging in class collaboration, and pressuring capital to “keep good jobs in Canada.”

As a result of its preference for strategies that contest free trade to counter competition (alter-globalization) or enhance its own competitiveness (nationalism, class collaboration), Unifor has created within its membership a collective action frame premised predominantly on the shared occupation, employer, and national identity of its membership. Such a framing is far more in line with business unionism than anything else, and it obstructs the possibility of a more transformative, class-struggle unionism by

emphasizing divisions in the working class, rather than working to overcome them. Met with the prospect of losing their livelihoods and confronting a crisis of mobilization within the union, local activists come to rely on nationalist appeals in order to develop the kind of engagement required to mount a successful campaign. But while appeals to nationalist rhetoric may be an easy, short-term solution to the crisis of mobilization, they remain limited in their ability to affect long-term change. After bargaining is over, rank-and-file members return to their lives no more engaged in the union than they were before, and the structure of international competition that underlies the problem remains intact. Conceiving of its struggle as a national one has delivered little success for the union.

Global Solidarity, Local Action

At the time of writing, negotiations between Canada, Mexico, and the United States for a new NAFTA are ongoing. Any change in the structure of the North American auto industry as a result of a new deal should necessarily prompt a reimagining of strategy for labour in the sector, and not just in Canada. It is possible that a new NAFTA could contain new content rules that bring some of the work back to Canada. In that case, the need for a global solidarity strategy to directly address the problem of international competition is less immediate. Failing that, of course, the situation remains grim. The odds are long, but not impossible. Auto remains an important sector for Unifor, and if they want to save it, there are a few things they can do.

First, the union needs to make fostering worker-to-worker relationships between autoworkers in Canada and elsewhere (but particularly, Mexico) a priority. This is perhaps easier said than done, but it is critical to the success of any global solidarity strategy. Even if the unions representing their counterparts in Mexico are uniquely dominated by the company or the government as Unifor suggests, direct contact between workers should still be sought. This would help to reduce the partial strike effect by more clearly framing GM workers around the world as belonging to the same struggle, and provide the opportunity to build a more powerful global movement for worker-friendly trade agreements. Further, the information that workers in Canada might receive could support other acts of global solidarity at the local level.

Autoworkers in Canada occupy a specific location in their employer's operations, not only as workers on the assembly line, but as members of the communities in which the vehicles are sold. As Herod argues (2001: 104), this specific location should provide unique opportunities for resistance, and this merits some further reflection. In his book *Riot. Strike. Riot*, Joshua Clover argues that the different phases of capitalist circulation—production and consumption—demand different modes of resistance (2016). Workers can mount effective resistance in the production phase by way of the strike, but they can also resist in the consumption phase by rioting. For Clover, strikes are a means of affecting the price of labour, while riots are a means of affecting the price of goods (ibid: 15). To date, Unifor has attempted to use its leverage in the consumption phase by encouraging members of their communities to “buy Canadian,” but armed with information about working conditions at GM Mexico, union activists

could instead exploit that leverage by picketing at General Motors dealerships in Canada in solidarity with their Mexican counterparts. Union activists should reflect on the unique opportunities for resistance afforded to them by their relative location in the global commodity chain and how they might use that to struggle in solidarity with, rather than in competition against, other workers around the world. Such actions could become a key component of a more transformative global solidarity strategy moving forward.

None of this is possible without a mobilized and engaged membership. It is vital that the union create the conditions for a more active rank-and-file by encouraging democracy, by distributing power and responsibility more widely throughout the union structure, and by providing resources for activists to engage in the necessary work of building global solidarity. How the union leadership responds to criticism from its members going forward will be instructive in this respect. A dissenting member is an engaged member, and rather than shutting them down or branding them a threat to solidarity, leadership should focus on finding ways to keep those members engaged by taking their criticisms seriously and ensuring that they feel heard and valued.

An Agenda for Future Research

This project represents my attempt at a modest contribution to our understanding of the international political economy of labour; one that frames workers and their organizations not just as the recipients of global capitalism's oppressive blows, but as important actors in the global political economy with the power to alter its

structure by resisting strategically. I have laid out a foundation of empirical knowledge about the GM Oshawa Matters campaign that may help guide or enhance the work of other academics and activists. I have also highlighted the significance of the ways in which workers and their unions understand themselves in relation to their political-economic surroundings, as identity permeates union action, affects strategic choices, and ultimately shapes the prospects for success (however it is defined). There are several important questions that I have been unable to adequately engage with in this project, however. Future research should explore the implications of productivist tendencies within Unifor's analysis, and examine the broader applicability of my analysis to other kinds of unions and other kinds of work.

Toward an Anti-Labour Movement

For Engels and others in the tradition of critical political economy, unions emerge primarily because the workplace is the site of capitalist exploitation, where workers have the surplus value of their labour extracted by the owners of capital. Immediately, a contradiction emerges because unions therefore rely on the continued existence of capitalism. If they are to end capitalist exploitation, the goal of unions must be no less than the obliteration of that which made them necessary in the first place. Instead, the labour movement generally fetishizes work, attaching identity-forming and life-affirming qualities to it. Though many unions have historically struggled for things like a shorter work day, preventing layoffs is generally the top priority.

In this project, I have focused on Unifor’s response to the forces of international competition for work and the subsequent loss of thousands of jobs. Underlying the entire analysis has been the implicit assumption that jobs are *worth saving*. This is an assumption that merits substantial interrogation in itself, though it is well beyond the scope of what I have done in this project. Building cars is difficult and physically demanding. As one interviewee said, “nobody voluntarily wants—believe me, now I’ve been working on the line for a couple of years—there’s nobody that’s going to want to do that. ‘Oh, I aspire to work on an assembly line’—it just doesn’t exist. Like, more than you’d want to be in a field under the blazing heat picking fruit, right? It’s the same thing, but somebody’s got to do it” (Interview 4). If not for the economic structure of capitalist society that punishes people for not working, being laid off would likely be welcomed. Future research should consider the ways in which the labour movement might reorganize around what Kathi Weeks refers to as “anti-work politics and post-work imaginaries” (2011)—how it might instead come to constitute an *anti-labour* movement.

Applicability Across Sectors

Unifor is the largest private sector union in Canada, and though it is one of Canada’s more important and influential unions, it is a relatively small share of the whole. In 2012, 71% of public sector workers belonged to a union, compared to just 16% of private sector workers (Galarneau and Sohn, 2016: 4). Future research should consider the applicability of the conclusions I draw in this project to the labour movement in Canada more broadly, bearing in mind differences in the relationship to

global capitalism of public and private sector workers, and the relationship between Canada's most influential unions. Public sector workers may be generally less exposed to the forces of international competition to which Unifor responds, but they may also be influenced by Unifor when it comes to crafting their own strategic responses to globalization. By reflecting on this, we may arrive at a more clear picture of the relationship between the sectoral particulars of global capitalism and the workers in those sectors, and how the direction of the Canadian labour movement as a whole is influenced by more or less powerful actors within it. This project also focused largely on one local within one sector, and so its applicability to the broader private sector is also somewhat limited. The auto industry is not the same as the grocery industry, and the specific orientation of workers in each sector to global capitalism is necessarily different. The general need for rank-and-file internationalism in the face of international capital likely applies, but the specifics of each sector and each union demand their own analysis.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

1. Getting to know the participant (roughly 10 minutes)

It is best to start each interview with some easy questions, building rapport and collecting some simple demographic/identifying information. Though answers may be fairly short, be sure to follow up on anything that seems interesting given any of the overarching research questions.

- A. What is your name, and how long have you been a member of Local 222?
- B. How did you first get involved in the Local?
- C. What is your present role within the Local, and what was your role during the last round of bargaining?

2. Learning about the campaign (roughly 25 minutes)

In this section, seek to understand the process by which the “GM Oshawa Matters” campaign was developed and implemented.

- A. What were some of the challenges that Local 222 faced as you approached the 2015 round of bargaining?
- B. How did Local 222 develop its demands in advance of bargaining?
- C. Take me through the process of developing and implementing the GM Oshawa Matters campaign, in as much detail as you can.
 - i. How was the labour divided? Were there separate committees for strike preparations, bargaining, and mobilization and communications?
 - ii. How did these committees communicate and coordinate with one another?
- D. How did the Local choose to define “success” in this round of bargaining?
 - i. Was this a successful round of bargaining?
 - ii. How might it have been more successful?
- E. How much coordination with or involvement from Unifor National was there?
- F. What is “globalization”?

- i. How did it affect or inform the development and implementation of bargaining strategy?
 - G. What is “solidarity”?
 - i. How did it affect or inform the development and implementation of bargaining strategy?
- 3. Going beyond the campaign (roughly 25 minutes)

In this section, seek to understand the tension between global labour solidarity and Canadian nationalism as it plays out more broadly within the workings of the Local.

- A. How much interaction does Local 222 have with autoworkers in the global South (Mexico, China, etc.)?
 - i. What is the nature of that interaction?
- B. How has the Local historically responded to Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) such as NAFTA?
 - i. How successful have those efforts been?
- C. How does the Local confront global capital between bargaining rounds.
- D. What can you tell me about the Local’s involvement in Unifor’s Social Justice Fund?
 - i. How is it administered?
 - ii. What projects does it currently support?
 - iii. What criteria are used in deciding how best to use the SJF?
 - iv. Does the Local provide support for autoworkers in the global South, either through the SJF or otherwise? What kind of support?
- E. What can you tell me about Unifor National’s policy on Global Solidarity?
- F. How important is national pride/Canadian identity to advancing the interests of the Local?

Appendix B

GM Oshawa Plant Population, 1989-2016

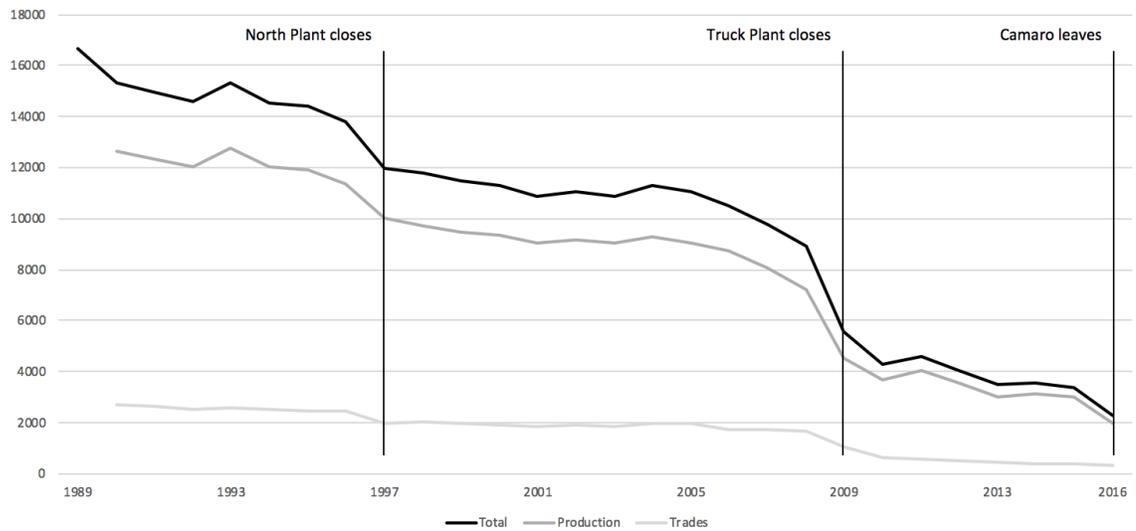


Figure 1 – Based on data obtained from Unifor Local 222, this chart shows the decline in membership at GM Oshawa between 1989 and 2016, with several key dates highlighted. Note that the disaggregated data showing the number of jobs in production and trades was only available from 1990 forward.