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ARTICLE

"Caterpillar Hates Unions More Than It Loves Profits": The Electro-Motive Closure and the Dilemmas of Union Strategy

Stephanie Ross and Jason Russell

The biting January wind blew snow sideways against the picket line, set up by members of Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) Local 27.[1] Since New Year's Day, 465 workers had been locked out by Electro-Motive Diesel (EMD), a London, Ontario, subsidiary of US multinational Caterpillar, after they had refused to accept a final offer demanding a 50 per cent wage cut. The weather was cold, as was the bargaining climate, given the devastating effects of the 2008 recession on manufacturing in North America. The workers were determined, bolstered by the national outrage expressed at their treatment. But so too was Caterpillar – as Local 27 president Tim Carrie put it, "Caterpillar hates unions more than it loves profits."[2] It soon became clear that the company was

1. CAW Local 27 is now Unifor Local 27, following the September 2013 merger of the CAW and the Communication, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP). For the purposes of this paper, reference will be made to the CAW, since that was the union's title at the time of these events.

2. Tim Carrie, interview by the authors, 12 April 2012. This article incorporates content from twenty semistructured interviews conducted between April and September 2012 with CAW Local 27 officers, former leaders of the Electro-Motive bargaining unit, and displaced workers. These interviews were part of a larger project on worker responses to plant closures and labour-market adjustment programs. The union established a worker adjustment centre in its hall in London, Ontario. Participants were a combination of key informants and those who became involved through snowball sampling. Most of the interviews were conducted at the hall. The researchers also observed worker adjustment programs in progress and worker responses to them. The article also incorporates archival materials found in the London Room at the London Public Library in London, Ontario.

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willing to do whatever it took to get what it wanted; on 5 February 2012, the company announced the plant's closure.

The 2012 lockout at and closure of EMD was both a heart-wrenching personal experience and a flashpoint in debates over the future of both manufacturing and the private-sector labour movement in Canada. These events were the immediate outcome of a breakdown in contract negotiations, but also shaped by processes beyond the confines of a particular round of bargaining. First, communities like London, with a significant manufacturing base, have endured a long-term process of deindustrialization and deunionization. These dual forces have both transformed local labour markets and altered the material and ideological conditions in which unions operate. Although Canadian manufacturing workers have been displaced in repeated waves of restructuring since the introduction of free trade agreements in the late 1980s, their position has become especially vulnerable as the labour market is now replete with precarious jobs.

Second, and related, are the changes in corporate structure, investment, and labour relations strategy in manufacturing that have increased corporate power with respect to unions. As multinational corporations (MNCs) have reorganized themselves on a global scale to take advantage of the benefits of free trade agreements, they have pursued corporate investment strategies that increase the role of finance-derived profits; reduce dependence on production, both in general and in particular plants; and facilitate pitting workers against one another. This has given MNCs extraordinary leverage to press their unionized workforces for major contract concessions, claiming that such givebacks are necessary to remain globally competitive regardless of the companies' profitability. Employer hostility to organized labour has been on the rise since the late 1970s, but has intensified significantly since the 2008 global financial crisis. While CAW Local 27 faced an unusually aggressive multinational employer with a legendary anti-union reputation,[3] similar conditions characterize other recent confrontations, at Vale Inco in Sudbury and Voisey's Bay (2009–10), US Steel in Hamilton and Nanticoke (2010–11), and Rio Tinto in Alma, Québec (2012).[4]

While these political-economic factors are obvious to unions in globalized industries, the disconnect between the changing nature of corporate capitalist class power and the strategic repertoires of workers' collective action continues to grow. As the literature on plant closures shows, union responses tend to remain local or, at best, national in scale. Such was the case for Local 27. On

3. Jeremy Brecher, "The Decline of Strikes," in Aaron Brenner, Benjamin Day & Immanuel Ness, eds., *An Encyclopedia of Strikes in American History* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 75–77.

4. See John Peters, "Down in the Vale: Corporate Globalization, Unions on the Defensive, and the USW Local 6500 Strike in Sudbury, 2009–2010," *Labour/Le Travail* 66 (Fall 2010): 73–105; Steve Arnold, "Steel City Meltdown: Hamilton and the Changing Canadian Steel Industry," in John Peters, ed., *Boom, Bust and Crisis: Labour, Corporate Power and Politics in Canada* (Halifax: Fernwood, 2012), 84–102.

the one hand, it effectively framed the problem as one of the loss of good jobs in the community to antisocial corporate greed, garnered significant positive media attention even in the business pages of the major papers, generated much public outcry, and mobilized both the wider Ontario labour movement and the local community. However, though taking up important elements of the social unionist repertoire, this strategy rested on assumptions about the corporation's rootedness in the local economy more suited to the 1950s than the 2010s, meaning that the union was unable to disrupt Caterpillar's main sources of profit and, hence, power. The EMD case thus raises important questions about the kinds of power that workers and their unions possess, the type of strategies needed to effectively confront corporate power, and the effective scale of union action in the current era.

The EMD case shows that while unions can effectively mobilize in response to attacks by anti-union employers, success in resisting concessions and defending workers' jobs requires a more proactive union strategy and sophisticated repertoire. We argue that, first, union strategy must be rooted in a careful study of the employer's particular structure and forms of power. Second, unions must develop capacities to intervene at scales beyond the local employment relationship and community. Third, unions must consider more carefully the nature of the various forms of power they seek to deploy, whether at the point of production or in sites of consumption, and how these forms of power can effectively amplify each other. Even the most effective campaigns, which mobilize lots of people and even deploy militant tactics, will fail to muster leverage over an employer or industry if they neglect developing these forms of knowledge and capacity.

To make this case, we first discuss the literature on deindustrialization and union strategic responses to plant closures, paying close attention to the forms of worker power typically deployed in plant closure fights. Next, we review the history of the London, Ontario, manufacturing sector to show how the relatively late advent of manufacturing job loss delayed local unionists' development of capacities to deal with the threats from an employer like Caterpillar. We then look at the history of the EMD plant, its changing position within the larger corporate structures of General Motors and Caterpillar, and the evolution of Caterpillar's corporate structure and strategy. We next examine the conflict between CAW Local 27 and Caterpillar in the 2011 bargaining round and discuss the union's strategy in the face of the lockout and then the closure. Finally, we assess the outcomes of this conflict and offer some reflections on the changing nature of union leverage and strategy.

Union Responses to Plant Closures

Although a transnational phenomenon, deindustrialization has sharply affected countries and communities in North America and Western Europe; hence, much of the literature is focused on these contexts. Barry Bluestone and

Bennett Harrison were the first to coin the term and extensively document the wave of deindustrialization in the United States in the 1970s. They located the roots of this business strategy squarely within a desire to create or find a "good business climate" characterized by an absence of both strong unions and strong welfare-state entitlements for workers.[5] A central part of implementing this strategy included the reorganization of corporate structure to reduce dependence on any one production facility. However, despite an observable intensification of plant closures beginning the early 1980s, Jefferson Cowie points out that such closures are less abrupt than they appear. Instead, "the final shutdown of a factory – the act that draws the public's attention – usually comes only at the end of a long, silent process of job relocation" embedded in capital's ceaseless reorganization in the pursuit of higher profits.[6] However, that such corporate activity is experienced as "normal" within capitalist industry impedes our understanding of "deindustrialization" and disarms unions strategically when closures take place.

The early deindustrialization literature documents the "death of mills"[7] and factories and the devastating economic, social, and psychological impact on workers, their families, and communities.[8] In Ontario, research beginning in the early 1970s also focused on the effects of manufacturing job loss, typified by John Eleen and Ashley Bernardine's study of the impact of plant closure on workers and their communities.[9] In many of these narratives, industrial workers figure implicitly as noble victims of large-scale economic processes that they are relatively powerless to control. Often, deindustrialization is treated as a historical inevitability, with nostalgia for the lost community and practices of mourning and memorialization all that is left for workers.[10]

Others have focused more squarely on questions of worker agency, looking at community and union responses and seeking to determine which strategies

5. Barry Bluestone & Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

6. Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA's Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor* (New York: The New Press, 1999), 6.

7. Jefferson Cowie & Joseph Heathcott, "Introduction: The Meanings of Deindustrialization," in Jefferson Cowie & Joseph Heathcott, eds., *Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 5.

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

9. John W. Eleen & Ashley G. Bernardine, *Shutdown: The Impact of Plant Shutdown, Extensive Employment Terminations and Layoff on the Workers and the Community* (Toronto: Ontario Federation of Labour, 1971). The 1971 closure of the Eaton-Rich parts plant in London, Ontario, featured prominently in this analysis.

10. Steven High & David W. Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland: The Landscape and Memory of Deindustrialization* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2007).

are most successful in averting plant closures. As Bruce Nissen points out, "much of the earliest work on labor-community coalitions centered on struggles to prevent plant closures."[11] The literature on responses to plant closures has emphasized the kinds of public policy needed to prevent closure, sustain industrial production, renew or transition brownfield industries, and protect and retrain displaced workers who need to "adjust" to new labour market realities. The development of unions' ability to discern the early warning signs of closure – changes in ownership, disinvestment, the narrowing of product lines, declining employment levels, management instability, lack of management advocacy for the plant – was seen as essential, not least to overcome the denial that often paralyzes union and worker responses.[12] Developing the capacity to detect and analyze the implications of such indicators was often linked to demands for early warning and advance notice legislation, so that workers subject to mass shutdowns would have a significant amount of time to respond.[13] Worker ownership, discussed as one possible response, itself often requires extensive financial backing from the public sector and a supportive public policy environment.[14]

In both the US and Canada, much of the work documenting plant closures has also emphasized union strategy. In Canada, David Sobel and Susan Meurer examined the 1989 closure of an Inglis appliance plant in Toronto, which closely followed the implementation of the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement, and the United Steelworkers' attempts to avert closure. Jamie Swift discusses the 1999 occupation by the Communication, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP) of a pulp and paper plant in Thorold, Ontario, following its closure. Larry Savage and Carmela Patrias described the events surrounding the closure of the CAW-organized John Deere plant in Welland, Ontario, in 2008. The unions involved with these closures all mounted vigorous and often desperate responses to corporate decisions, but none succeeded in preventing shutdowns (although there were some successes at smaller plants in southern Ontario in the 1990s).[15]

11. Bruce Nissen, "Labor-Community Coalition Strengths and Weaknesses: Case Study Evidence," in David B. Reynolds, ed., *Partnering for Change: Unions and Community Groups Build Coalitions for Economic Justice* (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 47.

12. Bruce Nissen, *Fighting for Jobs: Case Studies of Labor-Community Coalitions Confronting Plant Closings* (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1995), 10–11.

13. Lynn Feekin & Bruce Nissen, "Early Warning of Plant Closings: Issues and Prospect," *Labor Studies Journal* 16 (Winter 1991): 20–33.

14. Staughton Lynd, *The Fight against Shutdowns: Youngstown's Steel Mill Closings* (San Pedro, California: Singlejack Books, 1982).

15. David Sobel & Susan Meurer, *Working at Inglis: The Life and Death of a Canadian Factory* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1994); Jamie Swift, *Walking the Union Walk: Stories from the CEP's First Ten Years* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2003); Carmela Patrias & Larry Savage, *Union Power: Solidarity and Struggle in Niagara* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2012).

The timing of deindustrialization appears to be an important factor in how unions respond to closures. Stephen High has pointed out that southern Ontario workers did not begin to experience massive industrial job loss until much later than their counterparts in the northeastern United States. In fact, High argues that "industrial decline in Canada was not considered to be inevitable," given the combination of economic conditions (including the relative availability of other industrial jobs to move to) and union strategic choices (as the higher level of struggle in Canada gave union members more collective confidence).[16]

"Community welfare" and nationalist discourses have figured prominently in union campaigns against plant closures. In the cases studied by Nissen, a common measure of community welfare has been the availability of well-paying jobs, implying a moral obligation on behalf of corporations to provide such, particularly considering the various public supports and subsidies they have often taken advantage of.[17] High documented how Canadian trade unionists engaged in more popular protest and used an anti-American-inflected nationalism to challenge plant closures. Although US resistance to closures has mobilized American nationalism to condemn the "betrayal" of "their" capitalists who move jobs to the Global South, Canadian activists emphasized the injustice of the fact that many closures have been of US-owned branch plants, the decisions over which are made by "foreign" capital unconcerned with the welfare of Canadian workers.[18] This is a nuanced but crucial difference in how plant closure is experienced by Canadian and US workers and in the ideological resources deployed in union campaigns.

Mobilizing community support and opinion around key bargaining rounds and to protect local manufacturing jobs has become pervasive in both the CAW and the wider union movement. A growing recognition that union leverage in the bargaining relationship has to be enhanced with external solidarity and mobilizing structures has led to the use of union-community coalitions to defend "good jobs" in the community.[19] In the United States, such efforts have often been accompanied by strategic corporate campaigns that analyze corporate structures to find additional sources of vulnerability outside the immediate bargaining relationship: by, for instance, pressuring suppliers, customers and investors; uncovering corporate wrongdoing in order to leverage public shame and notions of "good corporate citizenship"; and attacking a

16. Steven High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969–1984* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 40.

17. Nissen, *Fighting for Jobs*, 157.

18. Steven High, "'I'll Wrap the F*#@ Canadian Flag around Me': A Nationalist Response to Plant Shutdowns, 1969–1984," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, n.s., 12 (2001): 199–225.

19. Stephanie Ross, "Social Unionism in Hard Times: Union-Community Coalition Politics in the CAW Windsor's *Manufacturing Matters* Campaign," *Labour/Le Travail* 68 (Fall 2011): 88.

company's valuable brand by subverting the meanings that corporations try to invest them with.[20] Consumer boycotts have been a common feature of such efforts to expand the scope of unions' leverage beyond the direct employment relationship.[21]

In Canada, the CAW has also used plant occupations to negotiate closure agreements. At a Canadian Council meeting in 1980 that featured many delegates' anguished stories of the devastation that plant closures were wreaking on their lives and communities, then UAW Canadian director Bob White declared, "If it takes occupations of plants to stop this … then we'll occupy them."[22] Between 1980 and 2009, CAW members engaged in 32 documented plant occupations, 15 of which had as their central goal the securing or improvement of severance pay. Such actions have often been accompanied by efforts to pressure provincial and federal governments to intervene with public policy that provides incentives to corporations to invest (particularly through subsidies), imposes stronger disincentives to divest, or protects workers financially from the dislocating effects of closure. High documents the relative success of plant closure opponents in southern Ontario during the 1980s in securing protective legislation for displaced workers, including advance notification of closings, enhanced severance for workers involved in mass layoffs, and preferential hiring rights.[23] In addition, such collective action has also been used to secure funding for "labour adjustment" programs, which assist displaced industrial workers in making the transition to other kinds of jobs.

Most of the plant closure literature analyzes union action at the local (or, at best, subnational) scale. In this era of globalizing production, the effectiveness of local union action has come into question. As labour geographers have pointed out, the scale of action is key to whether unions are able to effectively leverage power against multinational employers. Andrew Herod argues that unions can take advantage of the contradictions inherent in globalization. Those contradictions arise from employers' desire to be mobile and free of obligations to labour, on the one hand, and their need to produce *somewhere*,

20. Tom Juravich, "Beating Global Capital: A Framework and Method for Union Strategic Corporate Research and Campaigns," in Kate Bronfenbrenner, ed., *Global Unions: Challenging Transnational Capital through Cross-Border Campaigns* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2007), 16–39; Tom Juravich & Kate Bronfenbrenner, *Ravenswood: The Steelworkers' Victory and the Revival of American Labor* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2000). See also Victor Devinatz, "A Heroic Defeat: The Caterpillar Labor Dispute and the UAW, 1991–1998," *Labor Studies Journal* 30 (Summer 2005): 7–12.

21. Monroe Friedman, "Consumer Boycotts in the United States, 1970–1980: Contemporary Events in Historical Perspective," *Journal of Consumer Affairs* 19 (June 1985): 96–117; Monroe Friedman, *Consumer Boycotts: Effecting Change through the Marketplace and the Media* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

22. White quoted in Sam Gindin, *The Canadian Auto Workers: The Birth and Transformation of a Union* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1995), 192.

23. High, "'The F*#@ Canadian Flag,'" 200.

in a given location, on the other.[24] Struggles at the local scale are thus not inherently devoid of power for workers. Local action can, in certain production chains, have a much wider impact than otherwise expected. That said, the lesson here is that unions need strong knowledge of the geographic specificities of a multinational employer and of workers' position within the corporate structure.[25]

A similar point can be made about the utility of community mobilization and attempts to deploy leverage over political decision makers. While these are certainly forms of potential power available to unions, the specificity of the conditions in which they are used matters greatly. As Nissen points out, the target company in any plant closure fight must be *susceptible* to pressure from the resources that the union or labour-community coalition can control.[26] Similarly, writing about the impact of union-sponsored consumer boycotts, Friedman highlights the fact that these become contests between pro- and anti-union (or at least union-indifferent) consumers, and it is the *relative* market power of these groups that determines whether the boycott will have its desired effect.[27] In other words, the impact of political goodwill from local officials, positive relations with the local press or local consumers, and positive local public opinion varies according to whether the employer in question is affected by them. Recognizing these tensions, we now turn to explore the specificities of the Caterpillar case, first with respect to the political economy of manufacturing in London, Ontario, and then regarding the particularities of Caterpillar's corporate structure and strategy.

The Rise and Fall of Manufacturing in London, Ontario

London is currently Canada's tenth-largest city, located in the centre of southwestern Ontario. Although London has been associated with white-collar employment, the city has historically maintained a large manufacturing base. The city's geography, with the overwhelming majority of manufacturing plants in the east end and major white-collar employers in the downtown core, helped to reinforce perceptions that London was not reliant on manufacturing. London's location in the middle of southern Ontario, however, also made it desirable to manufacturers. Almost equidistant from Detroit, Toronto, and Buffalo, close to major North American markets, and with major rail lines through the city, London has drawn important manufacturing and support operations of both domestic and foreign businesses. Unlike Ontario's other

24. Andrew Herod, "Organizing Globally, Organizing Locally: Union Spatial Strategy in a Global Economy," in Jeffrey Harrod & Robert O'Brien, eds., *Global Unions? Theory and Strategies of Organized Labour in the Global Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 2002), 86.

25. Herod, "Organizing Globally," 98.

26. Nissen, *Fighting for Jobs*, 171.

27. Friedman, *Consumer Boycotts*, 41.

industrial cities, such as Hamilton, Sudbury, and Windsor, it has never been primarily reliant on one industry nor has it been tied to natural-resource extraction or processing.

From the early twentieth century, London was known to be home to Canadian companies such as John Labatt Ltd., Carling Brewing, McClary Manufacturing, and London Life. US firms such as Kelvinator began to arrive in the city in the 1920s, largely to access the British imperial market.[28] However, domestic firms were more prominent in the city's economy prior to World War II. London's economy changed markedly during the war. The city's manufacturing base transitioned to wartime production from 1939 to 1945, some of which remained after the war. More US firms arrived in the early 1950s, including General Motors Diesel in 1950 and Minnesota Mining and Manufacture (3M) in 1953.[29] The first major threat to London's ongoing postwar growth appeared in 1969 with the unexpected closure of the Kelvinator appliance plant after 43 years in operation, affecting 700 workers.[30] The closure was soon followed by that of London's Eaton-Rich auto parts plant, in 1971.[31] Eaton-Rich was a smaller facility than Kelvinator – it employed fewer than half the number of workers – but these were both alarming events in the city's postwar economic history.

London continued to grow during the 1970s as a home to both major manufacturing and service employers despite these early warning signs. Major non-union, white-collar employers such as the insurance company London Life and financial services firm Canada Trust hired large numbers of workers to fill a range of administrative jobs every year. Labatt's administrative operations were still largely based in the city during the 1970s, and public sector employers including the University of Western Ontario, Fanshawe College, and the city's various hospitals collectively employed thousands of workers. The city benefited from the opening of the Ford Motor Company assembly plant in Talbotville – a hamlet between London and St. Thomas – in 1967. The 1980s continued to be a period of economic prosperity for London's citizens, but troubling (if faint) warning signs appeared.[32] London did not add any major new industrial workplaces during the 1980s. Then, as the decade ended, a major industrial loss happened when the city's Westinghouse plant closed. Westinghouse's six Canadian plants were purchased by Swiss multinational firm Asea Brown Boveri (ABB). Although the loss of Westinghouse was the

28. See Jason Russell, *Our Union: UAW/CAW Local 27 from 1950 to 1990* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2011), 22.

29. Russell, *Our Union*, 21.

30. Russell, *Our Union*, 25.

31. Russell, *Our Union*, 25.

32. There was one significant plant closure mid-decade – Proto Tools in 1986 – but the plant was mid-sized and not considered a major employer.

worst closure the city had faced since Kelvinator in 1969, nearly twenty years without losing a major plant created a sense among municipal leaders that this was merely a blip. However, with the implementation of the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in 1989, matters were about to worsen. Even if the pace of industrial decline in London was slower than in other cities (like Toronto, whose manufacturing sector was decimated by the FTA), and was offset by new arrivals, closures accelerated over the next two decades.[33]

The 1990s brought London's third major plant closure, with Northern Telecom shutting its plant in 1993, leading to the loss of 705 jobs held mostly by women.[34] However, London's economy was again relatively insulated from the full impact of free trade and of the loss of Northern Telecom, as new investments in industry continued to reach the city. Kaiser Aluminum built a facility in the city in 1991, choosing London over Buffalo, New York, due to the availability of cheaper industrial land and better economic incentives from the provincial government, as well as its proximity to the US market.[35] London, due to the diligent efforts of its economic development staff, attracted Austrian aircraft manufacturer Dimona Aircraft (later called Diamond) in early 1993.[36] The long-standing strategy of buying and servicing industrial and commercial land, and the luck of being close to the United States, once again paid dividends for London's municipal leaders. In the minds of city policymakers, Dimona and Kaiser surely helped compensate for the loss of Northern Telecom. Politicians from all three levels of government extolled the quality of the products built at the city's plants and expressed willingness to provide material support when needed. Indeed, Stephen Harper's Conservative government provided $5 million in federal tax breaks to Greenbriar Equity Group in 2008, when it owned the Electro-Motive plant.[37] The CAW would later argue that some conditions should have been attached to that tax assistance.

33. In 1971, 13 per cent of London's workforce was employed in manufacturing jobs. That excluded managers and administrative support staff who may have worked in manufacturing. By 1981, just slightly over 10 per cent of the city's workforce was directly employed in the manufacturing sector. By 1991, manufacturing employment was 9 per cent of total employment. See Statistics Canada, *1971 Census of Canada*, vol. 3, part 2, table 6; Statistics Canada, *1981 Census of Canada*, Economic Characteristics, Population, table 12; Statistics Canada, *1991 Census of Canada*, Profile of Census Tracts in London, Sarnia-Clearwater, and Windsor, part B, table 1.

34. Joe Ruscitti, "705 Lose Jobs: Northern Telecom Hangs Up on London," *London Free Press*, 2 September 1993.

35. Eric Bender, "A Gutsy Move Pays Off Big Time," *London Free Press*, 22 March 1991.

36. John Matsui, "London Bid to Secure Piper Alerted Dimona to Benefits," *London Free Press*, 26 January 1993.

37. The 2008 federal budget announced tax breaks worth $1 billion on new corporate assets, as well as $5 million in tax breaks for purchasers of locomotive engines, which incentivized the purchase of EMD's products. Rob Ferguson, Robert Benzie & Tanya Talaga, "Caterpillar Closes Electro-Motive Plant," *Toronto Star*, 3 February 2012, https://www.thestar.com/news/

The mid-2000s was a major turning point for industrial London. While the early part of the decade witnessed overall stability in industrial employment, the city's economic situation quickly deteriorated following the 2008 economic crisis. The Beta Brands and Siemens plants closed in 2007, followed by the Ford Talbotville plant in 2011. The Electro-Motive plant closing was part of this new wave of closures that involved significant numbers of workers who had been employed in their respective workplaces for decades. Only one of the closures that occurred since 2007 can really be attributed to economic distress. Ford continued to consolidate assembly operations despite the company's profitability. London lost 8,000 manufacturing jobs between 2000 and 2008, and the wave of closures that had accelerated with the start of the economic crisis led to the loss of a further 8,000 jobs.[38]

Although London was facing creeping deindustrialization prior to 2008, it was masked by increased service-sector employment and the concentration of manufacturing jobs in the automotive industry. Previous major closures, such as Northern Telecom and Westinghouse, had mostly been forgotten. The urgency of the situation was largely underappreciated by labour. By 2011, London workers and their unions were confronted with industrial job loss on an unprecedented scale. Other nearby communities were already much further down the path of deindustrialization. Windsor had witnessed the gradual loss of much of its automotive industry. Most of Hamilton's steel industry was gone. The entire Niagara region had been deindustrializing for the previous 30 years, with the service sector taking over as a leading sector of employment. In those cities, unions like the CAW had established practices for confronting manufacturing job loss and plant closure. But in the case of Electro-Motive, the CAW faced an uphill battle. Given the complicated changes taking place in the plant, the nature of Caterpillar as employer, and the wider community's view of industrial job loss, the union's standard repertoire of supplementing bargaining with community mobilization, political pressure, and, if necessary, plant occupation would be severely tested.

Electro-Motive, Caterpillar, and Changing Corporate Strategy in North America

The Electro-Motive locomotive plant in London was originally opened by General Motors in 1950 and was known as GM Diesel for most of its history. One of the founding groups of the composite UAW Local 27,[39] the

canada/2012/02/03/caterpillar_closes_electromotive_plant_in_london.html; Jonathan Sher, "Plant Got Big Federal Tax Break," *London Free Press*, 30 December 2011, http://www.lfpress.com/news/london/2011/12/29/19179381.html.

38. Kaylie Tiessen, *Seismic Shift: Ontario's Changing Labour Market* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, March 2014), 26.

39. The Canadian membership of the United Auto Workers broke away in 1985 over differences

GM Diesel bargaining unit was also one of the largest, giving it both influence on the local executive and autonomy from the rest of the local. Even though GM Diesel was not part of auto assembly manufacturing, given its focus on transit buses, dump trucks, and light armoured vehicles, as well as its use of batch production rather than assembly lines, GM accepted the Local 27 unit's inclusion in pattern bargaining once the practice was established in 1953. Work performed by Local 27 members at GM Diesel was ultimately covered by both the GM master agreement and a local agreement until its eventual sale in 2004.[40] In the 1980s, production shifted toward diesel freight locomotives, and in 1999 GM split this component off from that producing light armoured vehicles, renaming the former Electro-Motive Canada.[41]

Labour relations at GM Diesel conformed to the standard postwar pattern, particularly for its skilled workforce, composed mostly of male welders. While there was significant instability between 1971 and 1988, with seven rounds of layoffs, the unit's participation in the GM master agreement gave laid-off members access to jobs at other GM facilities in southern Ontario, for example, the Oshawa auto assembly plant. Despite significant conflict over the local's acceptance of overtime while members were being laid off, the relationship to GM was a pressure valve that made those disagreements containable. Still, some members picketed the plant to press for work-sharing solutions as a response to job losses. The relationship with GM and the perceived room to manoeuvre it afforded Electro-Motive workers later came to play an important role in the members' strategic thinking in the Caterpillar conflict. Overall, the locomotive plant was an important part of GM's Canadian operations but was less key to the company's profitability than its auto assembly plants.[42]

General Motors' approach to labour relations was markedly different from that used by the heavy equipment manufacturer that purchased the London locomotive plant in 2010. Caterpillar's corporate history and labour relations strategy can only be characterized as profoundly anti-union. As Jeremy Brecher writes, as "the world's largest manufacturer of earth-moving equipment," Caterpillar has also been "a center of class struggle all around the world."[43] In the early 1980s, in response to major losses, the company changed

in bargaining strategy and all but one local became chartered with the CAW. Russell, *Our Union*, 21.

40. Russell, *Our Union*, 29, 81, 84, 106.

41. The LAV production unit was renamed GM Defense and then, upon its sale to General Dynamics in 2003, General Dynamics Land Systems-Canada (GDLS-C). As of 2014, the London facility was still in operation. Russell, *Our Union*, 260; GDLS-C, "History," accessed 26 January 2018, http://www.gdlscanada.com/products/history.html.

42. Both the local and the national union were wedded to a policy of preserving the full-time job, even if it meant that some members had no work. Russell, *Our Union*, 124–125. The pickets revealed that different notions of solidarity were in direct conflict over this question.

43. Brecher, "Decline of Strikes," 75.

its corporate focus. Originally a manufacturer of farm equipment, Caterpillar embarked on a corporate restructuring that included major diversification of its operations, including the establishment in 1981 of Caterpillar Financial Services Corporation to lend money to those buying its equipment.[44] The company also abandoned its previous commitment to the postwar social contract with labour (including pattern bargaining in the farm implements sector) and began an aggressive strategy to break the power of its unions.[45]

The labour-management conflict fomented by this strategy came to a head in 1991, when UAW members at two of Caterpillar's Illinois plants struck against concessions. Five months into the strike, Caterpillar began the process of screening applications for replacement workers and sent letters to the strikers saying they would permanently lose their jobs if they did not return to work in one week's time.[46] UAW headquarters called an end to the strike to prevent these replacement workers from being hired and ordered members back to work with no resolution to the issues that had sent them to the picket lines.[47] By 1994, and following two years of intermittent work stoppages, the local was back on strike, this time for seventeen months, while Caterpillar again continued production with strikebreakers.[48] In the face of Caterpillar's continued operations and the strike's inability to affect the company's profits, the UAW office again ordered strikers back to work, telling them that they would return to work regardless of the results of a vote on the company's final offer – the same offer on the table at the beginning of the strike. Although workers had rejected that offer by nearly 80 per cent, it was but a symbolic expression of their anger.[49] War was also waged by other means. Between 1992 and 1998, the UAW filed nearly 1,000 charges of unfair labour practices with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), 440 of which went forward as complaints.[50] In the ensuing decisions, the NLRB found that the "pattern of unlawful conduct convinces us that, without proper restraint, Caterpillar is likely to persist in its attempts to interfere with employees' statutory rights."[51]

44. "Company Overview of Caterpillar Financial Services Corporation," *Bloomberg*, accessed 15 February 2018, http://www.bloomberg.com/research/stocks/private/snapshot.asp?privcapId=1565883.

45. Issac Cohen, "The Caterpillar Labor Dispute and the UAW, 1991–1998," *Labor Studies Journal* 27 (Winter 2003): 80–81.

46. Victor Devinatz, "Union Solidarity, Collective Struggle and the Caterpillar Labor Dispute, 1991–1998," *Science & Society* 74 (October 2010): 548.

47. Devinatz, "Union Solidarity," 548.

48. Cohen, "Caterpillar Labor Dispute," 84.

49. Devinatz, "Heroic Defeat," 4.

50. Cohen, "Caterpillar Labour Dispute," 89.

51. Brecher, "Decline of Strikes," 76.

Canadian workers also confronted Caterpillar in 1991 in the wake of the recently signed Canada-US Free Trade Agreement. In April of that year, Caterpillar announced by fax that it would be closing its Brampton, Ontario, tractor plant (then a mere six years old) and moving 350 jobs to North Carolina, a right-to-work state with the lowest unionization rate in the United States.[52] The company initially refused to negotiate a closure agreement with the union, offering severance at the legal minimum of one week per year of service and no pension plan for those near retirement. Buzz Hargrove, then assistant to the CAW's national president Bob White, called out this "arrogance on the part of the company that is unheard of today in union-management relations."[53] About 40 members of CAW Local 252 began a six-day occupation on 24 April that eventually involved 200 of the plant's 350 workers. It required intervention from then NDP Minister of Labour Bob Mackenzie to get Caterpillar to the table with the union, and even then, terms of the closure deal were hardly sufficient. As Gerald Caplan later put it in the *Toronto Star*, "callousness, cruelty, even genuine sadism characterize the way people are being laid off."[54]

Given Caterpillar's very visible anti-union posture, news that the company was interested in buying Electro-Motive from GM in early 2004 elicited vocal opposition from the CAW leadership. Hargrove, by then CAW national president, stated that he was "opposed to any sale to Caterpillar because of their record on labour-management relations."[55] GM was also talking with Greenbriar Equity Group, one of whose founders was former Chrysler vice-chairman Gerald Greenwald. Hargrove was "less critical" of Greenbriar's prospective ownership because of Greenwald's involvement: "We've had some disagreements with him going back to the '80s but we had respect for him and he respects the union."[56] In April 2005, Berkshire Partners and Greenbriar Equity Group purchased Electro-Motive Division from GM for $201 million and renamed it Electro-Motive Diesel (EMD).[57]

52. Barry Hirsch & David Macpherson, "Union Membership, Coverage, Density and Employment by State, 1991," *Union Membership and Coverage Database from the* CPS, accessed 26 January 2018, http://unionstats.gsu.edu/State%20U_1991.htm. In 1991, the unionization rate in North Carolina was 5.1 per cent.

53. Frank Calleja, "Caterpillar Workers Refuse to Budge from Plant," *Toronto Star*, 26 April 1991.

54. Calleja, "Caterpillar Workers"; Keith Damsell, "Caterpillar Firm On Move; Plant Will Close Despite Occupation, Management Says," *Globe and Mail*, 29 April 1991; Gerald Caplan, "Workers Get Shafted as Firms 'Restructure,'" *Toronto Star*, 2 February 1992.

55. Michael Ellis, "Caterpillar in Talks to Buy GM Unit-Union Official Says," *WardsAuto*, 25 May 2004.

56. Lee Hawkins Jr., "GM Holds Talks to Sell Illinois Locomotive Unit," *Wall Street Journal*, 31 May 2004.

57. "Greenbriar Equity Group and Berkshire Partners Complete Acquisition of Electro-Motive from General Motors," news release, 4 April 2005, http://greenbriarequity.com/upload/

Caterpillar was not deterred by this setback and continued to look for a way into the rail industry. Shortly after the EMD sale, Caterpillar bought Progress Rail Services (PRS), in 2006, for $800 million.[58] PRS, with reported annual sales of $1.2 billion and 4,800 employees worldwide, is in the service side of the rail industry.[59] With this purchase, Caterpillar was thus in a strong position to expand into locomotive manufacturing should the London plant ever be put up for sale by Greenbriar. Between 2005 and 2010, Greenbriar set about restructuring EMD for an eventual resale.[60]

As a private equity firm, Greenbriar's main interest was in reorganizing operations to maximize return on investment. According to the company, "together, EMD and Greenbriar successfully positioned the company for a future of innovation and service to the fast-changing global railroad and power products industries."[61] Concretely, this meant finding ways to boost profits in what Greenbriar characterized as "an under-managed, non-core business."[62] In early 2009, 280 workers were laid off; by the end of that year, EMD management had the remaining workers working an average of 20 per cent overtime rather than recalling idled employees – enough for 90 full-time jobs. This move allowed the company to make significant savings on pension contributions.[63]

In 2010, Caterpillar, through its subsidiary Progress Rail, continued its attempt to secure locomotive manufacturing. At this point it looked to Indiana. In April, the company began negotiations with the Muncie-Delaware County Chamber of Commerce and the Indiana Economic Development Corporation to establish a facility in the long-vacant Westinghouse factory in return for up to $11.1 million in subsidies from the state and local governments.[64] The Indiana Economic Development Corporation offered Progress Rail up to $3.5 million in performance-based tax credits and up to $1 million

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newspdfs/GM040505.pdf; Bob Tita, "Caterpillar Expected to Make Electro-Motive More Competitive," *Dow Jones Newswire*, 7 June 2010.

58. Doug Cameron & James Politic, "Caterpillar to Buy Progress Rail," *Financial Times*, 17 May 2006.

59. "Greenbriar Equity Group and Berkshire Partners."

60. Several interviewees expressed the view that Greenbriar's role was specifically to prepare EMD for resale to Caterpillar. Whether this is true or not, certainly Greenbriar's goal was to "fatten the calf" for resale to someone.

61. Greenbriar Equity Group, "Mining Our Industry Resources…: Electro-Motive Diesel, Inc.," n.d., accessed 1 March 2018, http://web.archive.org/web/20130929145631/http://www.greenbriarequity.com/casestudy2.html.

62. Greenbriar Equity Group, "Mining."

63. Norman De Bono, "Laid-Off Workers Protest Overtime Hours," *London Free Press*, 21 December 2009, http://www.lfpress.com/money/2009/12/19/12210571-sun.html.

64. "Off-Track in Middle town," *Economist*, 10 September 2011.

in training grants, along with up to $1 million to the city of Muncie for infrastructure improvements.[65] When advertising for a human resources manager for new Muncie facility, PRS stipulated that the successful candidate should have "experience with providing union-free culture and union avoidance."[66] At the same time, Caterpillar rekindled its interest in EMD.

In June 2010, Caterpillar announced its intention to buy EMD for $820 million. By August 2010 the transaction was complete.[67] Shortly after, in November 2010, Caterpillar opened a new locomotive plant in Muncie. CAW leaders and members experienced this confluence of events as a threat, but the local media soon framed it in ways that temporarily allayed local fears of a plant closure in London. Coverage of the new plant emphasized the distinct types of locomotives being built – transit locomotives in Indiana and freight locomotives in London – as well as the need to meet "Buy America" requirements in federally funded transit projects, rather than any desire to eliminate EMD.[68] In public, CAW Local 27 president Tim Carrie called this "positive news" and stressed the years of "knowledge and skill" built up in the London facility. However, Carrie did note that the potential threat from Muncie would have to be discussed at the bargaining table.[69] Practical barriers to a closure in the short run also seemed to exist. As one EMD worker said, "We thought there was another three years in it. A lot of us thought … yes, they had opened the plant in Muncie, but it [could] in no way, shape, or form meet the product demands that we had. … The roster was full, well yeah, there's orders out there and they'll never meet them in the next three years."[70]

Fears of a closure, however, soon returned. The collective agreement between CAW Local 27 and EMD was slated to expire in May 2011 but was extended until December while bargaining continued.[71] It was clear that the new employer was poised to take a very aggressive stance, building a fence around the property in the summer.[72] Bargaining was certainly hindered by Caterpillar's continued efforts to expand locomotive production in the US.

65. "Muncie Gets Caterpillar Locomotive Plant," *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*, 30 October 2010.

66. Ken Wightman, "Electro Motive Workers Locked Out," *Digital Journal*, 1 January 2012.

67. Caterpillar, "Progress Rail Services to Acquire Electro-Motive Diesel, Creating Global Locomotive Manufacturing and Rail Services Company," news release, 1 June 2010.

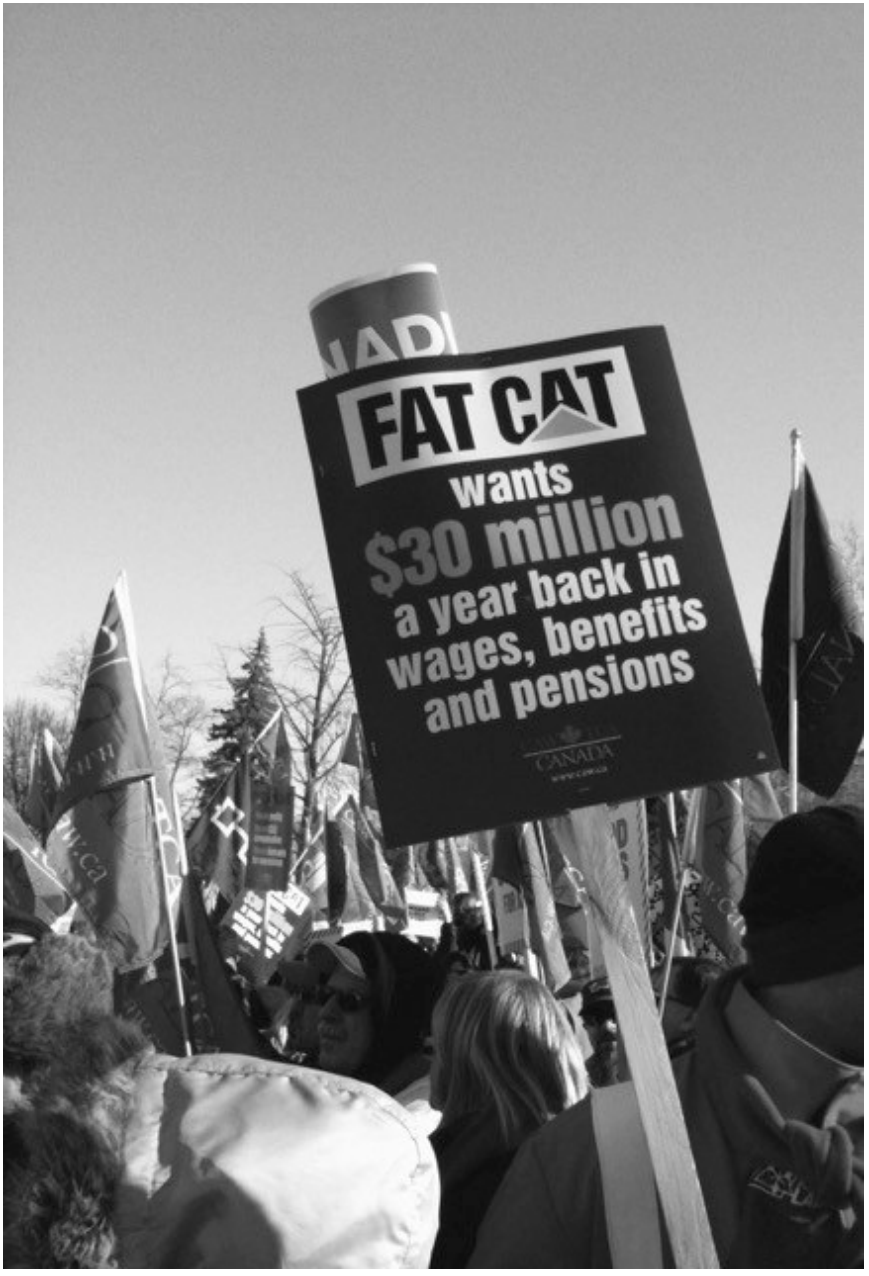
68. "Progress Rail Plant Completes First Locomotives," *Railway Gazette*, 9 November 2011.

69. Norman De Bono, "Electromotive Closing Fears Ease," *London Free Press*, 3 November 2010.

70. EMD worker, interview by the authors, 13 June 2012.

71. Norman De Bono, "Electro-Motive Contract Talks Extended," *London Free Press*, 20 May 2011, http://www.lfpress.com/news/london/2011/05/29/18209326.html.

72. Tony Van Alphen, "Caterpillar Union Fears Closure in London," *Toronto Star*, 9 August 2011.



Protest sign detailing the concessions demanded by Caterpillar.
Stephanie Ross.

Although EMD was winning lucrative contracts worth $10.8 billion to build freight locomotives in Abu Dhabi, Local 27 was concerned the London plant would receive none of this newly acquired work.[73] By August 2011, the union was expressing these concerns in public, outing the company's concessionary contract demands and capital improvements to the Muncie, Indiana, plant while it sat on those same improvements in London until a new contract was signed.[74] To make matters worse, the Muncie plant completed its first locomotives on 28 October 2011.[75]

The return to the bargaining table in November 2011 did not last long. The company made no alterations to its lengthy list of demands, which included a 50 per cent wage cut; elimination of the defined benefit pension plan, retiree benefits, and cost-of-living allowance; and a panoply of cuts to other benefits. The new contract would see workers' current $35 per hour wage cut to $16.50.[76] It was a final offer the union had to refuse. The CAW actively placed these events in their political context. Ken Lewenza, then the union's national president, wrote a letter to Prime Minister Harper decrying the federal Conservative government's passivity in the face of threats to Canadian manufacturing jobs and demanding that the Minister of Industry use powers under the Investment Canada Act to prevent job losses by foreign-owned multinationals.[77]

As Caterpillar moved to hire security guards, Local 27 members gathered on 30 December 2011 to hear from the union leadership and hold a strike vote. Lewenza told the media, "We are not looking for [a confrontation], but we will fight for our members. If Caterpillar is saying, 'To hell with the workers in Canada, the hell with Canada as a country, to hell with the CAW,' then quite frankly, we will obviously have a labour dispute."[78] The membership clearly agreed, voting 404 to 9 to strike if a deal was not reached by 31 December.[79] Rejecting the union's overtures for mediation, or at least a further extension of the bargaining deadline, the company locked out the workers on 1 January 2012.

73. "Etihad Awards Locomotive Supply Contract to EMD," *Khaleej Times*, 31 July 2011.

74. Van Alphen, "Caterpillar Union."

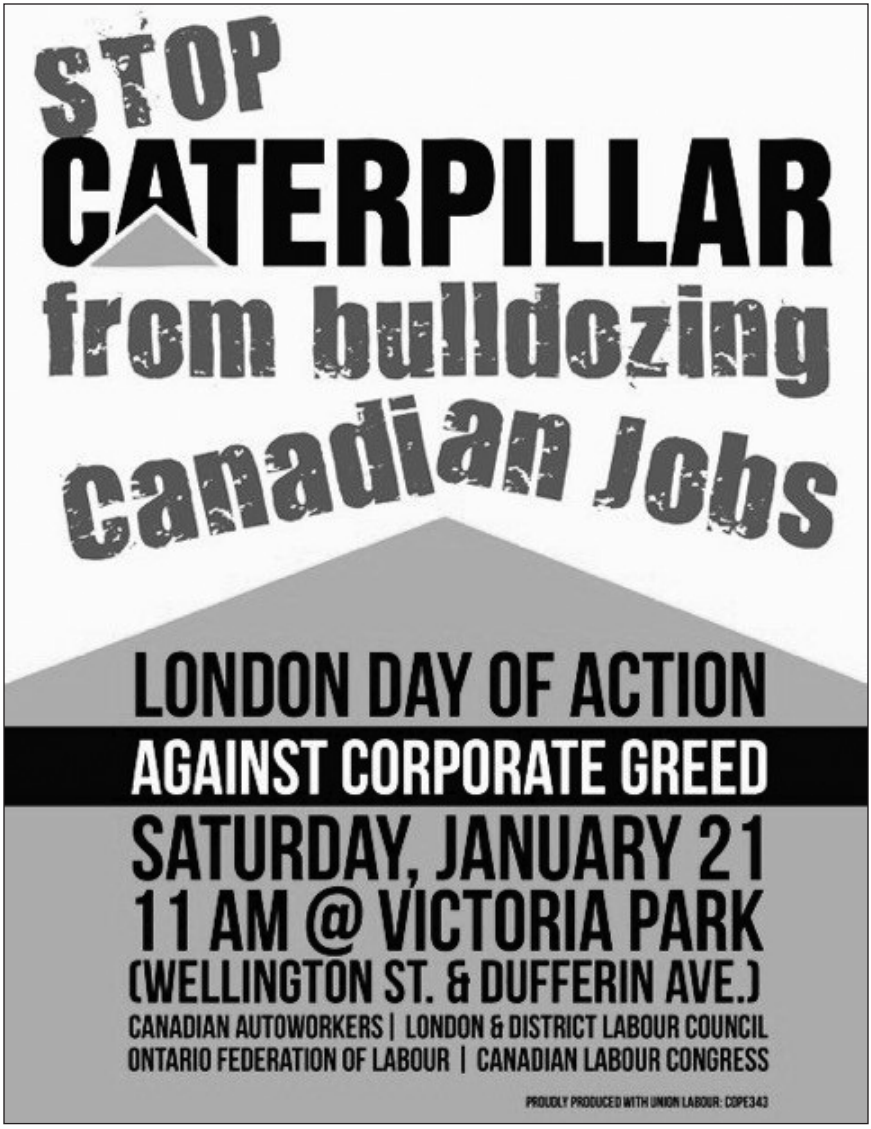
75. "Progress Rail Plant Completes First Locomotives," *Railway Gazette*, 9 November 2011.

76. CAW, "Concessions Demanded by Electromotive (Caterpillar)," unpublished document, 2011.

77. Ken Lewenza Sr. to Stephen Harper, "Re: The Future of EMD and the Investment Canada Act," letter, 21 December 2011.

78. Sean Meyer, "Electro-Motive Workers Gather for Strike Vote," *London Community News*, 28 December 2011.

79. Jonathon Brodie, "Electro-Motive Rejects Extension," *London Community News*, 30 December 2011.



Poster for London Day of Action against Corporate Greed, 21 January 2012.
Canadian Auto Workers.

The Union's Strategy

The union's strategy – first in bargaining and then in response to the lockout – was initially aimed at confronting an aggressive anti-union employer in a very tough round of bargaining. Local 27 approached the dispute with disciplined union solidarity in the hope of robbing the company of any legitimate pretext to paint the union as out of control. The consensus on the Local 27 composite executive was that Caterpillar hoped to provoke the union into using militant tactics that would give the company grounds for an injunction. The union's strategy was to prevent this from happening. Indeed, the union leadership preferred to be locked out, taking a strong stand against concessions but maintaining their willingness to bargain, to make the company the "bad guy."[80] Local 27's strategy also focused on community mobilization around the protection of these high-paying jobs in London, important in the context of accelerating deindustrialization in the previous four years. The union also believed community mobilization would put political pressure on governments to intervene. Although Harper's Conservative government was not sympathetic to workers, two of London's three federal ridings were represented by Conservative MPs, and at least one of them was politically vulnerable, having won his seat in May 2011 by a narrow margin.[81] The core of the local's strategy was thus to take the moral high ground.[82] Such a position would allow workers to leverage the power of respectability and law-abidingness in the face of an employer breaking its moral contract with the union and the community.

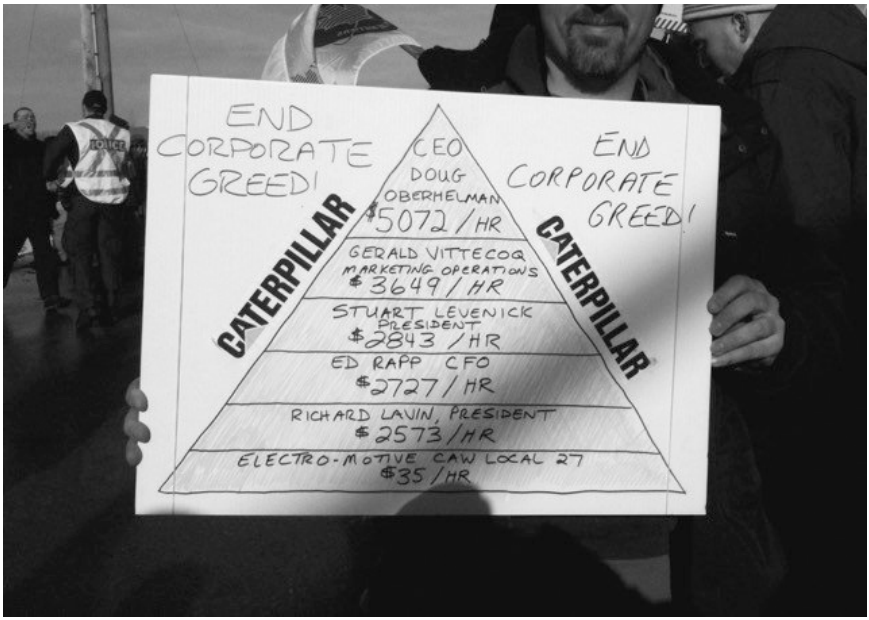
The bargaining round with EMD/Caterpillar seemed to provide the perfect context for community mobilization and brand attack. The conflict would come to a head during the Christmas holidays, an emotionally laden time for many that would increase the public relations problems for the employer. Although the 30 December vote was resoundingly in favour of a strike, the union maintained its willingness to bargain a "reasonable collective agreement" and sought to extend the strike/lockout deadline so as to continue negotiations.[83] Projections in October 2011 indicated that Caterpillar was on track to achieve record-breaking profits, later confirmed to be $4.9 billion – the highest in the company's 86-year history – making it easy to cast the workers

80. Local union leadership, interview by the authors, 11 April 2012.

81. The city of London has three urban ridings: London-Fanshawe, London North Centre, and London West. In 2011, these latter two ridings were represented by the Conservative Party of Canada. EMD was located in London-Fanshawe, which was held by New Democratic MP Irene Mathyssen. Neither London North Centre MP Susan Truppe nor London West MP Ed Holder actively opposed the closure, while Mathyssen was a vocal critic of EMD's actions.

82. This strategic orientation was very similar to the framing of mobilizations to defend manufacturing jobs in Windsor, Ontario in 2007. See Ross, "Social Unionism in Hard Times."

83. Brodie, "Electro-Motive."



Protest sign comparing the hourly rate of EMD workers and Caterpillar executives.
Stephanie Ross.

as the victims of uncontrolled corporate greed.[84] Adding to this favourable discursive context, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' annual report on CEO compensation was released on 3 January 2012, making a huge media splash with its demonstration of how the corporate elite had emerged from the 2008 recession not only unscathed but further enriched at the expense of working people.[85] The Occupy movement, which in the fall of 2011 had dramatically raised the issue of income inequality through a series of occupations of public space, also remained fresh in people's minds. People across Canada related to the EMD workers' plight and there was widespread revulsion at Caterpillar's demands across the country and across the border.[86]

84. Reuters, "Caterpillar Profit Climbs 44%," *Globe and Mail*, 24 October 2011, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-investor/caterpillar-profit-climbs-44/article4255771/; Stephen Greenhouse, "At Caterpillar, Pressing Labor while Business Booms," *New York Times*, 22 July 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/23/business/profitable-caterpillar-pushes-workers-for-steep-cuts.html.

85. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, "CEOs vs the 99%: No Contest When It Comes to Pay," news release, 3 January 2012, https://www.policyalternatives.ca/newsroom/news-releases/ceos-vs-99-no-contest-when-it-comes-pay.

86. Hank Daniszewski & John Miner, "Progress Rail Closing London Plant," *London Free Press*, 4 February 2012, http://www.lfpress.com/news/london/emd/2012/02/03/19333691.html.

Once the lockout was announced and picket lines established at the plant gates, attention quickly turned to the organization of a demonstration of community support. On 21 January 2012, a Day of Action against Corporate Greed was held in London's Victoria Park, called by the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL), the CAW, the London and District Labour Council, and the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC).[87] The event drew 15,000 people from across the province – a major event for London, which had not seen a mass protest against a plant closure since the Eaton-Rich factory was shuttered in 1971. A dozen labour councils sent buses and unionists to the protest from three Midwest industrial states (Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania). Occupy London was also important in this mobilization. Having been evicted from Victoria Park in November 2011, Occupy re-established its encampment at the EMD plant gates. After the rally, a smaller group of about 1,000 supporters bused or drove to the plant gates to picket.[88]

Alongside these developments, additional tactics materialized as part of a strategic corporate campaign designed to place economic and moral pressure on Caterpillar through its other commercial relationships. First, a consumer boycott of Caterpillar-branded products began to emerge, particularly those sold at Mark's Work Warehouse, and a London outlet of the chain eventually removed Caterpillar products from its shelves for a time.[89] Second, perhaps picking up on the support actions organized by some anarchist groups the week before, on 26 January 2012, the CAW National Office organized secondary pickets across the country at a dozen Toromont CAT outlets, the dealer in Canada for Caterpillar's heavy equipment.[90]

Third, the union began to place pressure on the company's ability to fill customer orders. On 25 January 2012, over 70 members of CAW Locals 27 and 88 – the latter representing workers at the General Motors CAMI plant

87. This rally of community support took place much earlier in the conflict than in the cases of the lockout of steelworkers in Hamilton by US Steel (three months in) and the Vale Inco strike in Sudbury (nine months in), likely because it was felt that broad mobilization had happened "too late" in those cases.

88. Liam Casey, "Thousands Back London Picketers; Caterpillar Unit Locked Out 425 Workers after Seeking Wage Cuts," *Toronto Star*, 22 January 2012.

89. CBC News, "Stores Pull CAT Boots to Support Electro-Motive Workers," *CBC.ca*, 5 February 2014, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/stores-pull-cat-boots-to-support-electro-motive-workers-1.1160800. The Facebook group Boycott CAT in Canada (https://www.facebook.com/groups/205461519551379/) still exists and contains information about these efforts, but has been largely inactive since 2013.

90. Both Common Cause and the Industrial Workers of the World organized pickets at Caterpillar rental locations in Toronto, London, Hamilton, and Peterborough the day before the London rally. Trevor Wilhelm, "CAW Launches Nation-Wide Pickets to Support Electro-Motive Workers," *Windsor Star*, 26 January 2012, http://blogs.windsorstar.com/news/caw-launches-nation-wide-pickets; Laurel Myers, "Pickets Set Up at Caterpillar in Wake of London Lock-Out," *NorthernLife.ca*, 26 January 2012, http://www.northernlife.ca/news/localnews/2012/01/26-caterpillar-lock-out-sudbury.aspx.

– blockaded an EMD locomotive as it crossed into nearby Ingersoll. The locomotive, one of seven built before the lockout and destined for Brazil, had been in Stratford, Ontario, for testing and was being sent via the Ontario Southern Railway (OSR) to Tillsonburg for painting. As the testing and painting work normally would have been performed at EMD, and as the "custom" during bargaining was for the company to leave locomotives in the plant, the moving of the locomotive was especially provocative. EMD plant chair Bob Scott indicated that "our plans are to hold up the locomotive as long as possible until we are told to move."[91] Community supporters, including Ingersoll's mayor and OSR's president Jeff Willsie, came out to the blockade, while Caterpillar – unsuccessfully – sought an injunction against this and further blockades.[92] Despite the company's legal loss, the Ingersoll blockade was stopped on 1 February 2012 at the direction of Local 27 in the hopes that the company would return to the table.[93] However, the union contemplated extending the blockade tactic in other ways. On 1 February, the CAW announced a "hot cargo edict," calling on its members at CN, CP, and VIA Rail not to handle any new EMD engines while workers were locked out.[94]

However, on 3 February, the strategic context of union action fundamentally changed when Caterpillar announced its intention to close the EMD facility in London.[95] Once the closure was announced, the campaign's focus quickly turned from bargaining or even saving the plant to negotiating a closure agreement. Fearing a repeat of Caterpillar's attempt to close its Brampton plant in 1991 by paying only the legal minimum in severance, Lewenza and Carrie threatened a plant occupation. Carrie indicated that if the company wanted to access the millions of dollars' worth of unfinished locomotives still in the plant, it would have to "atone" and agree to a "fair" severance and closure agreement (including an employer-funded action centre).[96] This direct threat of militancy by the union leadership was supplemented by further attempts to convince Caterpillar's heavy equipment customers – both private businesses

91. Hank Daniszewski, "Protesters Block Locomotive," *London Free Press*, 1 February 2012, http://www.lfpress.com/news/london/emd/2012/01/25/19291636.html.

92. Heather Rivers, "Ingersoll Train Protest Continues; OSR President Says Lockout Is 'Dirty Pool,'" *Woodstock Sentinel Review*, 29 January 2012, http://www.woodstocksentinelreview.com/2012/01/29/osr-president-says-lockout-is-dirty-pool.

93. QMI Agency, "Union Stops Locomotive Blockade," *Norwich Gazette,* 1 February 2012, http://www.norwichgazette.com/2012/02/01/union-stops-locomotive-blockade-3.

94. Norman De Bono, "CAW Targets 'Hot Cargo,'" *London Free Press*, 1 February 2012, http://www.lfpress.com/news/london/emd/2012/01/13/19242781.html.

95. Ferguson, Benzie & Talaga, "Caterpillar Closes Electro-Motive Plant."

96. CBC News, "CAW Threatens Electro-Motive Plant Occupation," *CBC.ca*, 6 February 2012, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/caw-threatens-electro-motive-plant-occupation-1.1207880; Norman De Bono, "'They Have to Atone,'" *London Free Press*, 6 February 2012, http://www.lfpress.com/news/london/emd/2012/02/06/19343661.html.

and municipalities – to cancel their contracts in support of the London workers. Motions to that effect were moved by councillors in Hamilton and Ingersoll, but both failed to pass.[97] The union made further appeals to the Harper government, sending two more letters to federal ministers in February appealing for government intervention, but these went unanswered.[98]

On 23 February, EMD workers were presented with a closure agreement, which they ratified with 95 per cent in favour. The deal provided three weeks' pay for each year unionized workers had been on the job; ratification bonuses of $1,500 and limited company-paid healthcare benefits; complete funding of employees' pension trust; and $350,000 to fund the settlement of all grievances and establish an adjustment program.[99] Perhaps most importantly, the closure agreement committed the union to "cease any picketing, pamphleting, leafleting, posting of signs or other activity" and to agree that "there shall be no boycott related to the operations or products of the Company or its associated or affiliated corporations."[100] In other words, the closure agreement was contingent upon the union leadership demobilizing not only the picket lines but also the community allies leading the boycott initiatives.

Taking Stock of Union Strategy

THE UNION'S STRATEGIC CHOICES have been the subject of much analysis and critical commentary. Several elements of this struggle – the extreme behaviour of a very profitable company, the effective mobilization of public sympathy and support in a difficult economic climate, and the unwavering unity of the bargaining unit under incredible pressure – are clearly important ingredients of workers' success in such conflicts. However, despite such

97. Hamilton City Council Minutes, 7 March 2012, http://www2.hamilton.ca/NR/rdonlyres/A4217231-FEB2-4C56-B8F0-91D94CA3CB5C/0/Mar07EDRMS_n278741_v1_006_Minutes__March_7__2012.pdf, 11; Town of Ingersoll, Council Meeting Minutes, 12 March 2012, http://www.ingersoll.ca/meeting-archives/2012/Minutes/12_03_2012_REG.pdf, 8.

98. Ken Lewenza to Christian Paradis, Minister of Industry, "Re: Caterpillar's Closure of London Facility and Investment Canada Act," letter, 9 February 2012; Ken Lewenza to Ed Fast, Minister of International Trade, "Re: Trade Policy Response to Caterpillar's Closure of London Facility," letter, 21 February 2012. The likelihood of a positive response from Harper's ministers was almost nil, given the Conservative government's anti-union approach to industrial relations. See Andrew Stevens & Doug Nesbitt, "An Era of Wildcats and Sick-outs in Canada? The Continued Decline of Industrial Pluralism and the Case of Air Canada," *Labor Studies Journal* 39 (April 2014): 118–139.

99. Canadian Press, "Electro-Motive Workers Ratify Closeout Deal," *CTV News Kitchener*, 23 February 2012, http://kitchener.ctvnews.ca/electro-motive-workers-ratify-closeout-deal-1.772504.

100. Closure Agreement between Electro-Motive Canada Co. and National Automobile, Aerospace, Transportation and General Workers Union of Canada (CAW-Canada) and Its Local 27, 23 February 2012, http://www.caw.ca/assets/images/EMC_RATIFICATION_(2).pdf, accessed 26 January 2018.

favourable elements, the union was unable to generate sufficient economic and political leverage to stop the plant's closure. At best, the union used its capacity for economic disruption to produce a better closure agreement and thus a means for union members to cope with the loss of their jobs. This outcome leads us to ask two questions: First, could the adopted strategies have produced a different outcome had they been better implemented? Second, would other strategies, not adopted, have produced a different outcome? Answering these questions requires us to think carefully about the economic and political conditions of particular struggles, of certain employer vulnerabilities and attitudes, and of the specific sources of workers' power rather than to rely on generalizations about where workers' power writ large "really" lies.

On the first question, several of the union's strategies were very effectively applied. The strategy of moral isolation of the company was undoubtedly successful. Public revulsion at Caterpillar was widespread both in London and across Canada. The success of the CAW's public communications strategy was helped by several key variables. First, Caterpillar public relations representatives made no comments to the media for the duration of the lockout. They essentially ceded public debate on the lockout and closure to the union and did nothing to counter the union's framing of the conflict.[101] Second, in contrast, the union – principally Local 27 – was ready to engage the media and community over events at EMD. Third, and perhaps most crucially, the community was receptive to the union's message.

The community's surprising receptivity to the union merits further examination. London has historically tended to vote centre-right and might be expected to be unsympathetic to industrial workers earning $35 an hour during a global recession. Members reflecting on the union's strategy pointed to "the empathy we were getting from the public" as one of their "proudest moments. … Somebody would drop by that probably didn't have extra money [and] would throw a twenty out or a box of coffee or stuff like that."[102] Another union member noted how the most unlikely people became supporters: "a dedicated conservative that's a relative of mine who was the most anti-union … for a long time, owned a … unionized business [and] he absolutely despised [the union] … and even he couldn't believe how well we handled it and was actually on our side."[103] There was also a common belief among union members that maintaining community support depended on the union's disciplined strategy of refusing militancy, of "handling it well."

However, despite these successful elements, the union could not generate much traction vis-à-vis the company. Caterpillar's silence in the media

101. Sian Griffiths, "Caterpillar Feels Force of Canada's Anger as It Closes Country's Last Train Plant," *Guardian*, 15 February 2012, https://www.theguardian.com/business/2012/feb/15/caterpillar-canada-anger-emd-rail-factory.

102. Union member, interview by the authors, 13 June 2012.

103. Union member, interview by the authors, 13 June 2012.

implies it had little interest in maintaining a positive image among the broader Canadian public. This leads us to consider a third related element in the union's strategy: that of exerting indirect economic pressure to get the company back to the bargaining table. The consumer boycott, the secondary pickets at Toromont, the blockade, and the attempts to interrupt relationships with Caterpillar's public and private sector customers were the beginnings of a strategic corporate campaign that might have exacted economic damage on Caterpillar had these tactics been sustained and more fully realized. Indeed, the specific inclusion of boycott activities in the closure agreement indicates the company had concerns about the impact of such tactics if they were to take off.

However, Caterpillar's business model placed limits on the effectiveness of a campaign of economic disruption based on a boycott by individual consumers. The fact that Caterpillar sells primarily to other corporations or public institutions (like municipalities) rather than to individuals insulates it from the impact of a typical consumer boycott or diffuse public discontent, since its primary customers are less likely to be convinced by moral appeals from unions and themselves must be subject to economic pressure.[104] As Friedman points out, the nature of the boycott target matters: "If, to take an extreme example, the prospective boycott target manufactures industrial equipment exclusively, there appears to be no obvious way that a consumer boycott can be used to influence the company's policies."[105] This applies to the EMD case: although Caterpillar's revenue stream from branded consumer products has been growing – with approximately $1.1 billion in worldwide retail sales in 2013, and twice that in 2014 – it was still just under 2 per cent of the company's total revenues of $55.6 billion in 2013.[106] Attempts to convince public sector purchasers to void their contracts might have borne more fruit had they been engaged sooner and more systematically.

The union also remained focused for too long on its power at the point of production. However, Caterpillar was clearly not economically vulnerable with respect to the EMD plant, being neither sufficiently interested in nor significantly economically dependent on production in that facility for its economic viability. Moreover, it is unclear whether Caterpillar ever intended to

104. For example, the companies developing the Athabasca tar sands in Alberta are among the largest consumers of Caterpillar products in Canada and themselves have fraught labour relations with their unionized employees.

105. Friedman, *Consumer Boycotts*, 44.

106. James B. Kelleher, "U.S. Manufacturers Refashion Themselves as 'Lifestyle Brands,'" *Reuters.com*, 3 November 2013, http://www.reuters.com/article/usa-manufacturers-lifestyle-brands-idUSL1N0IK22I20131103; "Cat® Licensing by the Numbers," Caterpillar, accessed 15 February 2018, http://www.cat.com/en_US/articles/customer-stories/merchandise/cat-licensing-by-the-numbers.html; "Caterpillar Reports Full-Year 2013 Results, including Record Operating Cash Flow," news release, 27 January 2014, http://s7d2.scene7.com/is/content/Caterpillar/C10085836.

run the EMD plant in the long run. Several members of the Local 27 executive believe that Caterpillar was interested primarily in EMD's intellectual property, namely, the unique design of the locomotive's traction motor technology, rather than in the facility itself or the skills of the workforce.[107] This – and the fact that the company was itself willing to interrupt production – means that production-halting strategies at one facility to make the "employer's pocketbook bleed" would not be enough.[108]

As discussed earlier, throughout the lead-up to the confrontation at EMD, Caterpillar was building capacity for locomotive production outside of London, in contexts favourable to employer dominance. On 1 February 2012, Indiana became the United States' 23rd right-to-work (RTW) state.[109] Right-wing state governments have long used RTW laws to attract capital investment. However, as Manzo argues, the implementation of RTW in Indiana did not immediately lead to markedly lower wages or higher employment levels in that state.[110] Instead, we can deduce from its willingness to forego a profitable investment that Caterpillar was concerned more with union avoidance in the long run than with paying lower wages per se.

So how can we explain the delay in expanding the scope and scale of the struggle to target economic activities that Caterpillar did care about? The union's strategic response was shaped by the divergent views that Electro-Motive workers and CAW leaders at various levels of the union had of the implications of the plant's purchase and the eventual lockout. The leaders of Local 27's composite executive, especially those from other bargaining units, were keenly aware of the challenges they faced when Caterpillar bought the locomotive plant. They, and the CAW national leadership, also had considerable experience with plant closure. In contrast, the leaders and members of the EMD bargaining unit and plant committee were blindsided. This was the first time that workers in the locomotive bargaining unit had engaged in a strike or lockout outside of the General Motors enterprise. This struggle required them, as workers at one plant, to face one of the most anti-union manufacturing employers in North America, which differs greatly from being one facility in a constellation of plants across Canada. Ironically, EMD's bargaining structure was scaling down at the very moment workers needed to generate power at a scale above the local level.

107. Union executive member, interview by the authors, 13 June 2012.

108. Joe Burns, *Reviving the Strike: How Working People Can Regain Power and Transform America* (Brooklyn, New York: Ig Publications, 2011), 17.

109. Monica Davey, "Indiana Governor Signs a Law Creating a 'Right to Work' State," *New York Times*, 1 February 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/02/us/indiana-becomes-right-to-work-state.html.

110. Frank Manzo, "Promises Unfulfilled: Right-to-Work's Early Economic Track Record in Indiana," *Labor Studies Journal* 40 (December 2015): 1–17.

Many workers reported shock at the lockout announcement. Some argued that the bargaining unit leadership had not taken the prospect of an immediate closure very seriously, rooted in the belief that the company "needed us to build locomotives." As one interviewee told us, "There were people in the [EMD bargaining] committee that still, even until Christmas and New Year's ... were fully expecting ... they wouldn't be locked out in December ... that there would be signing bonuses. ... There was just a suspension of reality ... because no one wants to believe that they are basically going to be thrown into such a cataclysmic fight, basically thrown over the cliff!"[111] Another interviewee admitted to having shared this overly optimistic view:

> I thought I would be back in. I really didn't think that ... like, the whole plant closure was more of a shock to me than anything else. Like everybody else we all had bills, we all have responsibilities, whether it be to ourselves or to our families, for them to turn around and call for plant closure, I was totally unprepared for that. ... [In hindsight,] speaking to some of the other brothers, I guarantee these people [at Caterpillar] sat around the big table, last year, if not five years ago, and they planned this out. It's systematic. This was far too fast. Far too quick.[112]

Other workers believed that the facility would close, but not immediately: one activist expected big concessions and three years of cuts or layoffs and *then* a closure.[113] However, local executive members who were not from the EMD unit (as well as EMD plant management) saw the writing on the wall well before the beginning of 2011 bargaining. Some were familiar with Caterpillar's long anti-union history and how the company had dramatically weakened the UAW in Illinois. It was later revealed that Caterpillar was planning the tear-down of the plant a year prior to closure.[114] However, the view that Caterpillar did not intend to run the plant did not have a full airing among the membership, leaving some local leaders to wonder whether they should have prepared the membership better for what was coming. Whether that could have changed the ultimate outcome is hard to know, but it may have led to a different kind of campaign to generate economic pressure on Caterpillar.

The role of the community mobilization in the union's strategic thinking is also contradictory: on the one hand, the union saw the community as an essential reservoir of additional power; on the other hand, fear of the community's reactions to more militant tactics served to make the union's strategy more cautious. Both media accounts and interviews with workers reveal the caution that the community mobilization strategy imposed on the union's strategy. As CAW Local 444 president Rick Laporte said about the secondary pickets at Toromont in Windsor, "We're not here to disrupt anything or cause

111. EMD worker, interview by the authors, 16 August 2012.

112. EMD worker, interview by the authors, 13 June 2012.

113. Union activist, interview by the authors, 13 June 2012.

114. Union executive members, interviews by the authors, 13 June 2012.

problems."[115] Similarly, EMD plant chair Bob Scott framed the agreement to end the Ingersoll blockade in this way: "The last thing we want to do is disrupt service and lose the customer. ... We're hoping to get back to the table and when the dust is settled, we're hoping the customers are still there."[116] Whether a correct read of the community's attitudes or not, the union's assumptions prevented it from exploring whether the community would have participated in a more active campaign of disruption to preserve local high-wage jobs.

On the second question, of the path not taken, much has been claimed, especially about the failure to initiate a plant occupation. Several left commentators believe this instance was ripe for a more daring intervention and see the failure to fight the closure itself as a lost opportunity to revitalize the labour movement. For them, a plant occupation should have been undertaken either for symbolic political reasons or to run the plant under workers' control. According to former CAW Education staffer Herman Rosenfeld, a plant occupation could have politicized the public about the fundamental unfairness of the economic and political structures that enable the destruction of valuable capital investment, skills, and local economic viability. "A plant occupation, rather than 'turning people off' could have galvanized already-existing concerns of working people across the province and continent. It could have created an opening to call for state intervention – in the form of nationalizing EMD – as part of a larger project of building Canadian capacity to manufacture heavy transportation equipment, through the public sector."[117] Even though the state would certainly have stepped in to protect private property, Rosenfeld argues, such a move could have further delegitimized corporate-led government and potentially develop working-class capacities to make different kinds of demands.

Another version of the occupation strategy – occupying for production – has circulated on the Canadian left since filmmaker activists Naomi Klein and Avi Lewis made their 2005 documentary *The Take*, about the recovered factories movement in Argentina, and gained further purchase in the wake of a December 2008 workers' takeover of Republic Windows and Doors in Chicago. The six-day sit-in at Republic aimed at securing severance and temporary healthcare benefits for displaced workers. Although a buyer came forward to run the plant in 2009, a second worker occupation broke out in February 2012 – the same month that Caterpillar closed EMD – as that company also

115. CBC News, "Local 444 Pickets for Locked-Out Electro-Motive Workers," *CBC.ca*, 26 January 2012, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/local-444-pickets-for-locked-out-electro-motive-workers-1.1298558.

116. Jonathon Brodie, "EMC and CAW Face Off in Court over Blockade," *London Community News*, 1 February 2012, http://www.londoncommunitynews.com/news-story/1356748-emc-and-caw-face-off-in-court-over-blockade.

117. Herman Rosenfeld, "The Electro-Motive Lockout and Non-Occupation: What Did We Lose? What Can We Learn?" *Alternate Routes* 24 (2013): 225–226.

declared it was shuttering the factory. That second occupation led to the establishment of New Era Windows, a union-/worker-run cooperative making replacement windows.[118] Given EMD's capital-intensive nature (making it very expensive) and market position as a supplier of products to other capitalists, and the lack of politically supportive governments at the provincial and federal levels, worker ownership in this case was never a real possibility.

It is also hard to know whether a plant occupation would have shifted the public debate over plant closures or corporate power more generally. As one interviewee put it, "I've seen wildcat strikes and have been part of occupations in the past. … I know what the benefits are and how it does bring things to attention. Things that people would rather turn their backs and not pay attention to have to be addressed. So yes, it could have done something."[119] However, the EMD workers we interviewed emphasized the fragility of support from the London community and believed that ramping up militancy would not have produced enough material gains to make the possible loss of community support worthwhile. One interviewee said simply, "If we were to occupy the plant I think … we would have lost some of that support."[120] Another expressed skepticism about the usefulness of such a strategy in the face of the forces arrayed against them and the unlikelihood of moving key power holders:

> Could there have been the possibility of overtaking the plant? For me, what good would it have done? … Powers that were beyond our expectations … were pulling the strings and we were just going along for the ride. … Things never got ugly and everyone handled themselves professionally … and the general public were on our side, our local politicians were on our side … but when I look at the federal government, in particular Stephen Harper, finding it more important to go to China to work on the free trade agreement with the Chinese and Canada. That was more important.[121]

These responses reflect in part the changed subjectivities of workers, whose expectations of what can be achieved through collective action have been lowered over the past twenty years. Compare the above with Gerry Caplan's characterization of the attitudes of workers involved in the occupation of the Caterpillar plant in Brampton, Ontario, in 1991:

118. Alejandra Cancino, "Window Factory Sit-In Ends with 90-Day Reprieve for Workers," *Chicago Tribune*, 24 February 2012, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-02-24/business/chi-window-factory-sitin-ends-with-90day-reprieve-for-workers-20120224_1_republic-windows-doors-window-factory-republic-workers; Alexia Elejalde-Ruiz, "Republic Windows Workers Who Staged 2008 Sit-In to Get Final Payment," *Chicago Tribune*, 20 January 2016, http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-republic-windows-workers-win-0121-biz-20160120-story.html.

119. EMD worker, interview by the authors, 13 June 2012.

120. EMD worker, interview by the authors, 13 June 2012.

121. EMD worker, interview by the authors, 13 June 2012.

What happened was that Cat's Brampton workers wouldn't take their fate lying down. After all, weren't they members of the powerful CAW? Wasn't Ontario now governed by the New Democratic Party, the workers' own party? Furious and bitter, they refused to go like lambs to their own slaughter. Cheered on by their mates, about 40 of the workers took over the plant in a clearly illegal, but highly effective, occupation and work stoppage.[122]

Thirty years of neoliberalism facilitating the global mobility of capital, of mounting manufacturing job losses, and of pursuing mitigating strategies rather than fighting for gains have had a narrowing effect on workers' expectations of militant action. Even where plant occupations have been used, the CAW's focus has remained limited to securing severance pay and closure agreements rather than the continuation of employment.[123] This strategy has had a cumulative conservatizing effect over time – as others in the UK have pointed out with respect to the struggle for redundancy pay – as it accepts the employer's right to close viable plants.[124] Both union leaders and members have a diminished sense of what can be achieved in the face of what seems like uncontestable corporate power. As June Corman, Norene Pupo, and Ann Duffy have shown in their research on plant closures in Welland, Ontario, union leaders' talk is full of "expressions of their relative powerlessness" in which they can do little more than "gaze upwards" at those who have real power.[125]

However, even if greater militancy is needed in a struggle against a corporate foe like Caterpillar, the question remains: What *kind* of militancy and directed at *which targets*? If militancy is narrowly understood as a strike or a plant occupation, then "more militancy" would likely not have produced a better outcome for EMD workers themselves. However, a more effective campaign of economic disruption focusing on secondary targets could certainly have been possible, but would have had to move beyond the confines of the EMD labour-management relationship and the London, Ontario, community and deploy a much clearer understanding of which secondary targets could really put pressure on Caterpillar's bottom line.

122. Caplan, "Workers Get Shafted."

123. Two exceptions to this trend are the PC World occupation in Scarborough, Ontario, in 1997 and the Alcan (now Rio Tinto) plant in Jonquiere, Québec, in 2004.

124. Hugo Levie, Denis Gregory & Claire Callender, "Redundancy Pay: Trick or Treat," in Hugo Levie, Denis Gregory & Nick Lorentzen, eds., *Fighting Closures: De-industrialization and the Trade Unions 1979–1983* (Nottingham: Spokesman, 1984), 193–208.

125. June Corman, Norene Pupo & Ann Duffy, "Overlooking the Workers: Community Leaders' Perspectives on Plant Closures and Economic Recession," in Luis Aguiar & Christopher J. Schneider, eds., *Researching amongst Elites: Challenges and Opportunities in Studying Up* (London: Routledge, 2012), 122, 137.

Conclusions

The Electro-Motive closure occurred within the context of the most grievous job losses that London, Ontario, had experienced in almost seven decades. The city had faced the loss of major factories before, but never on this scale at one time. London could also no longer hope that the service sector would absorb displaced manufacturing workers. Local 27 had dealt with major plant closures in the past, but by 2012 the CAW was confronting plant closures on an unprecedented scale.

Despite this context, the union mobilized significant community support, a reflection of anger over the loss not only of the locomotive plant but also of overall prosperity in the city. Moreover, while a mass movement against plant closures did not emerge, London's local electoral landscape did shift to the left. While the CAW's (and now Unifor's) relationship with the NDP remains fraught, London-area NDP politicians were far more vocal in their support of Electro-Motive workers than their Liberal and Conservative counterparts. The Conservatives, who held two of London's three federal ridings, were either silent or fatalistic about the closure's inevitability.[126] This no doubt contributed to the election of an NDP member of provincial parliament in a 2013 by-election in London West, a riding in which the NDP had never placed better than third. Thus, even in recessionary times, unions can clearly muster public support when facing a major plant closure, can at least build the elements of an effective strategy to resist global corporations, and can shift the political landscape and thus potentially the policy framework for industrial activity.

However, thus far, no policy change with respect to either plant closures or controls on foreign investment has been forthcoming, at either level of government, despite the replacement of the Harper Conservatives with the Trudeau Liberals in October 2015. In part, this speaks to unions' difficulty in having real political influence with neoliberal governments, especially when there are no viable non-neoliberal electoral alternatives.[127] More importantly, Caterpillar's business model, global reach, diversified holdings, and clear determination to dominate the employment relationship meant that many parts of the CAW's usual repertoire of responses to hard bargaining would not work. This is not an issue of the presence or absence of militancy per se, but rather of the *target* and *scale* of those efforts.

First, the union's attempt to exercise leverage outside the employment relationship by supporting a boycott of Caterpillar could have been more effective

126. Griffiths, "Caterpillar Feels Force."

127. The important question of the CAW's shifting political orientation and strategy, and its movement since 1999 away from the NDP toward strategic voting and a pragmatic alliance with Liberal provincial and federal governments, is beyond the scope of this paper. However, for some analysis on this question, see Larry Savage, "Organized Labour and the Politics of Strategic Voting," in Stephanie Ross and Larry Savage, eds., *Rethinking the Politics of Labour in Canada* (Halifax: Fernwood, 2012), 75–87.

with a better understanding and systematic targeting of the company's most powerful consumers, namely, corporate or institutional buyers. However, a boycott strategy premised on the buying power of consumers from the general public could not be effective in the case of a company that makes inputs for other capitalists. The EMD case thus shows that unions need to base their community mobilization strategies on more nuanced understandings of the specificity of corporate structures, practices, and forms of power. While all corporations pursue profit, their means of doing so, their concrete forms of power and vulnerability, are not uniform. Union responses thus cannot be uniform.

Second, the scale of the union's strategic responses must also be rethought. As Herman Rosenfeld put it, while the union "refused to accept [Caterpillar's] outrageous demands and waged a locally-based campaign of resistance, on terms that traditionally would have meant something powerful … in the current era, [it] turned out to mean very little."[128] While the Canadian labour movement has typically focused on local and national campaigns to resist international capital, the EMD case shows that finding ways to wage effective labour struggles above the local or subnational scale in concrete rather than symbolic ways is an urgent task.

Finally, while an occupation at EMD might have had a limited impact on its own, a wider campaign of economic disruption could have borne fruit. Indeed, the reluctance of local leadership to engage in disruption in the face of an employer only too willing to disrupt the lives of its employees was a real limiting factor that prevented the conflict from expanding beyond the plant. However, the EMD case shows us that "militancy" is not enough, because it can be put to such limited ends and it can be directed at the wrong targets. Instead, the use of militancy must be connected to a larger rethinking of the scale and scope, targets, and ultimate goals of union strategies.

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128. Rosenfeld, "Electro-Motive Lockout," 222–223.