

Thirteen

Library #M-35
Show # 510

WNET/Thirteen: 356 West 58th Street, New York, N.Y. 10019
Transcripts: Bill Moyers' Journal, Box 900, New York, N.Y. 10019
Press contact: Sara Reitz (212) 560-2039

Bill Moyers' Journal

"The Detroit Model"

Executive Producer JOAN KONNER
Executive Editor BILL MOYERS
Producer ALAN LEVIN

Funding for this program is provided by this station and other Public Television Stations and by grants from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Ford Foundation, and Weyerhaeuser Company.

WNET/Thirteen

PBS Air Date: April 3, 1980

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

COPYRIGHT © 1980 BY EDUCATIONAL BROADCASTING CORPORATION. THIS TRANSCRIPT MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED IN WHOLE OR IN PART BY MIMEOGRAPH OR ANY OTHER MEANS. WITHOUT PERMISSION.

TRANSCRIPT CHARGES:

One to ten copies, \$2.00 each; additional copies, \$1.00 each. Be sure to indicate air date and subject or participants. Send order with payment to Bill Moyers' Journal, Box 900, New York, N.Y. 10019. All orders must be prepaid. Make checks payable to Bill Moyers' Journal. PLEASE DO NOT SEND CASH OR STAMPS.

CANADIAN VIEWERS: Canadian checks are not acceptable due to excessive bank clearance charges. Please send U.S. funds. Thank you.

The Detroit Model

© Copyright 1980, Educational Broadcasting Corporation

[Tease: Detroit montage — gas stations, highways, auto wrecking yard, showrooms, auto signs, Lee Iacocca at Congressional hearing, unemployment lines, auto assembly line scenes, auto workers, traffic jams.]

YOUNG MAN: I live between a 12-block radius of Detroit all my life. It's the Motor City, is what it's called. It's for the car, man. So for me, I mean, I saved up my money and I got a beautiful car, but now it's just—I'm not going to be able to use it like I thought.

[Music]

VOICE: If our government lets the country continue to slide, the automobile's in serious trouble.

CAR SALESMAN: Cars are here to stay. It's not a luxury any more, it's now a necessity.

VOICE: I have faith in the nation, and I have faith in General Motors.

LEE IACocca [to Congress]: That means that every car sold in the U.S. in the third quarter by G.M., Ford and Chrysler lost \$500 a copy. Something, gentlemen, is wrong somewhere.

UNEMPLOYED WOMAN: I'm gonna lose my car. Lose our car, lose our home, lose everything.

AUTO WORKER: The government's gonna spend billions of dollars just to support us on unemployment or support the company. So why don't they just support the company and keep us in work?

AUTO WORKER: I'm gonna live, I'm gonna survive, I'm gonna support my family, regardless of what goes.

2nd AUTO WORKER: Could we get a voice? Is there some way that we could stage a national movement on our opinion?

MOYERS [voice-over]: We Americans love our cars. And we prize the system that produces them. But that system is having problems, and a lot of people think that to move ahead, we'll need a new economic model, a model that all of us can help to design. I'm Bill Moyers.

[Bill Moyers' Journal opening]

[Interior, automobile]

MOYERS [driving]: Yes, the car is in trouble. Which means Detroit is in trouble. Which means a lot more pressure on our whole economy. But how the Motor City is managing could be instructive. That's what this hour is all about: the Detroit Model, and what it might represent for the future. We're focusing on the car, but mainly as a metaphor. What we're really talking about is the way our economy is being redesigned, more by events than intent. The growing mix of public and private enterprise is a fact of life in America today. Everyone knows how tax money now helps all the major areas of the so-called 'private sector': steel, rails, construction, agriculture, shipping, auto. When Chrysler, the nation's tenth largest industrial firm, begged the federal government for help to stay in business, it was merely acknowledging what lots of folks have known all along — that free enterprise, in the classic sense, has long gone the way of the Model T.

[Old film footage of the original automobile assembly line]

MOYERS [voice-over]: Seventy-five years ago, you could argue it was free enterprise. Wide open competition did drive Henry Ford to devise the assembly line, and the dozens of companies he drove out of business couldn't go to the government for bail-outs. Ford and his generation believed that business, if left alone, would create an economic paradise. But for all the faith in capitalism, nobody could correct its built-in cycle of boom and bust.

[Montage of photo stills from the Depression era: labor conflicts, demonstrations]

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: The Great Depression of the 1930s threatened the future of the nation itself, and forever changed the ways of capitalism. The New Deal launched our mixed economy, and once the government went into the private sector as banker and employer of last resort, there was to be no turning back.

[Interior, present-day assembly line]

MOYERS: Now the economy's in crisis again. We see it in Detroit, and you hear a lot of talk out here about moving toward a new model. The need seems clearest when you listen to the men and women whose lives are 'on the line'.

AUTO WORKER: It's gonna get bad— it's gonna get worse before it gets better. I know I have trouble feeding my family right now.

2nd AUTO WORKER: Nobody buying cars no more, for the simple fact that, you know, the economy, the entire situation— it's a major crisis. The Japanese took over the car industry. If Ford doesn't do something to remodel their cars and their style, hey, they're gonna be just like Chrysler.

FEMALE AUTO WORKER: I would lose my house, my car, everything. What little bit of savings I got, it would be gone. I'm hoping to God that don't happen.

3rd AUTO WORKER: They let a lot of people already laid off, and any more get laid off, boy, it's gonna be, gonna be a crisis out there, boy. You know, you gonna— you know, people probably knocking each other in the head and carrying on, ripping each other off, you know, trying to live, man.

4th AUTO WORKER: I figure it's too much automation here, you know. That's why there aren't too many— that's why so many people are out on the street now, because they got machine doing everything, you know. They cut— they laid off 20 guys yesterday. Everybody used to come to Detroit— we'll all get a job in an auto factory. Now the people, even they don't have a job in an auto factory. You know. There's not very much to look forward to any more. A lot of people I know now are moving back down south. I was thinking about going back down south.

5th AUTO WORKER: Okay, my family's asking me, 'Hey, pop, how'd you like to go back to West Virginia where you come from?' I said, 'No way, no way.' I have it made here. This is my home now. I have relatives there. I'd go back and visit, but this is my home. And it's gonna continue to be my home. If I can help make it a better city by the products I put out, that's the name of the game. I can see where some jobs might be replaced by mechanical things sooner or later, but those darn mechanical things isn't gonna buy a car. It's gonna take a man producing these cars to buy that same product.

6th AUTO WORKER *[working]*: No man's a robot. You can only do so much well. Once you get past that quantity of work that he can do well, you've a sloppy piece of junk going down the line. And that's what's happening to the auto industry in Michigan.

7th AUTO WORKER: Well, I would imagine, if they want the quality in the cars, that they would have to cut the work on the people to where you have time to do these jobs. You know when they show you on TV the guy writing his name on there, I couldn't write my initials on the car, the car goes by so quick. You know what I mean? How could I write my name, you know? They want to make so much money, but yet they want to work us so hard. They've cut back so many men now, that men— we're doing a job and a half, each guy, you know what I mean? They've done cut back 400 and some guys, you know— that's a lot of people, you know. If they think the economy is bad now, what is it going to be like when all them people are all laid off. What are they gonna do? It seems like the crime and that would obviously go up, you know. It would darn near make a Christian turn bad. You know? You ain't got no money, and you got some kids, now you're talking serious stuff there, you know what I mean? You think about your kids, you know, and you almost couldn't blame anybody, you know what I mean?

JANET SIKES, auto worker *[voice-over]*: If you're on a motor line, it never ends. I mean, it's just one after another. It's just day after day, a monotonous routine to work. I don't know why I stay there, but it's something I'm going to stick with for the next 23 years or whatever it takes. I'm a lifer.

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: Janet Sykes went to the Chrysler assembly line right after graduating from high school.

[Interior, home basement with gymnasium equipment]

JANET SIKES *[exercising]*: I'm tired a lot of nights when I come home, but after I get started I feel invigorated, and I'm ready to go again. I don't have to go to bed thinking, you know, 'Is that all there is?' I lift weights down here so that if I have a day when I have to lift a manifold all day or something, it hurts, but it doesn't give me, you know, as rough of a problem. A lot of women just wouldn't do it. I don't like to be able to say 'I can't do that'. I can lift those boxes up, no problem at all. The guys at work get a big kick out of telling me, 'Come on, Janet, flex that muscle!' They're gonna throw it at me, and if that man thinks I'm capable of doin' it, I'm the type where I'm gonna show him 'buddy, I can'. I'd like to be able to say some day that I am something, instead of when somebody asks me 'What do you do?' 'I'm a factory rat'. 'Industrial rodent', they call 'em. *[Counting as she lifts weights]* One... two... three... four... five...

[Interior, car]

GEORGE SIKES *[driving]*: I'm glad the government finally decided to give Chrysler the help it needs.

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: Janet's husband, George Sykes.

SIKES: I think it's about time that the people in this country woke up to the fact that our country needs help. We've helped so many other people all our lives, and we don't help ourselves. And Chrysler should be just the beginning. We need help with our steel mills. We need help with our other auto industries, other factories and outlets. A lot of people have—probably have suffered the same anxieties that my wife and I have suffered in the last two or three years. If Chrysler was to fold, I would—I wouldn't know where to start.

[Interior, Sikes' home]

JANET SIKES: I don't want to lose my job. I mean, Chrysler is everything. It's the only thing I have, it's the only—I don't have any skills. Some day I'm gonna be an electrician. I passed the test that I had to take for this, which was finally offered to women. And it takes about 13 years to get on the program, to be in the process—someday I'll make it. Because some day I'm gonna be somebody.

GEORGE SIKES: Thirteen years seniority—

JANET SIKES: I mean, I don't relish the idea when my girlfriends say, 'What do you do?', you know, or I meet somebody, 'What do you do?' 'I work in a factory.' I find it quite embarrassing, you know. 'What do you do?' 'I grind hubs on oil—on water pumps.' You know, it's kind of—especially if you're at a wedding or a party or something. You know, you're all dressed up and they're looking at you, and, you know, 'I grind water pumps'. Well look at my hands, and I won't show 'em to you.

GEORGE SIKES: You have to be the kind of person that can put up with it. I'm going on 15 years there now, and I feel I'm at a point, a mid-point where I will more or less finish my time without too much problems as long as Chrysler stays in business. As for my wife, I feel that she has—she has a pretty good chance of staying with the company and not being replaced—as yet—by a machine.

JANET SIKES: I hope Chrysler keeps banging in there—We buy a Chrysler product so it'll keep banging in there, you know. We want it to stay alive. Lee Iacocca is my hero. He's gonna do it for Chrysler. No other man could. He's got the name, he made Fords, he'll make Chryslers. He'll be second, you watch. He's got the power, he's got the people. Several weeks I thought he was going to walk through our plant. I says to one of my supervisors, 'When he's gonna come through.' He told me it wasn't going to be on our shift. I said, 'Damn, I wanna shake his hand'. You know, a lot of people can feel the same type vibes I feel. Whether they do it or not, I don't know, but I would love to, you know, I would love to meet the man. We're gonna make it with Iacocca.

[Interior, Congressional hearings, featuring Lee Iacocca]

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: When the Chairman of Chrysler, Lee Iacocca, asked for federal help last fall, he was carrying the hopes of a workforce of 115,000 men and women. He was also carrying on an established corporate tradition. For all its criticism of big government, big business knows where its interests lie in a mixed economy. Tax breaks alone now save companies \$170 billion annually. Mr. Iacocca had plenty of precedents.

LEE IACOCCA *[testifying]*: We need help, and we need it soon. We have to come to the federal government. I

might say, I come with great reluctance. But I come in genuine need, to ask for a loan guarantee to support our efforts to try to restore Chrysler to profitability. We are breaking no new ground with our request. There are now outstanding — the number amazes me — federal loans and loan guarantees in the amount of \$409 billion. Loan guarantees have gone to steel companies in the past, to chemical companies, to shipbuilders, to railroads, to airlines, to farmers, and, yes, to small businesses. They don't call them 'bail-outs', but they are in fact the same kinds of loan guarantees sought by the Chrysler Corporation. Nor are we the first automobile manufacturer to ask for federal assistance. The fact is that where American Motors has received help we have received none, so I am here today to request federal assistance in keeping with a well-established precedent, set over many years for American industry in general and for an American car company in particular.

Sen. ADLAI STEVENSON: This plan is presented as though the only alternative were a Chrysler bankruptcy. We hear no debate about the alternative uses of \$1.5 billion. At issue should not be whether or not the government acts, but how to act intelligently. If Congress takes the easy way out, the course set could be irreversible. Once committed to the extent of \$1.5 billion, we will continue with more money to protect the old. Having bailed out one, it will be more difficult to refuse more. And there will be more.

IACOCCA: Maybe this is the tip of the iceberg. I don't know. I think we're first because we're the weakest link in the chain. Ford may not be too far behind. But that's a national problem. We can't cope with it. As a country — I can't cope with it as a manager — I don't know what to do. The drop is too severe, and I keep laying people off. We, last March, only expected to lose two to three hundred million dollars for the year, and now we're coming into the billions. You say, 'what happened?' The roof caved in. That's why we're here. So, I hope I'm responsive to you, because every day of my life people are asking me, 'But how can you be a free enterpriser so long?' Well, I think free enterprise, laissez-faire free enterprise died a while back.

Sen. WILLIAM PROXMIRE: The government is going to be in to your corporation when you come this way and ask for this kind of assistance. Now, doesn't this fly right in the face of what you've been preaching so eloquently for so long?

IACOCCA: It sure does. I've been a free enterpriser all my life. I come here with great reluctance. I'm between the rock and the hard place. I cannot save the company without some kind of guarantee from the federal government. I'm not gonna preach to you. You gentlemen know this better than I do, that we have much precedent. But I have to say to ya, at \$409 billion, don't stop now, men. Go to 410. For Chrysler.

MOYERS [voice-over]: Washington did come through with a billion and a half in loan guarantees, because saving Chrysler also meant saving Detroit, the nation's sixth largest city.

[Exterior, scenes of Detroit. Music, "Living for the City"]

MOYERS [voice-over]: These days, none of our big cities could exist without enormous federal aid. In our mixed economy, the government also plays a crucial role in maintaining urban America, the corporate marketplace. Detroit now gets one-half its annual budget from Washington. There are also other special considerations. Detroit is the home of the political powerful United Auto Workers, and the auto industry does provide about 5 percent of Black America's wages. Detroit and Chrysler together reveal just how linked today are cities and corporations, public and private institutions. This was brought home in another turbulent time, the late '60s, recalled for us by an official of the city, Joyce Garrett:

[Montage, photos of Detroit riots, 1967]

JOYCE GARRETT [voice-over]: For Detroiters, I think everybody remembers where he or she happened to be on Sunday, July 23rd, 1967, when this town began its most agonizing experience. It is very strange now to stand here and to know that I watched flames for three or four days that week in this area. I thought at the time that this must be the way people in London felt during the Blitz, and yet I think it is important to remember that the flames that people saw on television would not consume this town.

[Exterior, Detroit neighborhood]

GARRETT: Those flames kindled a different kind of spark in our city. They created such entities as 'New Detroit' and the cooperation of the corporate sector and community people, and established lines of communication which

probably never would have happened otherwise. It's a little easier now, after 12 years' perspective, with the growth of black political power in our town, and its expression in a way that says, 'We are now part of the action.'

[Interior, meeting of Detroit business leaders]

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: The action began in 1973 with the election of the first black mayor, Coleman Young. His administration is now 50 percent black, as is the city. And cooperation between blacks and whites has improved, so that Detroit has become a model.

WOMAN: Now what do we do?

COLEMAN YOUNG: We do what you always do, you start talking. *[Laughter]*

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: Coleman Young began in the ghetto, and his first job was on a Ford assembly line. He then became a union organizer, and eventually went into the Michigan legislature. Today, he is a White House favorite, and is credited with helping convince the president to support the Chrysler bail-out. Although the city is hard-pressed, he has approved \$3 million a year in tax concessions to Chrysler. Because the company's destiny and Detroit's are so intertwined, there's talk now of the mayor joining Douglas Fraser of the auto union on Chrysler's board of directors.

[Interior, Coleman Young's office]

YOUNG: I don't think it would affect Chrysler's direction too much. It's a superficial adjustment to public ownership. Now, if you want to talk about public ownership, let's talk about it very openly, and let's provide for it.

INTERVIEWER *[off camera]*: Do you foresee that coming some day in Detroit, the city participating more actively in production?

YOUNG: I think that, more than the city, the federal government. We compete—the American auto industry competes with automobile companies that are very directly subsidized by their governments. For instance, the Japanese automobile industry is in partnership with the Japanese government. And the same is true in France, in Great Britain, and in almost all of our competitor nations. I believe that in order to survive we have to agree that the government will have to become more and more of a partner with private enterprise. Now, I'm sure that that sounds like heresy, and some of the laissez faire people would raise hell, but it's very interesting that in order for Chrysler to survive it was necessary for the government to intervene.

[Interior, Ken Cockrel's office]

KEN COCKREL *[on the phone]*: Yeah. This is Councilman Ken Cockrel returning a call—

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: Ken Cockrel is a self-proclaimed socialist and an outspoken member of the City Council, who argues that when government helps failed industries, it should have a strong voice in their policies. We were filming when a local reporter called to ask if public ownership wouldn't lead to inefficiency and corruption.

KEN COCKREL *[talking on telephone]*: I don't operate on the presumption that there would be any more or less graft on the part of a governmental operation than there would be in what you call the private sector. I don't really understand what you're talking about. I mean, is there going to be more graft, ipso facto, because government is running something, than in General Motors. Is that what you're saying? *[pauses and listens]* Well, I don't think much of that proposition. Nothing personal, don't misunderstand me, but *[laughs]* I mean, where do you get off suggesting that automatically if a government is running something, be it what? The Tennessee Valley Authority? I mean, could government do a worse job than McDonnell-Douglas did in designing the DC-10? Could government do a worse job than the private sector did in Huntington, West Virginia, when the cooling tower cement wasn't permitted to dry and whole families were wiped out? Did government do a great job when the Lockheed C-58 Galaxy cost-overruns *[sic]* went into multi-million dollars? I go on and on and on. So, I mean, I don't understand the reasoning that implies that somehow government is intrinsically incapable of behaving with efficiency, whereas the so-called private sector, which has given us the Pinto that explodes on contact—I mean, you know, I don't buy that proposition at all. Government has the responsibility of doing what the private sector chooses not to do when they don't see the opportunity to milk any profit out of it, you know? They leave feeding the poor, the blind, the old, the disabled, the blacks and so forth in the cities for government to handle, and they run off to the suburbs and sell quiche.

[Exterior, Detroit — the Renaissance Center in downtown]

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: Cockrel may fault the private sector, but as the U.S. government came to Chrysler's rescue, so is business helping to rebuild downtown Detroit. But not without a hand from Washington — often up to 15 percent of costs. The effort is paying off. The Republican National Convention and the Montreux Jazz Festival are coming to town this summer, and in 1982 Detroit will host the Superbowl. The Detroit riverfront is beginning to flourish again. The downtown rescue effort began with the building of Renaissance Center, four office buildings and the world's tallest hotel. The man in charge of the project is Wayne Doran.

[Scenes of Detroit's downtown area]

WAYNE DORAN *[voice-over]*: People for the first time are recognizing the benefit of being in the central city. We had a lot of people who said they never thought that the city of Detroit could be turned around, and their predictions and their forecasts a few years back were of doom and gloom. Not only have we built the first four office towers and the hotel, but now we're adding — shows that there is strength in my ability here.

[Interior, Doran's office]

DORAN: We had experienced the riots in 1967, and many people didn't see any positive direction being taken for some years following that. They all started to believe that there in fact was no possibility for success, and when the business leaders stepped up to it with Renaissance Center and Henry Ford II accepting the responsibility to really lead that program through, there wasn't any belief that these people were serious, or that they had a meaningful program that would succeed. They didn't believe that the businessmen would really take off their coats and go to work and succeed in turning the city around.

[Interior, Ken Cockrel's office]

COCKREL: On the questions of the overall economic development strategy, the economic elite has been very much a part of a coalition. Indeed, our city has held up as the prototype. I mean, and our mayor is hailed nationally as the personification of the new partnership, if you will, that is essential for cities to be reborn, that must take place between the private and the public sector. And the question is not just whether or not such a partnership is good or bad, but what are the terms on which that partnership takes place. You see, if the partnership means simply socialism for the rich, that's one thing. And it seems to me, that if we in government, at all levels — the federal level, the state level and the local level — are going to be asked to use publicly generated resources to assist Chrysler in maintaining its existence as a corporate entity that is organized to produce for profit, then we're going to have to get some equitable interest in that. There needs to be public representation and there needs to be also public input that is designed to have Chrysler begin to address itself to reorienting its production.

[Exterior, Chrysler plant]

COCKREL *[voice-over]*: In other words, in my judgment, Chrysler is no longer a private corporation. It has to become, as a consequence of going to the federal government and asking for the loan guarantees, a quasi-public entity and there needs to be now infinitely more public representation, as well as worker representation, in the decisions of Chrysler as to what they will manufacture, how and where it will be marketed.

[Exterior, Dodge main plant]

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: Chrysler shut its famed Dodge main plant a few months ago, and the 20,000 jobs it once provided are probably gone forever. We have yet in this country to provide for collaboration before calamity. It's a failure that many argue has left us with a bankrupt rail system, steel mills that are obsolete, and a car industry no longer competitive.

[Interior, unemployment office — various scenes]

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: The jobless rate in Detroit is now about 14 percent, and a quarter of the nation's auto workers are unemployed. Benefits are generally twice the norm, but still hardly compensate.

VOICE: Okay, line 5, sir. One o'clock.

AUTO WORKER: It's gettin' harder and harder, like, you know? All the people out of work, plants is shuttin'

down. Fillin' stations shuttin' down. Gas is going up. Things are gonna be pretty bad, you know? Gonna do like the Wild West does, start packin' a gun, 'cause somebody gonna get on to somebody else, you know? They don't know who to get. Everybody got a little dime in his hand, somebody gonna try to get it. That's the way I feel about it.

2nd AUTO WORKER: It's a rough situation. I was never so tired of loafin' in all my life. I watch TV some, get some rest and drink coffee. In our country, and we're finished. The computers and everything else is taking over. Part of my job is maintaining the automation on some of the presses. It eliminates many, many people. Well, to see a machine doing your job, it's not good. I mean, myself, I'm not too much worried about myself. It's the generation that's comin' on. They're gettin' the first one every day.

INTERVIEWER [off-camera]: Do you have a family?

2nd AUTO WORKER: Yes.

INTERVIEWER [off-camera]: And what about them. How do you look at the future of your family?

2nd AUTO WORKER: Well, that's what I was just referring to, really. My children, the oldest ones are 19 and 21 years old. One of them just can't get a job no place. And the other, he's been working for about 9 months, but he's been laid off and transferred from one plant to the other. But I've got one, 17 in March, and it's hard to tell what it'll be like for him.

3rd AUTO WORKER: I felt really bad, you know. It really put a big dent in my life.

INTERVIEWER [off-camera]: How do you look at your future?

AUTO WORKER: I look at my future, that I'm gonna live every day that I'm out here, you know. I look at it everyday. Now, I try to not make no plans, 'cause I don't know they'll go through or not. But hopefully, they will, because I got one kid, you know, I'm about to get married, I'm gonna try to make it, you know. Trying to find me a job out here.

FEMALE AUTO WORKER: I get \$97 a week and in 'sub' [supplementary unemployment benefits paid by company] I get \$114, so about \$205 a week. I just wish I was back at work. It'd be— work can beat standing in this line. It's more tiring just standing here than being on the line working. At least you're doing something, you know. And a lot of people you see here, some of them get sick.

MALE AUTO WORKER: Well, there's no chance of me getting another job. It's just out here alone. It's just like me putting me outdoors. You's just out there, just kick you out. [unintelligible] can't explain that feeling, you know. It's hard to say. I leave out that same way, just like a come in — without a dime. It's 27 years. Just like I'm walking out of here. Now where am I goin'? I ain't got nothin' comin'. Out all that time. I don't tell 'em what I might do.

2nd AUTO WORKER: I ain't never seen Detroit look this bad. I mean I've seen some great days in Detroit. Detroit used to be a beautiful city, but it ain't the Motor City no more. It's just Detroit. I mean, they used to call it the Motor City, you know. And now they don't even call it the Motor City no more. They just call it Detroit. That's all they call it. People's out of work. This is the reason why there ain't nobody buying no car. 'Cause there ain't nobody working. you see it down here you know? Now if people's working. I could see them gettin' a car, but there ain't nobody workin', there ain't nobody going buy no car.

3rd AUTO WORKER: Personally I think that everybody better try to reeducate themselves, you know, have alternative routes to follow just in case. Hope to go back to school, get off into another type of training. A lot of people here in Detroit are employed by Chrysler, and if Chrysler goes under, Detroit is gonna be in trouble.

MOYERS [voice-over]: There are workers out here who know that while they need new skills to survive in the system, the system needs new economic answers, too. For trade unionists at the Wayne State University Labor School, their own situation becomes the lesson of the day.

[Interior, Wayne State University Labor School, classroom]

Prof. JIM JACOBS: Look what the Chrysler Corporation is doing. Now that they're closing Dodge Main, it's coming to the taxpayers, it's coming to workers and asking them for one billion, \$1.4 billion in tax guarantees. And I think we should watch real closely what goes on at the Detroit City Council in the next couple of weeks, 'cause in a sense, when the Chrysler Corporation starts to ask for such a big chunk of federal money, it ceases to become a

private corporation. It isn't. Even the UAW has a member of the board of directors now of Chrysler. Maybe the city of Detroit should have a member of the board of directors — or at least, the city of Detroit should give — should try to negotiate some kind of guarantee with Chrysler which says, 'Look, if you want this \$100 million or so new plant built, plus the tax concessions that we talked about last week around each one of the plants, then you gotta make an agreement, as long as you're borrowing money from the city of Detroit, you will not shut down a plant with over 500 workers anywhere in the city.

STUDENT: Why don't the unions push for management toward committing themselves to a certain number of years. being an employee would know that he has job security. If he — if the company is committed for 50 years or more, then you know you're not gonna put 20 years on a job and then you're out of a job all of a sudden.

Prof. JACOBS: Well, they'll probably say, 'Hey, look, we guarantee people jobs, they're not gonna work'. If I tell you you have a job for the next 20 years, are you gonna perform your job well?

STUDENT: Why not, 'cause I'm contented. I'm secure.

Prof. JACOBS: So, their concern then is that you're gonna be lazy. And as a result, you won't come into work. And if you won't come into work, we can't make anything. Rather, if I put fear over you, saying, 'If you don't come into work, we'll move the plant,' you'll come in more often. But, I think the question of taking the offensive — you're right, you have to take the offensive. For too long people have been mainly defending themselves, waiting, hoping it won't be this plant. Hoping that their jobs will be safe. And the answer is nobody's jobs are safe.

FEMALE STUDENT *[talking to off-camera interviewer]:* I found out about the Labor School through another fellow worker, which I had never heard of. And I felt that, being chief steward of so many people in the building, that it would be a great asset to me and to the people that I represented to get a better education as far as the union was concerned. And also, personally, where I would have to go into meetings, and I would have to speak, I'd have to give my point of view. And I never had a problem with that. I felt that it would strengthen me as far as talking to management and letting them know that I'm not dumb. I know just as much, if not more, than you do.

2nd STUDENT: When I came to the conclusion that it upsets management to have their workers educated to the point of knowing what's happening underneath of 'em, knowing what's happening in the offices and the undermining body of the corporation is, you know, that's when I found out that I had to get something, some kind of formal education.

2nd FEMALE STUDENT: How little the American working class knows about how the American system works. How little I knew before I came here, about how the American structure was in relation to no one caring about the working person. We're overly taxed, underpaid, and still the larger corporations and the government don't seem to be aware of how we're feeling, and how we're hurting.

[Interior, Richard Webster's home — various scenes]

MOYERS *[voice-over]:* Richard Webster is a graduate of the Labor School. He and his friend are on temporary layoff from their plant.

RICHARD WEBSTER: Well, the plant's slowing down production, and so as a result, we're off for two weeks, and I'm using this as an opportunity to be on home, to get some things done around the house, and it looks like that we're gonna be out a number of other down weeks in the course of this year. As a union representative, when people ask me when they're going out the door, getting laid off, when do I expect them to return, I try to be very honest with 'em and just let 'em know that, hey, the way I see it, I really suggest that they should start looking for another job.

LESLIE SMITH: Things do look really bad, because, like the 28th of this month that'll be my last day as chief steward, I'll have to go back to the line, and I understand they're gonna speed the line up, with less peoples, so I think it'll be pretty rough.

WEBSTER: They have all this people that's available with manpower, but yet instead, they can't find work. It seems like there's something wrong. I can't understand why the government or someone can't get together and say, 'hey, look, we have skills out there, and we have the people that are available, we have things that need to be done within our society, for example you go into any school, you see a ratio of students there to teachers, where you might

have anywhere from 30 to 40 students to one teacher, that's a problem. I think back to when I going to school in Detroit. I was told by teachers that, 'hey, you're just not college material.' After I graduated from high school, I got a job at Chrysler. I got involved in a labor education program because I was interested in the union, and from that I just developed an appetite for more education. I honestly believe that if one perseveres hard enough and they really believe in it, that they can improve their lot.

[Interior, Webster's dining room]

SMITH *[saying grace over a meal]*: Oh, Lord, we thank you for what we got. If there's any more in the pot, let us have it while it's hot. *[Laughter]*

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: Richard Webster was born in Detroit's ghetto, one of nine kids. He and his wife work for Chrysler. The wages they earned in auto's good years helped them move into a suburban home. And the UAW, the labor school, and then college, have moved Richard Webster towards social activism.

WEBSTER *[voice-over]*: As the United Coalition, we have a responsibility that we have accepted in terms of letting people know what's going on and attempting to provide some insight. So, what we would sort of like to do is have a general discussion about the Chrysler situation, what we see the future to be.

[Interior, United Coalition meeting]

MOYERS *[voice-over]*: Richard Webster and several shop stewards from the plant, the United Coalition, discuss the future in light of the new Chrysler contract. The bail-out agreement held the basic assembly line wage at \$300 a week, and deferred raises and other benefits for three years.

FEMALE SHOP STEWARD: We all know we took a beating in the contract. It's not just \$4500. It's the fact that we had a contract imposed on us without a lot of choice. As I remember, I think it was Larry got up at the membership meeting and just said, I'm going to vote no because I have no choice.

MALE SHOP STEWARD: The \$4500 I'm going to lose over the period of this next contract is my car. I mean, I'd like to sit there and donate, you know, a certain amount of my money for the preservation of Chrysler Corporation, fine. But let me see some return on this investment.

2nd MALE SHOP STEWARD: Now, I believe that when Ford spends a few months paying the same wages as GM and finds out that Chrysler is paying less, that they're going say, hey, they're losing money too, and they can't make it in a competitive market when Chrysler's wages are being subsidized by the government and the union, and Ford's aren't. And I think that what we're gonna see is that at the end of this contract a big attack on everybody's wages and working standards.

2nd FEMALE SHOP STEWARD: You know, there are a lot of elements that play a part in our industry at this time, and one of the main factors is the oil situation. The auto industry did not forecast far enough ahead to see this problem coming, and right at this point, unless they can scale down, you know, retool their shops and make a smaller car that costs, you know, use less gas, we, for the most part, will not be employed.

3rd MALE SHOP STEWARD: This country has slowed down because of the oil producing nations that won't give it to us the right way, and we can't control it. We're already in cold war, okay. Why not use the technology that you stop selling to these people overseas, and use it at home so you won't have to spend all that money racketeering over all that oil?

4th MALE SHOP STEWARD: If you can send a person to the moon for all that technology, and you tell me you can't get a car that gets fifty miles, you know, fifty miles a gallon, then something's wrong. Somebody is holding back somebody.

3rd MALE SHOP STEWARD: Why do you think solar energy is not being used? They can't put a meter on the sun. They can't put nothing to charge you for it on it. Okay? Until they find a way to charge you for it, they're gonna hold it back.

3rd FEMALE SHOP STEWARD: And this is what the world is coming to now. The people want the truth of what is going down, what is happening. Where is my tax dollar going?

WEBSTER: We could have used those same tax dollars that we're talking about building up a big military effort—we could have used that same money to improve our technology to decrease our dependency upon foreign oil. But we, as a nation, elected not to do that.

3rd MALE SHOP STEWARD: I want to kind of bring you back down to home base, okay. We're not senators, we're not officials. We are workers, okay? We built the gas guzzlers, okay? We build 'em [laughter] and that's our bread. That's our claim to fame, that's what got us on the map. That's what really got us here today. We get up every morning and go build them oil-eatin' cars. And so, I guess our big people in Washington say, 'if them people wanna eat, they wanna keep building them cars, so we gotta keep havin' oil to run them cars so that everybody have a job'. Okay? I think—well, I'd like to know if it's a possibility we could have a say, or is it some kind of movement we could get on; lettin' our people in Washington know that we are against this.

WEBSTER: We have the technology in this country here to make available any kind of job, and as many jobs as we wish. All we need is the willpower to do so.

[Various scenes of Detroit]

MOYERS [voice-over]: It has been imperative in Detroit's car-centered economy for workers to talk of 'new models'. The automobile used to provide one of every six jobs in the economy. But, as we've been running out of gas—literally and figuratively—other jobs have been disappearing, too. Many were lost when Uniroyal announced it would shut down its tire-making operation in Detroit. Peter Swider had worked there for eight years, had been a chief shop steward:

PETER SWIDER: Look, what happened today was that the Detroit plant got notice that it would be closing. When you take away a man's job, and leave him out on the street, and his unemployment runs out, and there's no job prospects, can you imagine what the city of Detroit is going to look like toward the end of 1980? You should have over 100,000 people out of work. The government won't be able to give us enough handouts, business won't be able to give us enough handouts, our whole economic system is going to have to be totally revamped. Now, if anyone was to pick a time to go read Thomas Jefferson, called 'Letters on Democracy', Jefferson, when he was writing the constitution, addressed all of these problems: government interference in big business, government monopolies in big business, what is the role of the government. Thomas Jefferson explicitly calls for a constitutional convention in every lifetime, every 20 years. He says there's no way the laws of the dead should govern the lives of the living. We may be getting to the point where we're gonna need a different type of union, a stronger type of union, maybe a labor union, a labor party. I'm certain that with all the money that all the unions throw into backing different political factions—Democrats, Republicans, local people—it must amount to ten or fifteen million dollars per year. Now, if all your unions were to take that money and save it for a four year period until the next presidential election, we could get someone, out of labor, who really cared about the working man and the working woman in this country, we could get them elected president of the United States. There's no candidate on the national scene right now that could do labor any good. There is nobody at the top who has a common view of what's going on at the bottom right now. A good thing to remember is that people say that you should start out slow, you know, work your way up. Mayor, councilman, board of education, governor, you know, and then maybe run for the presidency. But the sad fact of the matter is—and it's the truth—is by the time that you've worked yourself up that high to where you can actually run for the president, you owe so many people so many things that you're bought and sold for a hundred times over. You can't do anything, and you've forgotten what it was like down at the bottom.

[Interior, honky-tonk]

BOBBY LEWIS, rock singer: I think you've all heard this song before. It's what put us here today, and what's keeping us here. It's a song about Detroit, and the people that have lived and died so that we may drive fifty five.

[Song—over montage of Detroit scenes: George Sikes going to work, Goodyear production sign, traffic, factories, smokestacks, assembly lines]

Hey! Give 'em a hard hat! Five days a week! The old lady gets me up at five:

Baby, that hurts, I get out there on the E-way, brother, and I drive, drive, drive.

You know, that traffic is really a drag. Whoo! Yeah, but I'm a hotter winner there.

But I see them big old orange smoke stacks. Look at here. Just fillin' up the air, all right!

I've the Rou-ou-ou-ou-ouge. I've got the Rouge Plant Blues.

Keep that line a rollin', the boss man says. I gotta meet that public demand, whoo!

Well, I gave my life for eighteen years, damn it! And two fingers on my left hand. That's right, count 'em.

And let me tell ya something, y'all. Well, there's somethin' you just can't lose.

That's seein' stars and buildin' cars. I call it the Rouge Plant Blues, all right.

I've got the Rou-ou-ou-ou-ouge! Whoa! I've got the Rouge Plant Blues. All right, come on, now.

[song trails off]

[Interior, Rouge Plant assembly line]

MOYERS [voice-over]: The Rouge Plant Blues, an apt song for Ford. Last year, reportedly, it lost almost a billion dollars on its American operations. This year, car sales continue to drop, and the industry's demanding a limit on imports which now have 27 percent of the market. Where, then, is auto headed?

[Interior, meeting room]

MOYERS [voice-over]: Local union workers in Ford's huge Rouge Works discuss the future they see: more shutdowns, more runaway plants, and more automation.

AUTO WORKER: Where is it, at the Oklahoma plant, General Motors' Oklahoma plant, when a guy comes in in the morning, he punches in. That automatically is fed into the central computer, which shows on a little TV screen at the foreman's desk that the guy's in. And then he goes on his job, and as he's operating all day, if he stops for anything, automatically that keys off a light or some kind of signal or a siren in the foreman's office to let them know this guy's slowin' down or goofin' up. In the past, if a guy had a job where he had to, say, produce 800 pieces in a day, you know, what he could do, he'd go in the morning and maybe produce 500, so in the afternoon he could take it a little bit easier and only produce 300. But under this new system, where you'd be minute by minute watched by the computer, it's, you know, they want total control over every minute of that worker's in the plant. We in the Rouge, you know, dealt with, you know, Harry Bennett's goons, not personally, but our forefathers here in the Rouge, and the union fought hard to get those goons out of the plant, so they wouldn't be watching the workers every minute of the day. And now the company's gonna turn around and bring computers in to do the same thing.

2nd AUTO WORKER: Here's a robot working; it's malfunctioned. You place a human that is expected to do exactly like the robot, piece for piece, without any of the things that other—Human beings stop for water, a robot doesn't stop for water. A robot doesn't have to go to the toilet. But when that robot is malfunctioning, a human in placed in its position and is expected to do exactly, piece for piece, everything that that robot is doing.

3rd AUTO WORKER: Undermining of the unions is an important factor, because the simplicity of new technology enables management to put salaried people in worker spots and maintain production while they're out on strike. And this is definitely a demoralizing feature to the people that are on the picket lines.

4th AUTO WORKER: All of a sudden, the flexibility, the enormous flexibility of this technology, allows multinational companies to produce cars or components for cars, all over the world. So General Motors is expanding its engine plant in Australia, and I think its engine plant in South Korea, to bring engines into the United States for one of their new models that's coming out in a year or two.

5th AUTO WORKER: So that's exporting our jobs. We talk about foreign imports affecting jobs in the United States, but what we're finding out is that it's American corporations moving overseas affecting our jobs. And, if we're fighting multinational corporations, then we've got to start talking about I think multinational unions. I think that's what the British workers we've talked to, the Australian workers that we've talked to—There's a very deep concern about technology affecting jobs on a worldwide basis. And we can't be fighting British workers or Japanese workers for jobs, you know. We have to form, you know, more multinational unions to fight this question of technology. If they've got a global car that they can build an engine plant in Dearborn, an engine plant in England, an engine plant in Spain, an engine plant in Germany, producing the same type of engine, and we have some labor dispute in this country, they'll just ship the engines in.

1st AUTO WORKER: I definitely think that part of their overall strategy is to pit the workers in one country versus the workers in another country. They'll tell us, and we've already heard it from management, 'well, you better bring a lot of these robots and new technology into the plant because the Japanese workers have already accepted it, and they're able to build a car much more economically than we are here in the United States now.' is their claim, you know. And I'm sure they're telling the Japanese workers in Japan the same thing, 'if you don't allow this new technology in, if you don't give us a totally free hand, you're not going to be able to remain competitive.' And especially with the economy the way it is today, that's a very strong argument and it's hard for people to even think against that kind of an argument. But we have to inform people so that they know really what is being done. And like Al says we have to build alliances and communications with unions throughout the world.

4th AUTO WORKER: What prevents us from developing a program where we use our own talents and abilities to say, 'Well, wait a minute. We have these idle factories, we have these idle human beings who want to work. We have all these needs that are not being met. Why can't we combine them?'

6th AUTO WORKER: Lucas Aerospace in England, they got a committee together that started to look into socially useful products that they could build in their same plants that Lucas wanted to shut down, using the same work force that Lucas wanted to lay off because of technology. So these guys took it upon themselves to develop and come up with ideas and products that would be useful to people. Like heat pumps. They developed a heat pump; ran off a gasoline engine, and they could heat a home with it, at half the cost of the normal price to heat a home.

1st AUTO WORKER: There is tremendous talent in the plants that the companies now ignore, that is ignored by a lot of people. And if we were to tap that potential and those resources, I'm sure we could come up with a lot of different products that we could produce in our plants, too, rather than having them shut down.

5th AUTO WORKER: We really have no mass transportation in the city of Detroit. You know, we have— and we have the plants here, we have the tools here, we have the skills and the talents of all the workers around this place, even getting into designers and engineers and the workers on the shop floor. You know, why can't we build a transportation system in the city of Detroit? Why can't we use the, you know, the Dodge Main Plant to build that? Why can't we use the Dearborn Specialty Foundry? Or the Uniroyal Plant? And we have the facilities, we have the talents, we have the workers, we have the skills. You know, why should we let the workers go out in the street, to be unemployed, to be a drain on society — we all pay taxes — you know, put 'em back to work, you know, use that talent and skills and facilities to build something we need in the city. We need mass transportation.

1st AUTO WORKER: One important thing that we have to look at, we started to talk about before, is how we get the membership actively involved, the workers actively involved in these different type of committees and programs? I like the idea of some kind of competition or contest.

5th AUTO WORKER: I do, too.

1st AUTO WORKER: For the best idea.

2nd AUTO WORKER: Similar to the company's suggestion programs?

3rd AUTO WORKER: Excellent.

[Laughter]

5th AUTO WORKER: You got to find some way to put pressure on the company to want to do that. Now, you get pressure on the company by maybe let's talk to the city council or we're talking about a task force in the city. They're talking about a task force because plants are closing, and they're concerned about unemployment. If we can put enough pressure on this company to, you know, through the media, through the city council, maybe they'll like to bargain with us. I know their response is going to be, 'We're not interested in that, we're building cars and that's it'. You have to find some way to put pressure on them. And we've signed the contract already. We really have no rights to bargain for something different.

1st AUTO WORKER: Really, the future trend if we're gonna do our job for representing the workers, is gonna be to get into the whole area of industrial democracy much more. And we have to place people — and at least an equal number of people — on the board of directors in different companies. And that you have to have a say from the

...level down to the lowest level on how that plant is run. It's a political democracy, but unless you've got some kind of democracy, how meaningful is it? Unless he has some right and say over his job, you know? I really believe in the concept of, you know, you having a property right in your job. When you work there and put your sweat and blood into it, and everything, and you should have some control and say over what happens to your job.

[Interior montage, then interior, Moyers' office]

Industrial jobs in America are disappearing and operations like Ford's enormous Rouge plant employ far fewer than they used to. Nor is it likely that we can deal with this simply by saying we are on the way to becoming a post-industrial society. Industrial workers understand the vital role of production in a strong economy. Those Ford workers and other men and women we met in Detroit are talking about the real world, a world that's pressing ever harder upon them. They've heard all the slogans and promises, and they know that there are no utopias. But they also understand that our system is not delivering in the way it used to, and they quite properly think they have some constructive thoughts to offer. We heard two simple but important propositions. First, say the people there, let's stop acting as if the public and private sectors were alien to one another. Let's admit that one can't exist any longer without the other, and acknowledge that if the government is going to be the risk taker of last resort, those risks ought to be taken as much for the public interest, for public goals, as for private interest and private gain. The second thing you hear in Detroit is this: How about a little economic democracy in the work place? Why should we think the good ideas come only from the top down? Like those Rouge plant workers talking about heat pumps and other devices to conserve energy, there are people all over the country who are trying to seize the initiative, to come to grips with the inflation, unemployment crisis, to develop alternative production strategies, to inject some fresh ideas into all this discussion about a new economic model. If you're working to create, or to save, jobs in your community, if you're asking your boss for more say in what's being produced, if you have some ideas about a better balance in this mixed economy of ours, I'd like to hear from you, because I'm going to be returning to this subject another day. There are no pat answers or quick fixes, but our economy hasn't been doing very well lately, and one thing is certain: the experts aren't getting us out of the mess we're in. Maybe it's time to start listening to the people whose lives really are 'on the line'.

[CREDITS, over various shots of an auto wrecking yard]

Other transcripts available at press time: #M-27, "Our Times" (commentary on the end of the '70s and arrival of the '80s); #M-28, "The World of David Rockefeller"; #M-29, "What's A Party For" (about Maine politics); #M-30, "A Reporter's Notebook" (about John Anderson and political advertising); #Spec 2/24/80, "The Politics of Regulation" (about the Federal Trade Commission); #M-31, "Barry Commoner: Politics of Energy"; #M-32, "A Conversation with George Bush"; #M-33, "Vietnam Remembered"; and #M-34, "The Black Agenda". For a transcript of any of these shows, send \$2 and the number of the show to: Bill Moyers' Journal, Box 900, New York, N.Y. 10019.

Bill Moyers' Journal

Box 900
New York, N.Y. 10019

#M-35

FIRST CLASS MAIL