

ORIGINAL
COPY

FINAL OFFER

ORIGINAL COPY

(c) National Film Board of Canada

I.D. #106C 0185 117

ORIGINAL
COPY

(Music)

Male Singer

Foot on the gas
Hand on the wheel
Goin' to get lost in the city.
Spend my week on the line
Nickels and dimes
I'm not looking for pity.
Money in the tank
Not much in the bank
My baby thinks I'm getting richer,
But I've been workin' so hard
In the big man's yard
I'm thinkin' maybe maybe I'll get you.
Road block
I think we're headin' for a road block
Road block
I think we're headin' for a road block.
Road block
I think we're headin' for a road block.
I'm going to bust right through, yeah.
To you.

Worker

That's for your strike vote this Sunday. We'd appreciate it if ah you came over -
Sunday.

Road block
I think we're headin' for a road block.
Road block
I think we're headin' for a road block.
Road block
I think we're headin' for a road block.

I'm goin' to bust right through, yeah.

To you.

Narrator

Once every three years, Canada's auto workers send their union representatives to Toronto, to negotiate a new contract with the General Motors Corporation. As the Canadian section of the United Auto Workers' Union is setting up offices in the Royal York Hotel, no one expects the negotiations to result in anything extraordinary. But before the 1984 talks are over, one of North America's most powerful industrial unions will have been shaken to its very foundation.

Nickerson

We're lucky we got out there on the Canadian one.

Narrator

At the center of the talks is Robert White, 49 year old director of the union's Canadian section.

White

Use these.

Narrator

In White's inner circle are his two administrative assistants, Buzz Hargrove and Bob Nickerson.

White

Now what problem -- where they eventually end up.

Narrator

And his chief economist, Sam Guindon, the architect of White's policies.

Guindon

Not a job security plan. UAW.

Narrator

And across the border from them, on the other end of a telephone line, Union President, Owen Bieber.

White

I came .. yeah, I came back from the officers' meeting. I told the guys we have the flexibility. I pushed it past the council. I'm .. I'm pushing the deadline past the ratification of G.M. Now, I mean, I went through this for Chrysler and the God damn plants went nuts on us the last time. And, you know, these guys ...

Narrator

White has a reputation as a maverick inside the Union. As Canadian Director, White still has to get authorization from the International U.A.W. president in Detroit before he can finalize his strike deadline. It irritates the independent-minded White.

White

I .. I can't do that, Owen. I mean I got two committees over here. I've got national agreements. We've been sitting waiting. Why I it's just going to cause all kinds of hell over here because it's taken so long. I mean it's going to make it tight but I'll do it. I'll do it on the 17th. Okay. Bye bye. Nah .. tried to push me off to that 22nd.

Nickerson

Fourth call cri... crazy. Can't do it. Okay?

White

Yep. 17th.

Nickerson

We go tomorrow?

White

Go tomorrow.

Narrator

Union boss, Owen Bieber, has given the authorization. Tomorrow, White will announce October 17th as the strike deadline. White's relations with the International Union have been strained ever since he became Canadian Director in 1978. He's a man who likes to make his own decisions and he chafes whenever the Americans interfere.

Secretary

Bob?

White

Yeah?

Secretary

Owen wants you to call him right back.

White

(Chuckle) Go get 'im. Now what's important now. Maybe he wants me to hold the announcement.

Secretary

Owen, just a minute.

White

Hi. Yes. Yeah. Probably be about noon tomorrow. Yeah. Bye bye. Yeah. Just he wants to know my time so's he notifies the board members. That's fair. I don't have any problem with that. Need..... I understand Owen's position. He's ..

Narrator

Privately White has been anxious about the upcoming talks.

White

... complicated with having to deal with ...

Narrator

But after weeks of sitting around waiting, White is relieved to be getting on with it.

White

Have to go to Ottawa, Saturday, for the NDP meeting. Sunday I'm going to run in the ..

Secretary

Celebrity Chase for Charity.

White

Celebrity Chase for Charity. Monday, we're going to go to work. We're going to finally get our hands on the steering wheel. Our foot on the gas and get the money in the tank.

Narrator

In Canadian auto towns like Oshawa, Ontario, Bob White has become something of a hero. At a time when organized labor everywhere is under attack, White has steadfastly refused to make concessions. When he asks his members' support to call a strike if he has to, the outcome is more or less inevitable. Still, someone in Phil Bennet's position is bound to worry.

Bennet

I'm like a pregnant father.

Narrator

Bennet is the political boss of Oshawa. Home of the U.A.W. largest and most fractious local. He is also Chairman of the Union's master negotiation committee.

Bennet

94.3 percent in favour of strike.

Narrator

The need for collective bargaining originates in places like G.M. South Plant in Oshawa where, for generations, workers and managers have perceived each other as enemies.

Weslak

It's not one big happy family like you would like to think it is. No. Oh, I would say it's kinda that way, yes. Worker versus the company - worker versus the foreman. I would think so.

Morris

Hello Mel? Could you get ahold of Tommy. We're out of about 4 valances down on the line.

Narrator

In one section of the South Plant assembly line, G.M. management is embodied for foreman Fred Morris, a hard-nosed manager of the old school.

Morris

Yeah, I know. I seen 'im earlier, but I can't find 'im right now.

Narrator

Confrontations erupt almost every day on Morris's line. Each one heightens the barrier between the two sides.

Johnson

We had no fights for a while

Narrator

Danny Johnson is an amateur weightlifter who assembles cars at the back of the line. He and Morris have been at odds for months. Now, the foreman wants to move him. Danny doesn't want to go.

Johnson

And the contract states any man coming off of .. let me see here, I believe it's medical reasons, personal reasons, Page 149, Paragraph 45. Uh - man is entitled to his job when he returns. Now Fred tried to give me another job. So I .. ha ha .. he wants to move me up by the office - to keep an eye on me. We don't see eye to eye.

Morris

One time we used to be able to take the guy, if he was having troubles like that, or we figured he was givin' us a hard time, we could maybe put him on a job that wasn't so nice and maybe they'd get the message that, you know, that that's kind of the old-fashioned way of it always worked. You can't do that anymore, there's .. the rules changed enough that we can't do that.

Johnson

He wants to keep an eye on me up front. Down here - this is where I like to be. Down here with the guys. Up there I'm right in front of his office.

Narrator

Complex work rules may mean that Morris can no longer order Johnson to move. But Morris has other ways of exerting his authority.

Blakeney

I'm more or less the .. here to ..

Narrator

Brian Blakeney is the group leader ...

Blakeney

... to answer

Narrator

.. although he's a union member, he works for Morris.

Blakeney

... to their needs, eh? Since they're tied to the line, and uh they can't leave the line, so they need somebody to ah fetch things for them, get things for them. To look after them. More or less to just like a babysitter would do. To watch over them.

Narrator

One of Blakeney's duties is to come to the aid of workers who need to urinate. When a man needs to be relieved, he rings a bell, and Blakeney comes running to replace him. Usually. Danny has been ringing the bell but no one has answered.

Johnson

He let two men go to the washroom, no questions asked. Right? Obviously must be a change in policy here.

Morris

All right.

Johnson

Good for one but not the other.

Narrator

Bickering about when you can and cannot go to the bathroom may seem absurd, but it demonstrates how rigidly controlled men's lives are working the line.

Morris

Put another call in for Dan Johnson.

Narrator

Within minutes the District Committee man arrives to take Danny's grievance.

I can't work .. like I'm a prisoner in a jail.

I'm not giving him the slightest edge -- I want to fight this on his grounds, by the book.

Narrator

The nature of the assembly line virtually dictates that workers view management as their adversaries. At the bargaining table, Bob White fights for increased benefits. On the shop floor, the committee man sees to it those benefits are protected. But every passing year the conflict thus becomes more entrenched.

Blakeney

So what was happening over

Narrator

Within a few days there were signs of rebellion on the line. Siding with Danny, the men start ringing their bells. Some even leave the line.

Morris

One, two, three, four, five first aids. One, two, three, four, five, six eh? Gettin' pretty heavy.

Blakeney

Yeah.

Morris

All in ... all in around the same time. Just before dinner there ..

Blakeney

Yep.

Morris

.. the whole bunch of them wanted to go. Well you can't do all that too. But that shouldn't .. that's .. that's not normal.

Is that ours?

Blakeney

Yeah.

Morris

Well. Better see what it is, I guess.

Blakeney

You ring? Who rang the buzzer?

Narrator

With things heating up in the plant, union committee man Jeff Lotte arrives at Fred Morris' office.

Morris

You know it. Leave the group.

Yep. Not puttin' up with you anymore.

Lotte

Tell me, if I wait, by 45 minutes the guy doesn't have to stand.

Morris

Leave Jeff.

Lotte

No guy has to stand down there 45 ..

Morris

Leave.

Lotte

.. fuckin' minutes

Morris

Leave. Leave.

Lotte

.. to go to the washroom.

Morris

Leave. You caused it.

Lotte

You caused it because because I told you you need another fuckin' group leader in this group.

Morris

Are you are you goin' to leave?

Lotte

And you're the one that was opposed to it.

Morris

I'm askin' you to leave. You gonna leave?

Lotte

You're the one to know. You're the one that was fuckin' opposed to it. I'm not leavin' till I find out what the hell you're going to do about the problem.

Morris

Come down to my office for a minute.

Lotte

This isn't one - this has been five guys in a week.

Narrator

Ignoring the committee man, Morris waits for his superior to arrive.

Lotte

I can ..I can take take you down and show you four guys that have got to wait 45 minutes to go to the can. There's one fellow right over.... right over there that has never walked off his job. Last week he put in a call for relief, waited 45 minutes, went upstairs to the can, came back and Fred goes over and gives gives him hell for walkin' off the job. I had another fellow out the back that had to wait 45 minutes.

Manager

I'll talk to Freddie and I'll talk to the relief man .. er ah the group leader, but that's about all I can do. Right at the moment.

Narrator

Conflicts like these have helped put the North American auto industry in crisis. At G.M., management believes that it's time for a change.

Lotte

He's got to wait .. there's another fellow right over there, you haven't had any problems wth him .

Narrator

Ever worried about losing money and markets, they have decided that 1984 is the year to convince workers that their well-being and the company's well-being are one and the same.

Lotte

... thirty minutes.

Oh yeah ...

Narrator

After years of distrust, workers are skeptical, wary. Across the Detroit River at G.M. world headquarters, Company Chairman, Roger Smith, is determined to use the upcoming negotiations to radically alter labor management relations

at G.M.

Smith

I'll tell you it makes the jobs more interesting. It makes .. you know .. when you make a contribution to anything you feel better about it. I .. I think.

There. Put it on there the end of that.

Narrator

One of Smith's priorities is a profit-sharing wage scheme that is intended to force workers to share economic risks with management. In good times workers get generous bonuses. In bad times, their wages shrink. August 29th Dearborn, Michigan - Bob White attends a meeting of the UAW's officers to examine the details of a new American contract which the union and the company are close to signing.

Board Members

'Lo Ray.

Hello Joe.

Robert. How are you? Good to see you.

Welcome to United States.

White

Thank you. Thank you.

Welcome to the land where there's no money, right? According to the corporation?

Narrator

What he sees he doesn't like. The new American contract signals the end of guaranteed annual hourly wage increases.

White

The problem I see is the whole direction that pro..... not the amounts or anything, it's just the direction the corporation wants to take. And I think it's trying to set a stage for the future.

Narrator

Union President, Owen Bieber, is a man with a problem. Almost a hundred thousand of his members are still on layoff. American jobs continue to be exported overseas. G.M. is saying American labor is just too expensive. Under the circumstances Bieber finds it hard to argue. In an historic turnaround, he agrees to G.M.'s profit sharing scheme, effectively ending the guaranteed hourly wage increases that have been a part of the union's tradition for years.

Returning to the Royal York to meet with his inner circle, White spells out how the new American contract will affect the Canadian talks.

White

You look at the direction this takes, no increases in the second and third year. To say we would have a problem, I think, will be a slight understatement.

Narrator

In the U.S., Bieber has sacrificed hourly wage increases for guaranteed job security. It's a trade-off the Canadians don't feel compelled to accept.

Clancy

They've had a lot of guys that have been out of work for a lot longer than our guys have been out of work and that makes all the difference.

White

It's a very important principle.

Narrator

Canadian auto workers are fully employed. So the union leadership sees no

reason to abandon traditional wage increases.

Guindon

We're just looking at this in terms of some straight numbers.

Narrator

But keeping those increases will not only pit them against General Motors, it'll pit them against the union leadership in the U.S. as well.

White

No question. The money's a problem for us. There isn't any question. I mean this is not ratifiable.

Bennet

We've got a hard fight ahead of us.

Narrator

If the 1984 talks turn into a brawl, Bob White will be exchanging blows with Rod Andrew, chief negotiator for G.M. Canada. Born in Dayton, Ohio, Andrew is a former professional baseball player. Like Bob White, he is also the son of working people.

White respects Rod Andrew. He believes that Andrew, unlike most American executives, understands Canadian realities. In fact, White takes pleasure in having taught Andrew about some of those realities.

White

For 25 bucks. Less than it cost you for dinner last night, right? You are cheaper than I thought you were.

Andrew

All right, all right.

(Laughter)

Narrator

With a revolutionary new U.S. contract almost settled in Detroit, serious negotiations get under way in Toronto. Straight off, White warns Andrew not to bring the American deal to Canada.

White

I want to tell you the direction of that proposal in terms of the areas it's going in. It's completely opposite to where we intend to go in Canada. If we start to see that kind of an indication across this table, that that's the direction that G.M. of Canada wants to go, then I can tell you we are headed for a confrontation.

Andrew

We've made money. There's no question about it. And I can understand your apprehension about what you saw and what you saw come across the table in the United States. But there's there is also no question in my mind that we're not at a position where we're so stable that we can return to the things that we've done in the past. Because there is strict competition still out there. We're not on our own. We're not as viable as everybody thinks we are. What we're doing ...

Narrator

G.M., successful at getting what it wanted in the U.S., is determined to do the same in Canada. Although his company has recovered financially, Rod Andrew will attempt to convince the Canadians that G.M.'s profitability is fragile.

Andrew

Okay, thanks.

Negotiator

And Phil, you'll call me after the meetings and we can set up some firm schedules.

Narrator

Bob White and the auto workers he represents will be a hard sell. Since its inception in 1936, the U.A.W. has negotiated contracts which have steadily transformed its membership into an industrial elite. Auto workers believe that high pay is their just reward for the tedium of working on the line. And they protect their rights zealously. With a strike looming, a routine line speed-up immediately excites resistance.

Morris

Okay Kevin, try this one, eh? What do you mean no?

Worker

I don't know if you heard to well. I want a lead man here and I want a time here no one'd be if I do that.

Morris

Look, I'm asking you to do that job.

Worker

Well why -- can't we have to do anything.

Morris

Brian! Do that job there and I want him in the office. Okay? You better get down to the office and You're refusing to follow my instructions?

Worker

No, that's not it at all.

Morris

Well then you start doin' the job I'm asking you to do.

Worker

That's not it at all, Freddie.

Morris

Go down to the office. And there's a lunch area ..

Worker

I told you that ... I told you that yesterday when you came down. I said ah ..

Morris

I don't care what you're tellin' me. Go down ...

Worker

... Of course you never tell anybody. But you don't listen ...

Morris

.. to the lunch area and I'll get your committee man.

Worker

You don't listen to nothin' anyway.

Morris

All right? Go ahead.

Narrator

Back at the Royal York, lack of progress at the talks is making Bob White apprehensive. Two weeks ago he warned Rod Andrew not to bring the U.S. deal to Canada. The G.M. negotiator has remained evasive about the company's intentions ever since. Now with only a week before the strike deadline, Andrew finally calls White up to his room to show him the company's first offer.

White

How are you.

Andrew

How are you?

White

Fine.

Andrew

Good to see you.

This is what we're gonna show you today across the table. It contains ah basically every aspects of the things that you're going to ...

Narrator

As White scans the document with Andrew, the union leader's worst fears crystalize. G.M.'s defying him.

Andrew

... Together. The rest of the committee we

Narrator

The corporation intends to impose a variation of the U.S. contract on the Canadians.

Andrew

I'll say a few words about it.

White

Looks like its tracking the U.S. monetary thing, eh?

Andrew

It's tracking the U.S. monetary thing.

White

Oh, oh there's some problems. Okay.

Andrew

Okay?

White

Yep. See you down there.

Andrew

All right.

Narrator

White leaves Andrew's room stunned. It has now become clear to him that just to win traditional wage increases for his membership will require a bitter struggle.

White

I told Mr. Andrew across the bargaining table this morning, and I'll repeat now, unless there's a fundamental change in direction, it will be almost impossible to avoid a strike at General Motors on October 17th.

Narrator

Not unexpectedly, the union's negotiating committee had rejected the company's offer almost as quickly as it was tabled.

Background

Yep. Fine.

Document might be

Give me a call on one one ten, will you? Let me know.

Narrator

All of these men are tough, shop floor politicians, elected directly by the membership. Their careers are on the line with this contract. If the rank and file don't like what the committee brings back, all of these men including Chairman Phil Bennett, could be back on the line driving bolts after the next election.

Clout

I got the impression the other day when we met with Andrews - when he talked about people's expectations....

Narrator

John Clout is the Chairman of the St. Catherines plant. Intelligent, not given to compromise, Clout provides White with his main opposition on the committee.

Clout

Management's attitude in the plant is that, you know, there's a strike. Do you get that reading from him that ah that we're into a strike situation?

White

Last night was the first time he said to me that we can't do this before Wednesday - that we're into a into a strike. Now, I mean I'm going to level with you guys. He looked me right in the eye and said you better fuckin' understand my friend, if we go in the ditch you ain't fuckin' around with Chrysler. And if we get into a strike it's going to cost you a lot of fuckin' jobs in this country.

Clout

If they're reading that it's going to take a short strike in order to sell whatever they want to sell, I'm goin' to tell you that they're misreading the membership bad on that. Very bad.

Narrator

The committee knows that because G.M. has just reported the biggest profits in its history, workers expect a big pay increase to come out of these talks.

Not enough. They're goin' to have to give me a raise. We're goin' to have to go for more bucks.

Narrator

Rumours are circulating about the first offer. The men don't like what they

hear. They don't want profit-sharing or bonuses. Unlike their American brothers, they want an hourly wage increase just like they've always had.

Weslak

I like the money up front. I like to see the money. At least you know what you're getting, anyway. Profit sharing you wouldn't know what you were gettin' at the end of the year. At least this way if we're gettin' 40 cents an hour, we know at the end of the year we've got 40 cents an hour.

Narrator

Men like Al Weslak feel that G.M.'s bonus plan will mean they have to make more of the same concessions they made in 1982 in an effort to save jobs. American workers made the bulk of those concessions, but it didn't help them. Though G.M. is now enjoying record profits, many of the Americans are still on layoff.

Weslak

We give 'em concessions in the last contract to save what we got today, this contract they want us to give some more to save what we got? Just look at how many American fellows are out of a job today. They still got an awful lot on layoff. Didn't save their jobs. It's not bringing them back to work. Never will either.

Narrator

In the end, the Canadian workers are opposed to sacrificing traditional wage increases in exchange for a bonus scheme because it would make them feel dependent on the company's good intentions.

Weslak

How far can you trust G.M.?

Narrator

Two days before the strike deadline, G.M. is still pressing a variation of the American deal. If the company doesn't alter its position in 48 hours, the U.A.W.

will hit the picket lines.

Television Reporter

If Canadian workers at General Motors don't have a new contract on Wednesday, they'll go on

Narrator

The impact of a strike will be felt across the country and Bob White knows it.

Television Reporter

For the Canadian economy, some experts say an auto strike is like pulling a lynch pin from the economic recovery. For the last two years the auto industry has given the economy a real boost. General Motors, for example, has never been more profitable. Labor costs here are cheaper than on American assembly lines. So the workers argue the company can afford to give them some breaks and an uniquely Canadian deal.

Narrator

With pressure on the outside mounting, White comes under attack from within. The Canadian strike will begin closing U.S. plants within a few days. Concerned, Union President, Owen Bieber calls demanding to know from White why the calls are deadlocked.

White

Well I'm not going to a fuckin' agreement with this membership I know's absolutely not ratifiable. I'm not going to tear the union apart over here, my friend. I know where I'm going. I'm a responsible bargainer and I'm going to try and get this thing done by Wednesday, and if I can't, I'm going to stay till I do it. But I think I know my way around here.

White

Yes, I understand that. Last thing I want to do is put this thing in the ditch and start affecting the income of the U.S. workers, I can assure you of that.

Okay. Take care. Huhhhhhh. Well we're getting the starch.

Nickerson

..... now, is he? Tryin'?

White

Trying.

Hargrove

Well you give him a good message.

Nickerson

He was a little hot was he?

White

I don't know .. he's get more edgy than Rod Andrew. Well, I mean, his point is he .. he says, I don't want .. you know, I gotta look at the total union. This thing goes in the ditch and what it does to everybody. I said, I understand that.

Bennet

What did he say? That he may not allow us to strike?

White

Well ...

Bennet

He wouldn't give us strike benefits?

White

Yeah. That's the inference, but ...

Hargrove

.. how he's going to do that.

White

I won't lose one second of sleep over that because I know come Wednesday noon we are on the march.

Narrator

But White fully understands the power Bieber has over him. As President, he could revoke the Canadian's right to strike and block their access to the union's 500 million dollar strike fund.

White

If that happens we gotta talk about how things are done here.

Narrator

Pressure on White continues to build. Rod Andrew reminds him that a Canadian strike will quickly affect the entire North American auto industry.

White

The other interesting thing he told me this morning is that uh about three days into our strike we'll start to seriously affect some of the U.S. Ford operations.

Caucus member

Ford? Ford?

White

Ford. So this thing's getting a little more ... that before we get through we'll be into Bulgaria Ethiopia. How's it that Nassar car plant in Egypt .. if we can shut that down it will be a miracle 'cause it don't work anyway. And .. I mean when they start shutting down the U.S. operations there's goin' to be a lot of people calling.

Caucus member

Bob? An urgent call from Helen.

White

As I said there'll be a lot of people calling right? You think I don't know what I'm talking about eh? You guys'll believe me one of these days.

Caucus member

Yeah.

Tell her ... all this time

White

Hi.

Secretary

Bob? Rod Andrew just called. There's a wildcat at the Oshawa truck plant.

White

Okay. Got a work stoppage at the truck plant but we gotta get 'em back to work.

Caucus member

Any sense of going back?

Narrator

The wildcat causes White's worst fears to surface. It could incite all of G.M.'s Canadian workers to walk off the job early. And if White his heading for a confrontation with Owen Bieber, it's imperative that he maintain firm control of the plants.

Bennet

What shift is on? Who's the committee man?

Narrator

Bennett moves to restore union discipline in Oshawa - 35 miles away.

White

... it'll spread like wildfire. You know what I mean?

Well let me just say a couple of things about this because you know I'm not going to share with you guys all the phone calls I have except to say that we're in some tough times now. We ought not to .. we ought not to misunderstand what's happening. I got the authorization to strike with a deadline of Wednesday, at noon. And if somebody fucks that up, and these plants go before Wednesday noon, you're exactly playin' the fucking games some people want to play. I don't have to draw any more drawings on the blackboard than that. If you think the authorization won't be withdrawn for a legal strike - if these plants start going down today - that's out of my hands.

Narrator

Almost unwittingly, White has become a victim of circumstances beyond his control. G.M. is intransigent. The negotiations are deadlocked. In the wings, Owen Bieber threatens to intervene. And now the plants are becoming restive.

White

What have we .. 48 hours?

Clancy

48 hours from now, Bob, we'll be out.

(Telephone ringing)

Background

(Caller on one one seven calling ...)

White

Phone.

Nickerson

Somebody.

White

Phone.

Narrator

The Oshawa wildcat has been averted but workers in the plant are edgy anticipating the first strike against G.M. since 1970. And the days before the deadline, the mood on Fred Morris' line is more mutinous than usual.

Morris

If I send him down do you think he can do a better job

Weslak

Same as these brackets, you don't get anything done about them either, do you?

Morris

What

Weslak

These brackets here. These here. I told you about them the other night. What did you do about it?

Morris

.... them down. I don't..... they gone up.

Weslak

Then how come I'm still gettin' them then?

Narrator

The disorder angers Al Weslak. As a repairman on Morris' line, it's Al's job to fix other people's mistakes. And the mistakes are increasing.

Morris

This is getting ridiculous.

Weslak

Does look ridiculous.

Morris

Yeah.

Weslak

Well get it fixed.

Morris

Let me know when you're gettin' 'em and I'll see what I can do. Or you tell him, he should be catchin' it, eh?

Weslak

Same old problem. Leave it with me, eh? Just like ...

... the guy over there. You cross your arms and leave it with me. Yeah.

White

He's still sitting in the same position.

Narrator

The strike is now 24 hours away. Neither General Motors nor Bob White have altered their positions. Again, Owen Bieber calls from Detroit demanding to know why.

White

Well as of now we're going to be out on strike over AIF's and Cola Travel and Cola Diversion and time off the job, local agreements and working conditions. That's about the list as of now.

Narrator

Bieber's call irritates White. He feels both his ability and his right to conduct a

separate Canadian negotiation are being called into question.

White

Well I ... I mean .. but that's that's a fundamental issue .. issues that we're going to have to to come to grips with 'cause I can't fuckin' keep doin' this every two or three years. I'm just not goin' to do it. Arguin' with my own God damn people about puttin' together a settlement. I understand that. I understand that. I will. Okay. He's going to put this out to the officers today.

Narrator

This afternoon Bieber will call a meeting of the Union's executive to discuss whether the Canadian strike authorization will be revoked. In his place, White has sent his Quebec lieutenant, Claude Ducharme, to attend Bieber's meeting. Ten hours later, Ducharmes returns from Detroit with unsettling news. White has no allies among his fellow officers.

Ducharme

Cass Stevenson said that you .. you really deceive him because apparently you were strong on pattern negotiation. And now you're running away from that. Eflan said, well it's all one union and it's about time that some people learn .. some people learned about it.

White

Was there discussion at the board about Canadian ...

Narrator

No one on the union's executive is prepared to argue on Bob White's behalf. It now appears likely that his authorization to strike will be revoked. Tomorrow morning, the executive will take a final decision.

Ducharme

... meeting, he just said we might have to take a decision tomorrow.

Hargrove

Board will be on the other ... council ...

Ducharme

Because they are there for for for

White

Well, let 'em take it.

Hum?

White

Let 'em take it. The strike's on noon tomorrow.

... yeah, the one

Nickerson

He he's going to do it to us before we get out.

Hargrove

Can't do it to us before we get out.

Nickerson

What did he say, Claude? Is he going to deal with that tomorrow morning?

White

He said he might have to.

Eh?

Ducharme

He was going to call Bob.

Nickerson

He's gonna call Bob?

Ducharme

Yeah.

Nickerson

I'm sayin' he's goin' to do it before we go out, my friends. I've been tryin' to tell you he's going to call them and do it. He said I'm going to the board and he's going to tell 'em.

White

So what are we going

Hargrove

We gotta go ahead.

Nickerson

Yeah. We gotta go on strike.

Narrator

Rod Andrew, leaving it to the last possible moment, tables G.M.'s final offer before the deadline. The media, anticipating the collapse of negotiations, congregate outside the caucus room.

Press

Mr. Andrew, tell us what you had to say to these gentlemen today.

Andrew

I've got to get the union response

Press

Did you give them a new offer?

Andrew

Yes, I did.

Press

What about the chances of averting a strike at noon tomorrow?

White

I ..I think that's almost impossible. Thanks.

Press

Thank you.

John Sinclair....

Narrator

The committee rejects Andrew's offer unanimously, labelling it a carbon copy of the first.

Caucus Member

And I would never, never stand up and recommend that bag of shit to my membership in Local 222.

Caucus Member

It has nothin' to do with the reality of of what we proposed. That's all I have to say of it. It's a waste.

Caucus Member

It just seems to me that they don't want to settle the son of a bitch either. So I'm dead opposed to it.

Narrator

With the strike now seemingly inevitable, White informs the committee that there is a threat of U.S. intervention.

White

There has been no decision taken. The board was advised this afternoon that depending on the issues they may have to make a decision tomorrow about whether or not to authorize a strike in Canada. I just want to make it

absolutely clear that these fuckin' plants are going down tomorrow at 12 noon.

Caucus Member

Good show.

Narrator

But White is wrong. 16 hours before the deadline, union dissidents leads Oshawa workers in a wildcat strike. For weeks the plants have been a tinderbox, now not even Bob White can keep the men on the job. News of the wildcat hits the committee hard. Just when they need to be united, dirty local politics is driving them apart.

Caucus Member

They've got the uh they've got all the signs up. All the plants .. all the plants but the battery is out. They are parading up and down with signs...

White

I hope those guys are just as militant at Christmas as they are tonight. Really .. I mean it really hurts us but it's nothing... I'm not going to lecture anybody. There's nothing you can do now.

Narrator

The wildcat is especially devastating for Phil Bennett. Oshawa is his personal fiefdom and it's out of control.

Nickerson

You better get the word in there that they don't have the right to do that and the day shift is supposed to go in tomorrow.

Clout

Well by then leadership should be out there tomorrow morning then.

Caucus Member

Christ. They're up there now and I'll tell you right now Lord Jesus would never get 'em back in there

Clout

Talkin' about tomorrow morning.

Caucus Member

I'm talking about tomorrow morning John.

Clout

.... God damn drinking. Somebody ain't doin' their God damn job that's fuckin' all of us. Christ almighty, now what the hell's goin' to happen when that gets to St. Catharines. I'm going here to the God damn phone. What am I goin' to do if fuckin' St. Catharines goes now. 'Cause of that horse shit.

Bennet

But I don't give a fuck if they lined up .. if I went down there tomorrow morning, with John Sinclair, and all of the district committee men that are elected, there's no fuckin' way that you'll get them back in that plant. I'm telling you that John. I'm just bein' straight honest. Because some people that went around bullshitted them and told them that in order to help us out here in this fuckin' table in Toronto, you gotta walk out of the fuckin' plant.

Caucus Member

That's right.

Bennet

I feel worse than any person at this fuckin' table. I'm tellin' you that. Because for two months I've been layin in that fuckin' bed upstairs, and I've been gettin' phone calls, and they have fuckin' union meetings that I could feel the fuckin' hide bein' tore off me 35 miles away - to fuck me politically. And I tell you they ain't fuckin' me. They're not fuckin' me! They're doin' it to the membership and they played with the membership.

White

Let's try and not tear each other apart here. It's .. it's a difficult situation. So I'd just say the leadership ought to try and get at least an announcement out that the plant should operate tomorrow until 12 o'clock.

Bennet

I'll do that soon as

White

And the responsibility belongs back there in the local union.

Radio

The actions by the workers have seriously jeopardized negotiations at the Royal York Hotel. Local 222 President, John Sinclair, and Plant Chairman Phil Bennet, said and they urge all G.M. workers on the day shift to report for work this morning.

Narrator

But the plea has come too late. When Oshawa workers show up for the morning shift, bonfires are still burning and the plant is shut tight. An hour before the strike is to be officially announced, White and Bieber have an angry exchange on the phone.

White

I'm trying to get a fuckin' agreement, my friend.

Narrator

White has been waiting anxiously for this moment. Will the American union revoke the right of the Canadians to strike G.M.

White

Well, I mean, we're going to have a strike. I don't know what you'll .. where we're going to end up, but we're goin' to have a strike.

Narrator

If Bieber's to act, he must do so now.

White

Well what are you tellin' me this morning?

Narrator

Pressed by White, Bieber issues a threat. He will revoke strike authorization if White's only issue is whether Canadian workers receive an hourly wage increase in each year of the contract.

White

That's not the only issue in this strike. I mean .. there's a number of other issues and we won't be settlin' them before 12 o'clock today. I hear what you're saying and you'll have to make a decision if that becomes a last issue, I guess. That's fine. Okay. Bye bye. God he's an unhappy President.

Hi. Morning.

Narrator

Miraculously, White has been given a stay of execution. When he challenged Owen Bieber to shoot, Bieber didn't pull the trigger. He didn't cancel the strike, for now. In a few moments, Canada's auto workers will strike the world's largest corporation over a trade union principle, the right of workers to an ever-improving standard of living.

White

Try and get along. We got enough fights in this hotel this morning. At 12 o'clock today we will be commencing the first Canadian strike against General Motors in 14 years. We got another offer from General Motors yesterday which was almost identical to the offer that we'd received 10 days ago. I talked to Mr. Bieber this morning and acquainted him with the situation here. We have to find a solution to this this problem in Canada. We intend to do that.

Press

What did he have to say to you?

White

Good morning and how did you sleep.

Narrator

Within 24 hours, the mood on the picket line in Oshawa turns nasty as vandalism erupts.

In Toronto, Phil Bennet acts quickly to quell potential mob rule.

Bennet

Should get a tow truck and tow that out of there. I don't want you towin' that out of there, John. They got cameras and everything there. I mean, what the hell's wrong with them. They're crazy. Like dogs, pissin' on the Globe and Mail box. I want this thing put to bed. I don't want .. I want .. I don't want no foolin' around any way, shape or form. You understand me? I want everyone to stick together, be together, get together and put this thing to bed. They harrassed the um they harrassed and .. and the women goin' in there this morning - I'm told that one woman was pregnant and they pushed her around. They .. they .. abusive language and they .. some of them have pulled their penis out. And the women going by. I mean, they're crazy. They burnt a car. Dragged a car up there and set fire to it, in front of the gate. It's gotta stop. This ... it's got to stop now.

Caucus Member

I think we can put some documentation

Narrator

With G.M.'s plant down, the stakes at the Royal York increased dramatically. White learns that Company Chairman Roger Smith has intervened directly in the talks. To slash his labor costs, the G.M. Chairman is prepared to break the Canadians and he orders Rod Andrew to so inform Bob White.

White

He just called me up about five minutes ago and said that Roger Smith has said there is no fucking way they're going to put anything but lump sums in the second and third year, and if this means 1970 all over again, then that's the fucking way it's going to be. And it's going to mean a lot of jobs and it's going to be a lot in investment in this country, but the corporation is not going to start down the fuckin' road of putting money in the paycheques in base rate - on a cents per hour basis or a percentage basis in the second and third year of the agreement. There's no question. This is tough stuff. And my guess is when Roger Smith says that today, he probably means that. I'm tellin' you guys - I mean, if .. I want you to know what's goin' on up there. I've been threatened today with the sale of the diesel plant, the closing of the Ste. Therese plant ..

Narrator

The committee is alarmed. They fear that Smith is taking a hard line because he fully expects Owen Bieber to deny Canadians their strike benefits.

Caucus Member

... between Bieber and the Canadian sector and

The strike fund?

White

I got that behind me with Andrew. I just told him if you're hearing any rumours about that, don't worry about it, I got 10 million dollars in my hip pocket from the Canadian labour movement so the strike stays on. It's no problem. I don't have ten cents, but we'll get that.

Narrator

Away from the committee, White and his inner circle are worried men. It has become clear to them that G.M. is counting on Owen Bieber to abort their strike.

Nickerson

They're relying on the big guy - he's goin' to cancel it.

White

I think they're depending on somebody taking it out of their way.

Nickerson

Yep. They're relying on the cancellation. There's no question.

White

However, that's for another day. As they say the party's not over 'til the last dance is played.

Phil, what do you think kid?

Before I met you I had no trouble

Bennet

Yeah.

White

Ever since I met you I've been up in shit over my ears.

Bennet

Yeah.

Better get

White

Turn out the lights, the party's over.

Narrator

That night, White and his boys are forced to acknowledge a hard truth. They can't fight both Roger Smith and Owen Bieber at the same time. If they're

going to win a made-in-Canada agreement, they'll have to make peace with the U.A.W. president.

General background

He taken this

... Oldsmobile, Cadillac ...

They're not

The line is ...

White

The party's over. Into your Caddies. Get those expenses in quick, Helen.

Hello.

Narrator

To secure Owen Bieber's co-operation, the Canadians will have to back off on their key principle, symbolically at least. So White offers to camouflage the A.I.F. - the Annual Improvement Factor - in the workers' hourly wage rate by calling it something else.

White

I ... that's what .. well that's exactly what I'm trying to do here. I was prepared to call .. I was prepared to call it C.F.I. Canadian Fuckin' Increase.

Narrator

Bieber agrees to White's scheme.

General Office

Four point what? One percent or 4.2 percent?

Right.

... under this?

No, the 38 cents ...

The old this ...

Narrator

Over the next few days they hammer out a deal.

White

But if we can unlock this we can put some subcommittees, we can put the locals on

Narrator

Although it is fundamentally different from the one signed by the Americans, Bieber, satisfied he can save face, agrees to sell it to Roger Smith. When he tells White it won't be easy, White reminds him that if the candidate White supported for Union President had been elected, Bieber wouldn't have this problem.

Just think if Magurish hadda got that job you wouldn't have to worry about this. Yeah, we don't have to talk about that. Okay. Talk to you.

Did he say yes?

Okay, both

White

He said, I'm just going to go in a cold-turkey the bastard and say the fuckin' committees are trying to file, there's 11 cent start ...

Nickerson

That's it!

White

... that's how they get it. Now go to work.

Guindon

But what are you talking about then.

Let's see ... he's got the 30-30 -

White

Well we haven't got it, what the fuck we shaking hands for? We don't even have this by the committee ...

Hey, fuck you.

He's talkin' about 220.....

Narrator

The threat of a fight within the union has been averted. But negotiations remain stalled. Hoping White may not enjoy complete support inside the union, Rod Andrew requests a meeting with the whole committee to see if there are any weak links. Two hours later, he leaves the room subdued. The committee is lined up behind White in an extraordinary display of solidarity.

Press

Any breakthroughs?

No, not right now.

Andrew

The did well.

White

It's a very important meeting. I understand it. I gotta do it. I believe it. I just want to give 'em a little fuckin' history. And I think we just gotta hang tight for a few hours and see what happens. And we may have to play a little

hardball later today, so I'm .. I'm just proud of the committee and let's just keep 'er goin'. Let's not panic. I love it.

White

Love it. Because we're absolutely right. And when you see them fightin' so hard on pennies in this agreement, do you not think they understand what this means to working ... working people.

Caucus Member

I didn't know you had that cheque?

(Laughter)

Yeah.

Narrator

Andrew realizing the union can't be bullied into an agreement, gives White a new proposal to end the stalemate. But White isn't interested. He has his own president dealing directly with the corporation's top man in Detroit. He sees no percentage in negotiating with Andrew in Toronto.

White

That's why I won't go with this. I won't mess with this.

Nickerson

Oh, don't touch that, that's right. Oh sure.

White

I ain't messin' with this. I got the Presidente in the perfect position.

Nickerson

My God.

White

He wanted in, we got him. Come on down.

You see? Price is right.

Nickerson

He hasn't ...

White

Come on down!

Nickerson

I couldn't figure out.

White

So I'm go to have a shower, relax. Freshen up, shave, get ready for an evening.

I would just say that I'm more hopeful tonight than I've ever been that I think we're going to break this log jam.

Narrator

Feeling that Bieber is on the verge of getting him a settlement in Detroit, White asks the committee to stick round the hotel.

White

... stays in this room, because I'm giving no indications.

Narrator

None of these men know the contents of White's deal. Briefing them, White is purposefully vague. After four months in the dark, John Clout begins to rebel.

Clout

And I'm supposed to be on the Master Committee, and I don't know where we are any longer on the wage issue. Now that's okay for a while, but the clock's

fuckin' tickin'. I know where my fuckin' membership is on the wage issue, and I'm not sure if the union's there anymore.

White

Let me tell you John, if I get to where I want to get, I haven't sold out your membership. I think I know where your membership are, and you've expressed that. If I have, you guys will turn the fuckin' thing down and the strike will continue.

Bennet

That's right.

Narrator

For three days, the Canadians think the deadlock will be resolved at any moment, but the word never comes. Then suddenly, White receives a call from Detroit. But it's not from Owen Bieber. A secret source inside the union gives White news that dramatically alters event. Owen Bieber is making moves behind White's back. Unable to sell the Canadian package that had been agreed upon, Bieber is now discussing a variation of his own American deal - without White's permission.

White

We're gettin' it put to us.

I've got all the information. I would blow it open if I have to.

Nickerson

He didn't even God damn well try it on you.

White

I'm just goin' to let it .. let it fester a little bit today and see where it's comin' from. My guess is I'm going to get a call soon, from over there, saying this is the best we can do. I'm going to say forget it.

Narrator

White has been warned that Bieber will call to seek his approval for the deal Bieber has negotiated on his own.

Hargrove

I thought the big guy would have called by now.

White

Oh. Oh. I'm so disappointed in my own organization, boy.

Secretary

Bob, Owen's on line 3.

Narrator

White listens to Bieber dispassionately. He gives no indication that he feels Bieber has deceived him.

White

Leave it with me. Thanks. G'bye.

Narrator

The deal Bieber has negotiated contains lump sum bonuses, the very thing White has vowed he would never bring to Canada.

Nickerson

Great guy, eh?

Is that the final offer?

White

No. He said he's prepared to go to Roger. He thinks it's pretty close to the final offer.

Nickerson

Ahhh.

White

But once he goes, it'll probably lock it in pretty good.

Narrator

Cornered, White goes up to the 13th floor. He has to act quickly or he'll be forced to accept the Detroit deal. He has one last card to play. Amazingly, it's Rod Andrew.

Andrew

How are you?

White

Fine, how are you?

Andrew

Okay.

Narrator

White believes that Andrew will allow him to keep hourly wage increases in Canada, at a price.

White

But the problem is, and it's very simple, he's saying to me, you want the principle, you're gonna pay. You ain't going to get both. It think the best thing is we get it down and if it's a few pennies short in the committee I just keep arguing with them. At least it's on the table.

So - you guys understand, we really are talking about the end of the International Union because Owen Bieber will go absolutely bananas. Absolutely bananas.

Yeah.

Narrator

By accepting Andrew's deal, White knows he's playing a dangerous game. He's

not only going behind Owen Bieber's back, he's testing the support of his membership. If he's to keep hourly wage increases in Canada, he'll have to settle for much less money than the membership is expecting. And that could incite rebellion.

White

Just ... let's agree just to keep our .. keep our temper here.

Nickerson

Oh ... sure, eh?

White

Get into the costs if we have to.

Nickerson

How come you're looking at me when you say that.

White

You're the guy I'm pointing to. And you keep a check on me, too, eh?

Nickerson

Hi, Ronnie, good morning.

Narrator

But one last surprise awaits Bob White. When he reaches for Andrew's new offer, it vanishes. G.M. is offering even less money than White has been led to expect.

White

I said don't try the package on me like that. I mean we're just not going to play the game here. Yep. I know what's happening.

Yes sir.

White

No, sir. Not today. Not today. Not for sale today. He said just .. your package is 50 cent an hour too high. I said don't waste my time with the arguments.

Bennet

I'll say you're going to have a different opinion of Rod Andrew before you get out of this set of negotiations ...

White

I'm not worried about him.

Bennet

And you remember what I'm saying?

White

No, I'm not worried, but I know what's happening.

Bennet

Yeah.

White

I know what's happening and I looked him in the eye and he knows what's happening.

Bennet

Yeah.

White

That's fine. That does ... not a problem for me. Yep.

Secretary

Rod Andrew on 12.

White

Okay. I'm going to a caucus, 8 o'clock and .. when do you want to put that garbage on the table? It won't be tonight. So if you wanna set it up for 10 o'clock in the morning let's get the garbage on the table and the negotiations are finished. Okay. Bye.

Nickerson

Okay. Here we go fellows. Everybody in the same barrel here.

Narrator

His strategy in a shambles, White will now likely have to lead his members into a long, crippling strike with the possibility of no financial support from Detroit and the probability of G.M. moving work out of the country - perhaps forever.

Nickerson

Don't mean nothin' now Sam. Take all them figures off the board and .. don't mean a thing.

White

Yep. Hi. Sorry to keep you.

Narrator

Down, but not out, White comes back at Owen Bieber with the only weapon he now has left - his membership's willingness to fight to the finish.

White

... and they're going to make us pay for the God damn thing and they can't do that today. Now they may do it in Christmas, or they may do it a month from now, but they can't do it today. And when we get through this weekend, I'll tell you, when I lock that son of a bitch in, now I know Roger Smith is tough and I know he's going to move some jobs but I'm going to lock that son of a bitch in this weekend, and I told Andrew across the table when I lock it in it'll stay for six weeks without us even having a meeting. The G.M. can't win this. I'll wrap the fucking Canadian flag around me, these multi-national corporations with

Roger Smith and 146% increase - there's -- I've told him all of that. And when I get through, the membership will sit. Now we'll pay a hell of a price for that. We will pay a hell of a price for that. But we are not going down the road and I'll love to look Roger Smith in the eye. We're not going down the road for nickels and dimes. And as of 10 o'clock tomorrow morning, I will have Andrew at the bargaining table here and tell him these negotiations are finished. Okay. Thanks.

Bennet

Very good.

Nickerson

Right on.

White

These guys ...

Hargrove

You won't tell him that White was quiet this time.

White

You're fuckin' right he won't tell him White's quiet.

Nickerson

All right.

White

Those guys are going to find out my friends - I ain't fuckin' around.

Now I .. I tried everything. Sand shifted a few times. People started to play around and I played it all both ends, and up the middle and around sideways and I thought I had something moving and I did. Not enough. And then people started to shift all over the place again. I said I'm all through fuckin' around with you guys. If we reach in the hat we get a rabbit and then we just get the

rabbit and there's another hat over here with another rabbit in it. So .. I don't play that game. I don't care about your costs. I don't care about your numbers. The facts are there's plants are down and General Motors doesn't understand they're going to fuckin' stay down. And I just told Owen Bieber that I may get grey hair but I'll get grey hair fighting the God damn corporation before I'll get grey hair going to those ratification meetings to have the membership cut me up. Ain't going to work that way.

(Applause)

White

Now I don't .. I got no guarantees. You guys know this isn't Joe's Garage, I keep saying. This is a tough mother-fuckin' company we've got. And they are mean fuckers. And they're going to grind. Make no mistake about it. Make no mistake about it.

This is going to be a classic in my judgement. And we've got to make sure the membership are with us. I just told Owen the same as I told Andrew, when I wrap that Canadian flag and I talk about Roger Smith's 146% and all the money you guys have made, and the workers gave up, if I can't win that argument with the workers. I won't be the director of the union and you'll have your settlement. My guess is we'll win that one.

Narrator

With the union and the company now totally polarized, the consequences of a long strike sink in. For the membership weeks, perhaps months, on the picket line. For the company, idle plants and millions of dollars a day in lost production. In the end it's become a game of chicken. At the last moment, in a surprising turnaround, G.M. backs down. Roger Smith flinches. Bob White doesn't. Early on the 8th day of the strike, Andrew calls agreeing to White's terms.

White

What .. explain it to me. Can you talk?

Narrator

G.M. offers a special Canadian increase in the hourly wage rate.

White

But the first year. Umhum. Okay. Now where is it in the third? Right. Is he going to get them? Yeah, okay, I ... that's for you and I. Fuckin' right. We're gonna break this thing, man. I know it. We're gonna break this sucker today.

Bennet

They fuckin' well know you mean business now. They know that for sure. Yeah, they really do now. I mean they like to blow your fuckin' brains out. No doubt about it.

Boy they fuckin' hate you, I'll tell you.

White

I'm not here to get people like me.

Bennet

No, I'm just saying that ...

White

... Respect is what you get.

Narrator

With the deal almost in place, White has one last battle ahead of him. He has to sell the package to the committee. Knowing it'll be a hard sell, he steals himself for the moment.

White

I need .. I need a shower and ..

Bennet

I do, too. I need some shaving

I need about 5 bottles of coke to get some fuckin' energy.

White

I need .. you gotta reach the next couple of days, guys.

Narrator

White may be on the verge of making a bold and historic declaration; namely that Canadian workers are entitled to determine their own future.

White

This is not obedience school. It might be a while. Thanks.

Narrator

But as he enters the caucus room, White knows that before he can enjoy his victory, he must first prove to the committee members that he didn't sell them out to achieve it.

White

Holy Christ, where did they all come from?

(Laughter)

And I have no hesitation in saying to anybody in this room that you may not like the amounts and we can fight about that, but there's no fuckin' question that that's a major, major move in terms of the whole question of lump sums and whether or not we were going to get money in the workers' pay cheques on an ongoing basis.

All I can say is

Narrator

While White has been negotiating on his own, committee members have been nursing their expectations. Bottom line, they want to see a traditional 3% increase in the hourly rate. White is bringing them only 2%. To sell the deal,

he'll have to remind these men of the harsh economic realities of the 1980's.

Caucus Member

That might have been General Motors' last offer, but I don't believe it. I don't believe it's their last offer.

White

Believe me, Bob.

Caucus Member

Well I'd like to do that too. Because I likely deal with those pensioners in another year from now. And I'm gettin' my gut feeling. I don't like to give up that 3%. I've seen it for years and years and years, and I don't want my kid or my son-in-laws, or the other guys having to give it up. And I said at the Canadian Economic thing that through the years we've been inched and inched and inched and if you took everything we've been inched through the God damn years, we'da had a strike issue all by itself.

White

I'm not attacking anybody. I understand that. I understand how you feel about that. But if anybody asked me the question, is that G.M.'s bottom line? Can you hang on and get 3 - 3 and 3. My friends, the answer is no.

Caucus

Well I say - right, Bob, appreciate what you done, but I think it's gotta be ... 3 and 3 and 3 all the way through. So my vote right now is no.

I'm .. I'm opposed to this. There's too much ... there's too much hanging out there.

Clout

Well we're in one fuck of a box with this fuckin' thing, I can tell you that.

Narrator

At the end of the dissidents roll call, is John Clout.

Clout

Geez, I dunno. I .. seems to me we got the fuckin' driving seat here. They're in big fuckin' trouble.....

Narrator

He may lack White's polish, but nevertheless he's the only committee member capable of successfully mounting a challenge to the U.A.W. leader. To carry the committee, White will have to neutralize John Clout.

Clout

That God damn thing has got to change from what it is. And we're betrayin' the God damn membership if we .. if we buy this bag of shit for what's left and end up terminatin' the God damn strike short, there. Five fuckin' days, and we want to run for the fuckin' hills? Geezus, jumping Christ, I don't know what's going on here. Sure is a lot of fuckin' guys swimmin' the other way.

White

Well let me say something, John. You and I might as well get into it. It's one thing for you to tell me I didn't do good enough. But don't ever fuckin' tell me that I'm betraying the membership with this proposal.

Clout

I'm not talking of

White

Yes, you are. So's you know .. So's you and I get it off on the right foot from day one, I come to this committee with this recommendation and I ain't betrayin' the membership to recommend it. Now you and I may disagree on what's in it, but don't ever fuckin' accuse me of betraying the membership, my friend, because that's bullshit. Okay. Let's start now. Now let's look at reality. John Clout's plant. Do you think you're not going to lose fuckin' jobs if we keep out another month? You know there ... you know the answer to that. I've been told the answer to that. You know it, John. And let's look at what Rod Andrew does tomorrow. He goes to the press and he says, Bob White said

he's made an agreement. What did he want? Up front money? More money up front than there is in the U.S. agreements. No lump sums? No lump sums in this agreement. Cost of living protection? A new COLA - Canadian COLA formula better than anything else in the rest of Canadian industry. 74 cents new God damn money? And the Americans? And you think the ... you think the telegrams are going to come in from the American worker saying keep right on guys. You guys are right on the fuckin' money? Or from your membership? If that's a betrayal of your membership, John, I'll go with you to the membership meeting. It's a betrayal to the membership for us to keep 'em on strike for another month, then go back to 'em and say, you know what we did guys? We had 'em by the fuckin' balls, and we moved to your increase up to 3%. And we got you another 15 cents. Man we are sure fuckin' tough.

Clout

You wanna tell the membership that they can't get what they had for God damn - 30 God damn years, for Chrissakes? They can't get God damn 3% with the money that this corporation's making after they've been on the street for a week? You might tell 'em that if you've been on the street for two God damn months. You might even convince me of that. But you ain't convincing me that it ain't there within the God damn week. And .. and on that, I'm saying that that's a betrayal of the God damn membership. And I'm not telling you're betraying the membership, or this God damn committee. I'm sayin' I am if I God damn go back and recommend that shit. Because we put 'em on the God damn street.

White

Just listen to me my friend, and it's not .. I'm not Rod Andrew telling you. I rolled the dice with Ioaccoca and we got a buck 15. And that cost us an engine plant and make no mistake about it. I don't want to roll the dice for another 10 or 20 cents here, John, and some jobs. I want to say to the corporation that we fought you on a principle. We were right. We found some common ground. We got some money. Let's get back to work and let's understand that this is ... makes sense economically. And let's talk about the future.

Clout

Well .. I ain't changed my mind on it.

Bennet

All in favor of accepting this proposal and gettin' off dead center and every ... raise your right hand.

Narrator

After five hours of bitter debate, White prevails.

Bennet

Opposed? Carried.

Television

.... UAW strike talk. Bob White, the union's Canadian director said the union agreed tonight to a formula that will allow what he calls serious negotiations. He also says he's optimistic for the first time since the strike began a week ago. Bargaining will resume tomorrow morning.

Narrator

Two days later White and Andrew meet across the master table for the last time.

Andrew

This is an outstanding new plan. It's innovative. It's truly Canadian.

Narrator

After a gruelling four month fight, Andrew admitting G.M.'s defeat on the key principle of the '84 talks, formally offers White what he's fought so hard to win.

Andrew

In response to the concerns indicated by the U.A.W., lump sum payments are deleted in this offer and going -- ongoing increases are provided with a 25 cent per hour special Canadian adjustment. S.C.A.

Narrator

On October 29th, Oshawa auto workers, like Brian Blakeney arrive early at the Civic Center to vote yes or no on the new contract.

White

A hell of a crowd boy.

Narrator

White, concerned that local union politics may mar the ratification vote, comes to Oshawa to oversee the proceedings personally.

White

So I say guys, I understand the local politics. I've been around it for many, many years. But let's not play it at this meeting. Let's tell the membership where it's at. You either recommend it up, or you recommend you stay on strike and you stand according to that issue.

Narrator

In 1984, G.M. management has argued that workers' interests and the company's interests are one and the same. Bob White has disagreed. On that very principle he has challenged both the world's largest industrial corporation and America's most powerful union. It appears as though he has won. It remains to be seen, however, whether workers like Brian Blakeney will eventually have to pay a price. Whether G.M., confronted by traditional unionism, will continue to make massive new investments in Canada. And whether Canadian auto workers will now have to compete directly with their American brothers for jobs.

Blakeney

Let's go back to work.

Union Worker

U.A.W.

Narrator

For now, back at the Royal York, Bob White savors his victory as ratification returns flood in from across the country.

Union Worker

85.7 ... trade 71.3

Union Worker

Oh no. Ow ... we just got the transmission plant windows open.

Union Worker

85?

Union Worker

Yeah.

Union Worker

We're running at 87 and a half on a whole.

White

87 and a half percent. I knew we'd do it men.

Nickerson

No problem. Okay.

Union Worker

Okay, well we're kinda waiting for him. I think .. White's waiting for him right now.

Nickerson

Let's call the local. Let's call 1163.

White

Okay. Fine. Okay, John, thanks.

Nick? St. Catharines production - 89.9. Skilled trades - 91.7.

Nickerson

Holy Christ.

Workers

Where was John from?

91?

Tons.

I told you I could sell a bag of shit, he says. I said, he sure did.

Nickerson

So he'll be calling your guys. So you'd better call him. Okay, John. Bye bye.

White

Okay, that's fine. You phone the numbers in as soon as you get it. Thank you.

Ste. Therese - he says no question it'll run 75%.

Worker

Who's that - Johnny you're talking to?

White

That's Pierre Lepage. Says a little rough but no question we'll run 75%.

Get Trim. Get Moran. We're gone. Call Wendy, tell her I'm on my way up.

Narrator

Before meeting the press, White calls Rod Andrew to tell him the strike is over.

White

Hello. Whyn't you go out and buy yourself a double dip of ice cream? Okay. All right, away you go. And just while you're doing it, make sure you put that P.E.L. in three years instead of five. Okay. Talk to you.

All right.

Worker

Congratulations.

White

Oh man, ah?

Worker

You're tough, but you're good.

White

God damn right. Tough but steady.

Worker

All right.

Narrator

The membership has overwhelmingly approved the new contract. 12 days after he called it, White officially ends the strike. And 36,000 Canadian auto workers return to their jobs on General Motors assembly lines.

White

Well, well. I feel good. I feel good. Mm mm mm.

.... go out now?

Gotta go and call my mother. She called me -- called me Saturday night and I forgot all about it.

What ya got

Narrator

Within six weeks of the conclusion of the 1984 contract talks, divorce proceedings between the U.S. and Canadian sections of the U.A.W. begin. The grounds? Irreconcilable differences. The action is not contested.