

# Social Unionism in Hard Times Union-Community Coalition Politics in the CAW Windsor's *Manufacturing Matters* Campaign

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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Résumé de l'article

Étant donné que plusieurs secteurs traditionnellement syndiqués connaissent une période de crise économique, les syndicats se retournent vers des stratégies de coalition et de mobilisation communautaire comme un moyen de défendre l'emploi à travers de la solidarité externe. Cet article explore la politique et la dynamique de l'organisation d'une coalition syndicale et communautaire et le rassemblement à Windsor, Ontario par les Travailleurs canadiens de l'automobile (tca), comme un moyen de défendre la base de la fabrication. Le document soutient que bien que le rassemblement à Windsor en mai 2007 soit un succès à court terme, en raison de fortes structures de mobilisation dans le tca et les relations de longue durée entre les syndicats et les organismes communautaires, la dynamique interne de la coalition et les processus discursifs ont conduit à des décisions qui ont limité les capacités à long terme de la campagne. La coalition a opté de souligner le lieu avant la classe sociale comme l'élément unificateur, pour produire des discours et des tactiques non conflictuelles afin d'éviter de paraître anti-entreprise, et de marginaliser les discours et les tactiques plus militantes. Ces résultats soulèvent des questions à propos de la durabilité de la solidarité et de la mobilisation parmi la classe ouvrière de Windsor, et aussi de la capacité du mouvement syndical local à articuler des interprétations contre-hégémoniques vers des problèmes économiques et de promouvoir les options politiques qui ne sont pas dominées par les besoins et les intérêts des élites économiques et politiques.

## ARTICLE

# Social Unionism in Hard Times: Union-Community Coalition Politics in the CAW Windsor's *Manufacturing Matters* Campaign

**Stephanie Ross**

FOR ONTARIO'S MANUFACTURING WORKERS, the financial and economic crisis of 2008 was not the beginning of hard times. Instead, the latest round of manufacturing job loss was evident in Ontario communities as early as 2003, when regular and long-term layoffs became common in several key industries such as auto and steel. When the US mortgage crisis hit in 2008, Ontario's industrial cities and towns were already reeling from unemployment and insecurity. Forms of resistance had also begun to emerge well before 2008, largely adopting a social unionist framework and strategic repertoire to connect the particular interests of (mostly unionized) manufacturing workers with those of the wider community.

This paper explores the politics and dynamics of union-community mobilization as a means of defending the manufacturing base, and assesses the possibilities and limitations of social unionist appeals and strategies in such a project. In brief, social unionism entails a commitment to the interests of the broader working-class community, in conjunction with those of union members, and sees the union as a platform for social and economic justice struggles beyond the workplace. As such, social unionists' repertoire includes more overtly political strategies and tactics that go beyond collective bargaining.<sup>1</sup>

1. For a more extensive discussion of social unionism and its various expressions, see Stephanie Ross, "Varieties of social unionism: Towards a framework for comparison," *Just Labour: A Canadian Journal of Work and Society*, 11 (Autumn 2007), 16–34, and Stephanie Ross, "Social unionism and membership participation: What role for union democracy?" *Studies in Political Economy*, 81 (Spring 2008), 129–57.

Examining concrete expressions of social unionist commitments also allows us to explore claims in the union renewal literature about the importance of external solidarity in generating union power in the era of neoliberal globalization. The focus here is on the union-community coalition which emerged in Windsor, Ontario in the spring of 2007 as the local version of the Canadian Auto Workers' (CAW) national union-wide *Manufacturing Matters* campaign, against the backdrop of efforts by the Ontario Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress to highlight the crisis in Canadian manufacturing. Windsor's May 2007 *Manufacturing Matters* rally was quite successful in its instrumental, short-term aims, due to strong mobilizing structures within the CAW and longstanding relationships between union and community organizations. However, internal coalition dynamics and framing processes led the coalition to emphasize place over class as the unifying element, to produce non-adversarial discourses and tactics so as to avoid appearing anti-business, and to marginalize more militant talk and tactics. These outcomes raise questions about both the sustainability of ongoing solidarity and mobilization amongst the Windsor working class, and the capacity of the local labour movement to articulate alternative/counter-hegemonic interpretations of economic problems and promote policy options not dominated by the needs and interests of economic and political elites. Using data from semi-structured interviews with CAW activists, statements from CAW leaders in union documents, press accounts and public meetings, media coverage of the mobilization process, and data gathered through the author's own participation in the coalition, this paper examines the political implications of the particular way that union leaders and activists perceive, frame and act on their broader social justice commitments, particularly in hard times.

### **On the Brink: The Crisis in North American Automaking**

BY NOW, FEW ARE UNAWARE of the deep crisis afoot in the North American auto industry since the early 2000s. In the decade between 1996 and 2006, the combined market share of the "Big Three" North American-based auto manufacturers – where unionized Canadian autoworkers are employed – fell from 71.5 per cent to 52.7 per cent, despite steadily increasing overall sales.<sup>2</sup> By 2009, their combined market share totalled 43.7 per cent, in the context of initially gradual and then precipitous annual declines in total new vehicle sales since 2005.<sup>3</sup> This crisis came a mere eight years after a moderate boom in the

2. Ashley Ker, *New Motor Vehicle Sales: 2006 in Review*, Statistics Canada Analytical Paper, Catalogue no. 11-621-MIE – No. 054 (Ottawa 2007), 3, 6. <<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-621-m/11-621-m2007054-eng.pdf>> (6 March 2011).

3. Dina Cover, *North American Auto Industry To Bounce Back...But How High?* TD Economics/ TD Bank Financial Group Special Report (29 March 2010), 1–2. <[http://www.td.com/economics/special/dc0310\\_auto.pdf](http://www.td.com/economics/special/dc0310_auto.pdf)> (6 March 2011).

sector, which saw Canadian auto employment recuperate after the recession of the early 1990s as the Big Three benefitted from their dominance in the North American market for SUVs, trucks, and minivans.<sup>4</sup> However, after 2008 and the emergence of a severe credit and financial crisis fuelled by a collapsing US housing market, Canadian auto production fell by 20 per cent in that year, “equal to the annual output of two plants.”<sup>5</sup>

By the end of 2006, the crisis in manufacturing in general had already taken an enormous toll on its workers, and would only continue to escalate through to the end of the decade. In Canada, between 2002 and 2008, over 350,000 manufacturing jobs were lost to restructuring, layoffs and plant closures; in the major auto and auto parts sector alone, 25,000 jobs were lost in this period.<sup>6</sup> Looking at employment levels over the decade reveals an even more stark reality: according to industry analyst Dennis DesRosiers, auto sector employment has gone from a peak of nearly 200,000 in 2001, to just under 124,000 in April 2010, a decline of 40 per cent.<sup>7</sup>

For the Canadian Auto Workers, the impact on membership levels has been severe. By 2010, the CAW’s membership stood at 195,000, down from 265,000 at the end of 2007.<sup>8</sup> In addition to overall membership decline, the union’s sectoral demographics have also changed significantly: in 2009, manufacturing in general made up only 45 per cent of the CAW’s number, down from 89 per cent in 1987. In the same timeframe, the membership from Major Auto (assembly) has been reduced from 42 per cent of the union to 10 per cent.<sup>9</sup>

4. Don Drummond and Craig Alexander, *Big Wheels Keep on Turning: Globalization & the Health of the Canadian Auto Industry*, TD Economics / TD Bank Financial Group Special Report (18 May 2006), 6. <[http://www.td.com/economics/special/ca0506\\_autos.pdf](http://www.td.com/economics/special/ca0506_autos.pdf)> (6 March 2011).

5. Statistics Canada, “Manufacturing,” *Canada Year Book 2009*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 11-402-X (Ottawa 2010), 293. <<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-402-x/2009000/pdf/manufacturing-fabrication-eng.pdf>> (6 March 2011).

6. Canadian Auto Workers, *Manufacturing Matters: Fighting for Canadian Jobs* [flyer] (Toronto 2008), 1 <<http://www.caw.ca/en/campaigns-issues-manufacturing-matters-manufacturing-jobs-fact-sheet-2008.htm>> (1 March 2011).

7. Canadian Press, “The Canadian auto sector employment decline continues despite sales recovery,” *The Times & Transcript*, 15 July 2010, <<http://timetranscript.canadaeast.com/news/article/1135942>> (1 March 2011).

8. Strategic Policy, Analysis, and Workplace Information Directorate, Labour Program, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, *Union Membership in Canada – 2010* (Ottawa 2010), 3, <[http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/labour/labour\\_relations/info\\_analysis/union\\_membership/2010/unionmembership2010.shtml](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/labour/labour_relations/info_analysis/union_membership/2010/unionmembership2010.shtml)> (28 February 2011); Strategic Policy, Analysis, and Workplace Information Directorate Labour Program, Human Resources and Social Development Canada, *Union Membership in Canada – 2007* (Ottawa 2007), 3, <[http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/lp/wid/pdf/Union\\_Membership.pdf](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/lp/wid/pdf/Union_Membership.pdf)> (15 August 2011).

9. Canadian Auto Workers, *Building the Union in Hard Times*, 9th CAW Constitutional Convention, Quebec City, 18–21 August 2009, 10.

In the wake of membership loss in its “core” sector in terms of the union’s history and identity,<sup>10</sup> the CAW faces major strategic and organizational challenges. The CAW’s various responses to this crisis have also been subject to significant scrutiny, both because the union has been considered the *de facto* leader of the progressive wing of the Canadian labour movement and because recent developments in the union have raised questions about whether this continues to be so. In the 1980s and 90s, the CAW, along with its allies in the public sector, emphasized the ability of unions to act in ways consistent with social justice principles despite very hostile economic and political conditions. Given its history as an anti-concessions union, and as a social union oriented towards the broader welfare of the working class, the union has (re)turned to community mobilization to save manufacturing jobs in CAW/auto communities. The question is whether the CAW’s contemporary social unionism, as exemplified by their approach to union-community coalition work, provides the strategic and ideological capacities needed for working-class communities to resist effectively.

### **The Historical Roots of Social Unionism and Coalition Work in the CAW**

THE CAW’S SOCIAL UNIONISM has its historical roots in the United Auto Workers (UAW), but has also developed in a uniquely Canadian direction since 1985. Walter Reuther, the UAW’s president from 1946 until his death in 1970, evinced the belief that the labour movement should be committed to more than “a nickel-in-the-pay-envelope kind of philosophy”. Instead, he argued, “[w]e are building a labor movement, not to patch up the old world so you can starve less often and less severely; we are building the kind of labor movement that will remake the world so that the working people will get the benefits of their labor.”<sup>11</sup> “Reutherism” in the US meant a redistributive left liberalism and advocacy for a European-style welfare state (even though the main drift of the movement eventually led to the creation of private welfare states in unionized workplaces).<sup>12</sup> Reuther criticized the AFL-CIO for lacking “the social vision, dynamic thrust, the crusading spirit that should characterize the progressive, modern labor movement” and, in contrast, committed the UAW to

10. Charlotte Yates, “Unity and Diversity: Challenges to an Expanding Canadian Autoworkers’ Union,” *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 35 (February 1998), 93–118.

11. Walter Reuther, *The Job Ahead*, speech delivered to the Eleventh UAW-CIO Convention, Atlantic City, NJ (9 November 1947), 4–5.

12. Sam Gindin, *The Canadian Auto Workers: The Birth and Transformation of a Union* (Toronto 1995), 116–124; Kim Moody, *An Injury to All: The Decline of American Unionism* (New York 1988), 58–61.

supporting student, civil rights/anti-racist and anti-poverty struggles in the 1950s and 60s.<sup>13</sup>

The character and depth of Reuther's social unionism was both contradictory and contested, however. Whether for ideological reasons or as a pragmatic calculation in the context of the Cold War, Reuther abandoned his early socialist commitments, led an attack on the UAW's communist left, purging them from both national and local office, and supported the expulsion of communist-led unions from the CIO in the early 1950s.<sup>14</sup> These moves to eliminate important sources of internal dissent were accompanied by the centralization of power over strikes, the disciplining of members, and collective bargaining into the hands of the UAW International Executive Board.<sup>15</sup> All this made for a fairly top-down and narrow interpretation of social unionism.

These tensions shaped the evolution of social unionism in the UAW Canada, whose different national context and greater ideological diversity allowed for multiple interpretations of social unionism to coexist. According to Charlotte Yates, the UAW's "politics with a social conscience" created a certain political space in the union for Canadian autoworkers, who "interpreted [social unionism] to include an incipient nationalism and workplace militancy" of a syndicalist orientation, "which saw social and political change emerging from union, rather than party, activism."<sup>16</sup> Although similar purges of left-wing staff did occur in the Canadian UAW, particularly in the late 1940s, these were comparatively contained and even resisted.<sup>17</sup> As Gindin points out, in the 1950s the

13. Clayton Sinyai, *Schools of Democracy: A Political History of the American Labor Movement* (Ithaca NY 2006), 213–14; Nelson Lichtenstein, *Walter Reuther: The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit* (Urbana / Chicago 1995), 370–395.

14. For discussions of Reuther's purge of the UAW's US locals, see Gindin, *The Canadian Auto Workers*, 120–1 and Judith Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlin, *Left Out: Reds and America's Industrial Unions* (Cambridge and New York 2003).

15. Wells, "Origins," 214–15.

16. Yates, "Unity and Diversity," 105.

17. Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist Party and the Canadian Congress of Labour, 1935–1956* (Toronto 1973), 30–33, 147, 163–67. Charles Millard, first Canadian Director of the UAW, was a noted CCFer and "ardent" anti-Communist who made attempts to purge the UAW of its communist elements in the late 1930s. However, Millard's actions were widely condemned by the union membership and he was replaced in his role by George Burt who, though not a communist himself, was supported by the union's "unity" caucus of socialists and communists. Abella characterized Burt as "flexible" in his relations with the left in the interests of maintaining unity. When Millard (then USW Canadian Director) approached Burt in the aftermath in the 1945 Ford strike in Windsor with an offer to assist in the "house-cleaning" of communist elements in Local 200's leadership, "Burt politely, but firmly, declined the offer." However, Burt's pragmatism and gravitation towards Reuther's right-leaning caucus, as well as pressure from social democratic officials from the CCL and other unions, led him to "remove [some communists] from union positions; others left of their own accord." However, the scale of these purges was small compared to that in other unions.

left in the UAW Canada not only had “a much wider base of support amongst activists”, it “could also, in any fight with the American leadership, appeal to not only rank-and-file democracy, but also democracy linked to nationalism and Canadian autonomy,” a set of discursive resources that remained available well into the era of Bob White’s leadership in the early 1980s.<sup>18</sup> Although the Canadian Region of the UAW affiliated to the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in 1948, neither social democratic politics nor electoral activity defined “politics” for the union.<sup>19</sup> Instead, a range of political orientations survived and engaged each other in the union, leaving room for independent lobbying, some criticism of the CCF/NDP, and economic and political forms of direct action (like wildcat and sympathy strikes, plant occupations and “days of action” to challenge government policies). In the Windsor context, Charlie Brooks, the president of Local 444<sup>20</sup> at Chrysler from 1956 until his death in 1977, articulated the local variant of social unionism in terms of both left nationalism and extensive community engagement, particularly in United Way fundraising initiatives.<sup>21</sup>

In 1985, Canadian autoworkers split from their US-based parent union to form the CAW. A divergence in bargaining strategy had been building in the union since the US Congress made their 1979 bailout of Chrysler contingent on the union accepting wide-ranging concessions, and culminated in the 1984 round of negotiations at General Motors, in which the Canadians went on strike in defiance of the international executive’s wishes.<sup>22</sup> In contrast to their US counterparts, the Canadian Region rejected concession bargaining as the price for saving jobs, and this position made it increasingly impossible to remain within a broader union structure that had accepted this logic.

18. Gindin, *The Canadian Auto Workers*, 128, 205–19.

19. Gindin, *The Canadian Auto Workers*, 135–6.

20. Established in 1956 (after over a decade as the Chrysler section of UAW Local 195), CAW Local 444 represents workers at Windsor’s Chrysler Assembly plants, but also at a variety of other industrial and service sector workplaces, including Caesar’s Windsor Casino, TransAlta Energy, and a variety of auto parts and transport workplaces.

21. Brooks is considered the personification of social unionism in the Windsor CAW, to the extent that the Charles E. Brooks Labour Community Service Award is given out annually by the Windsor-Essex United Way to a local activist. See also J. Hayes, “Our History,” CAW Local 444 website (n.d.), <http://www.local444.caw.ca/aboutus.html#history> (3 March 2011); CAW, “Tribute to Charlie Brooks,” *Contact*, 37.3 (26 January 1997), <http://www.caw.ca/en/4366.htm> (3 March 2011).

22. Gindin, *The Canadian Auto Workers*, 180–85, 210–12. For detailed consideration of the UAW-CAW split, see Sam Gindin, “Breaking Away: The Formation of the Canadian Auto Workers,” *Studies in Political Economy*, 29 (Summer 1989), 63–89; Charlotte Yates, “The Internal Dynamics of Union Power: Explaining Canadian Autoworkers’ Militancy in the 1980s,” *Studies in Political Economy*, 31 (Spring 1990), 73–105; and Charlotte Yates, “North American Autoworkers’ Response to Restructuring,” in M. Golden and J. Pontusson (eds.), *Bargaining for Change: Union Politics in North America and Europe* (Ithaca NY 1992), 111–145.

The foundation of an independent union provided an opportunity for Canadian autoworkers to articulate what was distinct about their approach to unionism and working-class politics. In this process, Canadian autoworkers entrenched their wide-ranging commitment to social unionism in the Statement of Principles that introduces the CAW Constitution. Here, their rationale for social unionism is that, “[i]n our society, private corporations control the workplace and set the framework for all employees. By way of this economic power, they influence the laws, policies, and ideas of society.”<sup>23</sup> Capital’s reach into workers’ social and political, as well as economic, lives means that unions cannot confine themselves to workplace action:

Our collective bargaining strength is based on our internal organization and mobilization, but it is also influenced by the more general climate around us: laws, policies, the economy, and social attitudes. Furthermore, our lives extend beyond collective bargaining and the workplace and we must concern ourselves with issues like housing, taxation, education, medical services, the environment, the international economy. Social unionism means unionism which is rooted in the workplace but understands the importance of participating in, and influencing, the general direction of society.<sup>24</sup>

This analysis of the power of capital and of labour’s forms of response was forged in the specific context of staking out a Canadian direction in bargaining with the Big Three described above. The struggle to resist concessions, twinned with a struggle for Canadian autonomy, and then for complete independence, was infused with an analysis that clearly challenged the idea that workers’ interests could be satisfied by submission to employers’ framing of the problem as one of “too-expensive labour.” Instead, Canadian autoworkers, through a union-wide educational campaign delivered through the Paid Education Leave (PEL) program established in 1977, adopted the view that “concessions propelled workers into a no-win rat race to the bottom.”<sup>25</sup> This rejection of corporate logic and the “need” for workers to accede to competitiveness as the framework for union decisions carried through to the CAW’s scathing critique of lean production in the late 1980s and early 90s, in which it emphasized that the class interests of capital and labour were very much opposed.<sup>26</sup>

23. Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), “Statement of Principles,” *Constitution of the National Automobile, Aerospace, Transportation and General Workers Union of Canada*, (CAW-Canada) (Toronto 2009), 1, <<http://www.caw.ca/en/about-the-caw-caw-constitution-english-version-pdf.htm>> (1 March 2011).

24. CAW, “Statement of Principles”, 1–2.

25. Gindin, *The Canadian Auto Workers*, 187. The CAW’s Paid Education Leave is a 4-week residential activist training programme funded through negotiated education funds and widely respected for its relatively radical political curriculum, although its content and staffing have also been contested in past and present.

26. Don Wells, “When Push Comes to Shove: Competitiveness, Job Insecurity and Labour-Management Cooperation in Canada,” *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 18 (1997), 171–2.



Along with this vehement anti-concessions position, the particular way the CAW prioritized and operationalized its social unionist commitments in concrete strategic terms was crucial to the union's unique leadership role in the Canadian labour movement.<sup>27</sup> A more explicit emphasis on class power and inequality than found in other unions underwrote both syndicalist forms of militancy in the workplace and a commitment to the interests of the working class, not just the CAW membership. This commitment could be seen in the bargaining of provisions with a broader social impact, such as social justice funds, reduced working time, and agreements (or even threatened sympathy strikes) to pressure employers to remain neutral in organizing drives. In the 1980s, the CAW's recognition that class inequality was political as well as economic in nature led the union to form, along with several public sector unions, a progressive, anti-neoliberal coalition which advocated political modes of struggle – social democratic electoral politics through support for the New Democratic Party, coalition-building with community allies, and extra-parliamentary forms of direct action and protest – alongside the more conventional methods of collective bargaining. Social unionism's centrality in the CAW's collective identity and vision in part explains the union's attractiveness to many of Canada's left nationalist unions, most notably the Canadian Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers and the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers Union of Canada, the majority of which joined the CAW in the ten years following the split.<sup>28</sup>

In the late 1980s and 1990s, the CAW's solidaristic and community-based political activism was evidenced by their active participation in the Action Canada Network and the opposition to free trade in the 1988 election, their support for public sector unions protesting the Ontario NDP government's Social Contract in 1993, their central role in organizing the Ontario Days of Action between 1995–1998, their willingness to support a political strike by Ontario teachers against legislation restricting their bargaining rights in 1997, their involvement in the Quebec City protests against the proposed Free Trade Agreement of the Americas in 2001, the organization of flying squads to support strikes and other protest actions, and their financial support of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) up until 2000.<sup>29</sup> In Windsor, in both symbolic representation and concrete action, social unionism remains a potent framework for union activity: at the 2007 Labour Day parade, the CAW

27. Wells, "When Push Comes to Shove," 168–9.

28. Gindin, *The Canadian Auto Workers*, 228–4; Yates, "Unity and Diversity," 95, 112.

29. Geoff Bickerton, "Labour, OCAP and Protest," *Canadian Dimension*, 35 (September 2001), 10. The decision to end the CAW's annual \$12,000 donation to OCAP came after the organization and some of its allies carried out an 'eviction' at then-Ontario Finance Minister Jim Flaherty's riding association office in Whitby, Ontario. Following a unanimous vote of the CAW National Executive Board, the CAW gave as its reason "that [actions] designed to encourage or create violence and or destruction of property, are not consistent with the CAW's commitment to social unionism."

contingent carried signs featuring Reuther's image, reading "Walter Reuther 1907–2007; 100 Years of Inspiration."<sup>30</sup>

Although the CAW continues to engage with a variety of community-based social unionist activities, such as that analysed in this paper, a series of decisions through the 2000s have raised concerns about the character of the union's social unionist commitments and priorities. The decision to defund OCAP, internal conflicts around the militancy of local flying squads, and the adoption of a 'non-partisan' political position in the aftermath of the union's Task Force on Working-Class Politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century have led some to question whether the CAW continues to represent the progressive and militant approach to unionism it once did.<sup>31</sup> While a full exploration of this issue is beyond the scope of this article, these trends inevitably form the backdrop of CAW leaders' and activists' responses to the manufacturing crisis and their decisions to mobilize the Windsor community in particular ways.

As Kumar and Murray document in their survey of Canadian union innovation, 47.5 per cent of Canadian unions indicate that coalition work with community groups is an important part of their strategic repertoire.<sup>32</sup> What explains the emphasis on coalition work amongst Canadian unions in general, and in the CAW in particular? Why the expression of social unionism in this particular way? Both social movement theory and the union renewal literature offer some insights into why coalitions have become so important: they are understood to create both broader mobilizing structures and the collective identities that sustain activism.

### **Union-Community Coalitions: The (Potential) Power of Solidarity and Collective Identity**

THE UNION RENEWAL LITERATURE in Canada and abroad has emphasized the use of union-community coalitions and alliances to improve the effectiveness of union struggles and extend the reach of union activity to larger segments of the working class. Coalition work reflects the stated values of social unionists, but also has a practical effect of massing greater power and leverage on the targets of union activity, indicating that workers are not isolated "special interests" who can be ignored, but in fact are supported by and represent the interests of a wide swath of the broader community.<sup>33</sup>

30. Personal observation, 3 September 2007; CAW Local 200 website [photo gallery], [http://www.cawlocal200.org/2007\\_labour\\_day.htm](http://www.cawlocal200.org/2007_labour_day.htm) (3 March 2011).

31. For an exploration of contradictions in the CAW's approach to environmental questions, see Derek Hrynyshyn and Stephanie Ross, "Canadian Autoworkers, the Climate Crisis, and the Contradictions of Social Unionism," *Labor Studies Journal*, 36 (March 2011), 5–36.

32. Pradeep Kumar and Gregor Murray, *Innovation and Change in Labour Organizations in Canada: Results of the National 2000–2001 HRDC Survey* (Ottawa 2002), 6.

33. For important early contributions to the literature in Canada, see Steven Tufts,

The resource mobilization tradition in the social movement literature has explored the organizational factors which permit for effective action. For authors writing in this tradition, “mobilizing structures” are “those collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action,” and include not just resources (like time, money, expertise, leadership skills) but also the particular form of relationships and decision-making structures that link people together.<sup>34</sup> Although much attention has been paid to *internal* mobilizing structures, that is, the features and practices within individual organizations, it is increasingly clear that not only these are relevant. There is growing awareness of the role of social movement networks, formal and informal ties to other movements, individuals and institutions, social capital, and the “informal connective structures”<sup>35</sup> that link movements together and expand the array of participants as well as financial, strategic, and ideological resources available. In this context, coalitions have become a particular *external* mobilizing structure developed by many unions to leverage the additional instrumental and legitimizing power that comes from alliances with ‘community’.<sup>36</sup> Lévesque and Murray refer to this activity as a component of “external solidarity”: “the capacity of ... unions to work with their communities ... to build horizontal and vertical coordination ... with other unions,” and to construct “alliances among unions, community groups, and social movements.”<sup>37</sup> They argue that such external solidarity is

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“Community Unionism in Canada and Labor’s (Re)Organization of Space,” *Antipode*, 30 (July 1998), 227–250; Cynthia Cranford and Deena Ladd, “Community Unionism: Organising for Fair Employment in Canada,” *Just Labour*, 3 (Fall 2003), 46–59. The US and UK literature is much more extensive, but amongst the key interventions are Jeremy Brecher and Tim Costello, *Building Bridges: The Emerging Grassroots Coalition of Labor and Community* (New York 1990); Dan Clawson, *The Next Upsurge: Labor and the New Social Movements* (Ithaca NY 2003); Bruce Nissen, “The Effectiveness and Limits of Labor-Community Coalitions: Evidence from South Florida,” *Labor Studies Journal*, 29 (Spring 2004), 67–88; Carola Frege, E. Heery, and Lowell Turner, “The New Solidarity? Trade Union Coalition-Building in Five Countries,” in C. Frege and J. Kelly, eds., *Varieties of Unionism: Strategies for Union Revitalization in a Globalizing Economy* (Oxford 2004), 137–158; Amanda Tattersall, “There is Power in Coalition: A framework for assessing how and when union-community coalitions are effective and enhance union power,” *Labour and Industry*, 16 (December 2005), 97–112; and most recently, Amanda Tattersall, *Power in Coalition: Strategies for Strong Unions and Social Change* (Ithaca NY 2010).

34. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, “Introduction: Opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing processes – toward a synthetic, comparative perspective on social movements,” in D. McAdam, J.D. McCarthy and M.N. Zald, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, (Cambridge and New York 1996), 3; Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Cambridge and New York 1998), 123, 131–2.

35. Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 124.

36. Tattersall, “There is Power in Coalition,” 98.

37. Christian Lévesque and Gregor Murray, “Local versus Global: Activating Local Union

one of three<sup>38</sup> crucial factors contributing to local union power in the era of globalization.

However, the particular form that such coalitions take is relevant to whether the potential of external solidarity is actually realized. As Tattersall and others have argued, union-community coalitions vary widely in their motivations and duration, their definitions of 'community' and its unifying common interests, and their internal structures, decision-making processes and power relations. Several scholars identify a range of coalition types, from *ad hoc* or "vanguard," to "common-cause," to "deep" or "integrative," each with important effects on the outcome of coalition efforts and whether or not they build union (or community) power.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, Tattersall suggests that union-community coalitions can have a range of potential outcomes against which their success can be assessed. For Tattersall, these include "winning a specific external outcome," like a shift in employer practice or government policy, "shaping the broader political climate" which changes the strategic and ideological basis on which future mobilizations occur, fostering or deepening "sustainable relationships" between coalition partners, and "increasing [the] internal capacity" of organizations in terms of skills and capacities.<sup>40</sup> In light of this, what kind of coalition was Windsor's *Manufacturing Matters*, and with what outcomes, in terms of transforming the actions of power holders in the deindustrialization process and building the capacities of Windsor's social movement sector? These questions can't be answered without also examining the content of the coalition's goals and messages.

Mobilizing structures like union-community coalitions are key not only because they put material resources into use, but also because they are the ideological and political space in which political and economic problems are analysed and identified, alternative visions and agendas are articulated,

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Power in the Global Economy," *Labor Studies Journal*, 27 (Fall 2002), 46. Lévesque and Murray include a number of factors in "external solidarity", which, in the resource mobilization tradition, would be more appropriately viewed as internal to a particular movement organization (such as ability to coordinate with other levels of the same organization and to access the resources of that larger structure). However, because they take the local union as the unit of analysis, they characterize relations with the national union as 'external'. Of course, 'inside' and 'outside' are contentious and dynamic terms in the labour movement. However, I would argue, following Yates, that these elements are components of "internal solidarity," which is both a question of organization and identity.

38. The other two elements in union power are *proactivity*, the union's capacity "to shape and put forward their own agenda ... demands ... projects ... and vision of social relations," in other words, to maintain an independent analysis from that of capital; and *internal solidarity*, "the mechanisms developed in the workplace to ensure democracy and collective cohesion amongst workers." Lévesque and Murray, "Local versus Global," 45–6.

39. Nissen, "The Effectiveness and Limits of Labor-Community Coalitions", 72–3; Tattersall, "There is Power in Coalition", 99; Frege, Heery, and Turner, "The New Solidarity?", 2.

40. Tattersall, *Power in Coalition*, 22–3.

strategic and tactical decisions get made, and common interests, identities and bonds of solidarity are created and reinforced. In other words, people are motivated to act partly as a result of the collective meanings created in organizations through *framing processes*. In that sense, collective action by social movements is the product of a dynamic relationship between organizational structures on the one hand, and ideologies, identities, and emotional bonds of solidarity on the other. These latter elements must be made meaningful and mobilized in particular ways. Framing refers to the process of constructing or interpreting reality in order to “render events or occurrences meaningful ... organize experience and guide action.”<sup>41</sup> More specifically, collective action frames are used by social movements, whether individually or in coalition, “to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists” by articulating grievances, defining those who are responsible, and invoking emotional and moral responses to injustice.<sup>42</sup> Organizations can create and reinforce collective identities whose experiences of the world get translated into strategic and tactical actions. As Tarrow argues, potent pre-existing collective identities are important in bringing people together and creating the emotional basis on which action can take place, but they “cannot do the work of mobilization – which depends on framing identities so that they will lead to collective action, alliance formation, and conflictual interaction with opponents.”<sup>43</sup> In other words, in order to be effective, organizations must draw on and mobilize both material and emotional resources. In that sense, framing discourses reflect a particular construction of not only “who [labour movement] actors are and ... their relationships with each other, but also ... what they should and can do,” which is fundamental to the work of strategizing.<sup>44</sup>

However, social movements do not invent frames out of thin air, since to motivate people to act, they must have some relationship with already existing ideas and understandings of self and the world. That “cultural stock” is out there in the broader world, providing activists with the images, norms, discourses, and emotional resonances to frame injustice and effectively motivate

41. R.D. Benford and D.A. Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000), 614.

42. D.A. Snow and R.D. Benford, “Ideology, Frame Resonance and Participant Mobilization,” *International Social Movement Research* 1 (1988), 198.

43. Sidney Tarrow, “Beyond Globalization: Why Creating Transnational Social Movements is so Hard and When is it Most Likely to Happen,” *Global Solidarity Dialogue* (2001): ¶45, <<http://www.antenna.nl/~waterman/tarrow.html>> (24 May 2008).

44. Colin Barker and Michael Lavelette, “Strategizing and the Sense of Context: Reflections on the First Two Weeks of the Liverpool Docks Lockout, September–October 1995,” in D.S. Meyer, N. Whittier, and B. Robnett, eds., *Social Movements: Identity, Culture, and the State* (Oxford 2002), 141–2; Carola Frege and John Kelly, “Union Revitalization Strategies in Comparative Perspective,” *European Journal of Industrial Relations* 9 (March 2003), 14–5.

people to action.<sup>45</sup> There is also such cultural stock located within organizations that, over longer periods of time, have built sub-cultural identities, shared ideological frameworks and emotional orientations that can be used strategically to frame certain conflicts and actions (such as that within the CAW, described above).

Both within organizations and in the broader political environment, framing is a contested process.<sup>46</sup> As Zald explains, “there is an external and internal competition for defining the situation and what is to be done.”<sup>47</sup> Framing disputes often occur inside organizations, although, as Yates points out, the extent to which such debate can happen and is translated into changes in discourse and strategy depends crucially on the form of mobilizing structures themselves.<sup>48</sup> Framing contests with opponents, which play out in (and are sometimes engaged in by) media, are also central to social movements’ internal dynamics, as they must anticipate the arguments of others in their attempts to influence and recruit “bystander publics” to the cause.<sup>49</sup>

The need to engage those dominant constructions of reality that serve entrenched forms of power constitutes an important problem for movements like the labour movement. At least in some ways, the labour movement must challenge dominant interpretations of economic and social relations which, in the current context, frame the causes of manufacturing job loss as the result of impersonal global forces and the resulting social dislocation as the fault of militant and inflexible unions protecting their own vested interests. Lévesque and Murray argue that the ability to proactively articulate an independent, alternative agenda to that of capital in general, and employers in particular, is a key source of (local) union power. Otherwise, “the inability of local unions to propose their own agenda leads them to subordinate their actions to the interests of their plant” or company, and to undermine workers’ identification with their union.<sup>50</sup> Others have emphasized the importance of creating “oppositional consciousness”<sup>51</sup> or an “oppositional culture,” in which people develop

45. Mayer N. Zald, “Culture, Ideology and Strategic Framing,” in D. McAdam, J.D. McCarthy and M.N. Zald, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, (Cambridge and New York 1996), 266–7; Benford and Snow, “Framing Processes,” 622.

46. Benford and Snow, “Framing Processes,” 625.

47. Zald, “Culture, Ideology and Framing Processes,” 269.

48. Charlotte Yates, “The Internal Dynamics of Union Power: Explaining Canadian Autoworkers’ Militancy in the 1980s,” *Studies in Political Economy*, 31 (Spring 1990), 77.

49. Zald, “Culture, Ideology and Framing Processes,” 270.

50. Lévesque and Murray, “Local Versus Global,” 50.

51. Jane Mansbridge defines “oppositional consciousness” as those “principles, ideas, and feelings” adopted by subordinated groups to “claim their previously subordinate identity as a positive identification, identify injustices done to their group, demand changes in the polity, economy, or society to rectify those injustices, and see other members of their group as shar-

“alternative forms of identity and community, alternative modes of living, and alternative forms of political action.” Such a culture is foundational for any movement seeking to “wean” people from “hegemonic constructions of their interests and identities” and make fundamental social or political-economic change.<sup>52</sup> The capacity to develop oppositional consciousness and culture is also strongly linked to the capacity to create autonomous or “free spaces” in which alternatives can be developed free from interference from power-holders.<sup>53</sup> It is, however, an open question whether social movements do challenge the ideological underpinnings of established power relations, or whether, in their framing work, they internalize the basic premises of those ideologies in order to achieve immediate instrumental aims (or, using Tattersall’s terms, whether they sacrifice shifting the broader political-ideological climate in order to achieve a concrete external outcome). The concepts of resonance and cultural stock are key: as Benford and Snow explain, movements that tap into already-existing “culturally resonant” beliefs or perspectives are more likely to be able to mobilize effectively.<sup>54</sup> However, “culturally resonant” beliefs are often pervaded with the unspoken but hegemonic assumptions about the prevailing social order. This presents movements with a strategic challenge: is it better to do the difficult and Sisyphean work of constructing counter-hegemonic understandings of the problems faced and solutions sought, or to dip into existing understandings and identities, problematic though they may be, to more easily mobilize resources and people into the streets in the short term? Although framing work rarely involves such an either-or choice, it is important to examine both the implications of framing choices in general and the extent to which union-community coalitions are spaces in which counter-hegemonic interpretations of the political-economic situation are made possible. It is with these theoretical and conceptual issues in mind that we now turn to examine the quality of external solidarity and framing of collective identity and consciousness in a concrete case of union-community coalition work. Such coalitions have often emerged in response to job loss due to deindustrialization<sup>55</sup> and Southern Ontario’s auto towns have been no exception.

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ing an interest in rectifying those injustices”. Jane Mansbridge, “The Making of Oppositional Consciousness,” in J. Mansbridge and A. Morris, eds., *Oppositional Consciousness: The Subjective Roots of Social Protest* (Chicago 2001), 1.

52. William K. Carroll and Robert S. Ratner, “Sustaining Oppositional Cultures in ‘Post-Socialist’ Times: A Comparative Study of Three Social Movement Organisations,” *Sociology* 35.3 (2001), 607.

53. Aldon Morris and Naomi Braine, “Social Movements and Oppositional Cultures,” in J. Mansbridge and A. Morris, eds., *Oppositional Consciousness: The Subjective Roots of Social Protest* (Chicago 2001), 30–1.

54. Benford and Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements,” 622.

55. See, for instance, Bruce Nissen, *Fighting for Jobs: Case Studies of Labor-Community Coalitions Confronting Plant Closings* (Albany NY 1995).

A vibrant union-community coalition emerged in the community of Windsor, Ontario in the spring of 2007 in support of the CAW's national *Manufacturing Matters* campaign and to raise public awareness about the issue. An examination of the strategic analysis, framing processes and internal politics of this coalition demonstrates both the strengths and limits of the CAW's approach to social unionism, and illustrates the mixed outcomes of coalition work as a strategy for amplifying union power.

### ***Manufacturing Matters* and Union-Community Coalition Work in Windsor, Ontario**

IN WINDSOR, THE UNOFFICIAL OPENING of the local *Manufacturing Matters* campaign took place on 1 October 2006, at a Town Hall meeting convened "to discuss the importance of Ford/Nemak jobs in Windsor, as well as hearing from our elected officials on their role in securing Ford/Nemak jobs in the future."<sup>56</sup> The meeting was called in response to Ford's announcement on 14 September 2006 that it planned to close its Essex Engine Plant and eliminate 650 jobs as part of its massive *Way Forward* continent-wide restructuring plan. Nearly 3000 people attended this event. In some ways, this impressive turnout wasn't surprising given that, when added to the 550 jobs to be lost with the already-announced shutdown of Ford's Casting Plant<sup>57</sup> and 1045 workers on layoff or notice of layoff at the time, the closure of Essex Engine would result in unemployment for half of Ford's Windsor workforce.<sup>58</sup> The head table included not only leadership and staff from CAW National and Local 200 – which represents workers at Ford's Windsor operations – but also municipal, provincial

56. Canadian Auto Workers Local 200, Attention CAW Local 200 Members: Special Membership / Town Hall Meeting [flyer] (Windsor 2006), 1.

57. Ford confirmed on January 23, 2006 that its Windsor Casting Plant, locally known as the Foundry, would be closed in 2007, as it had previously announced to the union at the end of the previous round of bargaining. The Foundry was indeed closed on May 29, 2007, and has since been razed. CBC, "Canada escapes brunt of Ford cuts," *CBC.ca*, 23 January 2006, <<http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/story/2006/01/23/fordnumbers-060123.html>> (1 March 2011); Toronto Star, "Ford shutters Windsor plant that employed 450 workers," *The Toronto Star*, 30 May 2007, <<http://www.thestar.com/Business/article/219123>> (1 March 2011).

58. Dave Hall, "Ford cuts: Essex engine plant to close in 2007; casting plant idled at same time," *The Windsor Star*, 15 September 2006, <<http://www.canada.com/windsorstar/index.html>> (2 October 2006); CTV News, "Ford cuts 10,000 more jobs, closing Ont. Plant," *CTV.ca*, 15 September 2006, <[http://www.ctv.ca/CTVNews/SciTech/20060915/ford\\_cuts\\_060915/](http://www.ctv.ca/CTVNews/SciTech/20060915/ford_cuts_060915/)> (28 January 2011). Despite the strong turnout, it was later acknowledged by a Local 200 leader that, given the scale of the crisis, far more members from his own local should have been in attendance. The majority of the audience was from Local 444, most of whose jobs were not immediately threatened. The Local 200 leader attributed the 'low' turnout of his own membership to the leadership's and steward body's failure to mobilize in a deeper way, relying on flyers rather than personal contact (personal notes, 10 May 2007).



and federal elected officials from all political parties, who were expected to explain how they proposed to defend auto manufacturing in Windsor.

The Town Hall meeting was crucial not merely because it introduced, on a banner behind the head table, what was to become the slogan for the *Manufacturing Matters* campaign in Windsor: “Our Jobs, Our Communities, Our Future.” More importantly, it signalled the direction of subsequent mobilizations, how the political terrain would be perceived, and how key collective action frames would be defined and translated into strategic and tactical decisions. First, the CAW leadership articulated the causes of manufacturing job loss to the broader public in a particular way, with an emphasis on the flawed trade policy framework rather than employers’ decisions to manufacture (or stop manufacturing) certain kinds of products in Canada. Second, the town hall revealed the political strategy at the core of the *Manufacturing Matters* campaign, namely a lobbying effort for “fair trade” and a pragmatic electoral alliance with Ontario Liberals to secure subsidies for auto manufacturers.<sup>59</sup> Third, both the speeches and “VIPs” in attendance presaged how the union would come to define the boundaries and internal relations of “the community” to be mobilized, how various interests would be articulated, connected and prioritized, and what kind of strategies would be needed to maintain this alliance. Finally, the conduct of the meeting signalled the distribution of roles within the coalition, in which the mobilization’s overall aim and strategies would be (pre)determined by the CAW leadership, and operationalized by rank-and-file activists and community allies, with some, but not much, room for participants to debate those purposes or strategic decisions.

Six months passed between the Local 200 Town Hall meeting and the official establishment of a union-community coalition to organize a response to job loss. In those six months, the pressure on Windsor’s manufacturing sector

59. The decision of the CAW’s national leadership (and Canadian Council) to formally disaffiliate from the NDP in 2006 (in response to Hargrove’s expulsion by the party earlier that year) and ally strategically with the Liberal Party in Ontario provincial and federal elections since 1999 has been the object of much internal and external criticism, and raises broader questions about the content of the union’s contemporary social unionism. Although the CAW’s adoption of strategic voting has been framed as part of a pragmatic attempt to block the most extreme representatives of neoliberalism from coming to power, to maintain union independence from a particular party, and to permit pressure from the left to be put on the NDP, other actions imply both a defensive and sectional Gompersism and a more proactive shift to the political centre. “Jacket-Gate” is the most notorious example: in December 2005, Liberal Prime Minister Paul Martin was invited to speak at a union meeting in Windsor and was gifted with a CAW jacket by then-president Buzz Hargrove. Critics lambasted this act as symbolic of the union’s embrace of centre-right politics to preserve jobs and abandonment of a more class-conscious form of social unionism. For one such analysis, see Bruce Allen, “Inside the CAW Jacket,” *New Socialist*, 57 (July–August 2006), 18–20. For a critical discussion of the political implications of the CAW’s adoption of strategic voting, see Larry Savage, “Contemporary Party-Union Relations in Canada,” *Labor Studies Journal*, 35 (March 2010), 8–26, and “Organized Labour and the Politics of Strategic Voting,” in S. Ross and L. Savage, eds., *Rethinking the Politics of Labour in Canada* (Halifax forthcoming).

was mounting, and the ripple effects in other sectors of the economy were also apparent. The tool and die industry – both union and non-union – was particularly hard hit, symbolized by (non-union) Hallmark Technologies' sudden closing in February 2007, with no pension or severance guarantees for current or retired employees.<sup>60</sup> By the end of 2006, the area's unemployment rate had climbed to 9 per cent, the highest for Canadian metropolitan areas and dramatically higher than the national average of 6.3 per cent.<sup>61</sup>

The CAW turned to social unionist strategies to address this crisis. At the December 2006 CAW Council meeting, then-National President Buzz Hargrove recommended that “the CAW lead a campaign to highlight the ongoing loss of manufacturing jobs in our economy and the effect that will have on our country's future,” using local information forums to build for a Canadian Labour Congress-organized National Day of Action on 30 May 2007.<sup>62</sup> At the March 2007 meeting of the Windsor-Essex District Labour Council, Ken Lewenza Sr.,<sup>63</sup> then president of CAW Local 444, announced that CAW locals would go beyond this recommendation, organizing not another town hall meeting but rather a mass mobilization to raise the issue of manufacturing job loss. This rally would be scheduled for 27 May 2007 and would be the first major action of the Windsor *Manufacturing Matters* campaign. Lewenza Sr. made an impassioned plea for participation from Windsor's other unions and community-based organizations on the organizing committee, as this was “not about the CAW.” The need to both “raise consciousness” and “revitalize commitment” in the general public was urgent and an open invitation to join the organizing committee was extended.<sup>64</sup>

Starting on 22 March with a group of 27 (mostly, but not only, CAW local leaders and members), coalition meetings grew consistently in both scale and scope over the next two months, such that the final meetings in May drew between 60 to 80 people. Meeting every ten days to two weeks, the coalition came to represent a wide diversity of community interests, including public sector unions (in the hospital and municipal sectors), public school, Catholic school, and university teachers, University of Windsor labour studies students, the United Way and the community-based organizations it funds (such as the

60. Dalson Chen, “Plant's Closing Called Only Option,” *The Windsor Star*, 23 February 2007.

61. Ernest B. Akyeampong, “Canada's Unemployment Mosaic, 2000 to 2006,” *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, 8 (January 2007), 7.

62. Canadian Auto Workers, *Jobs and Manufacturing: On the Critical List*. [PowerPoint slides], 11 February 2007, 1.

63. Lewenza Sr. subsequently became CAW National President in September 2008.

64. Personal notes, 13 March 2007.

Rally mailout.

**OUR JOBS . . . OUR COMMUNITIES**  
**. . . OUR FUTURE**

COMMUNITY  
MARCH & RALLY  
INVITATION

Stand up  
for Canada's  
*Manufacturing Sector*

SUNDAY, MAY 27/07 - 9 am

**Marshalling Area #1**  
 Assembling: Drouillard Rd. between Wyandotte St. E. & Riverside Dr.  
 Route: South down Drouillard Rd. to Seminole St., East to Ford Test Track.

**Marshalling Area #2**  
 Assembling: Stodgell Park at Kildare Rd. and Seneca St.  
 Route: East down Seneca to Walker Rd., North to Seminole, East to Ford Test Track.

**Marshalling Area #3**  
 Assembling: Drouillard Rd. between Grand Marais & Tecumseh Rd.  
 Route: North on Drouillard Rd. to Seminole, East to Ford Test Track.

**Rally will assemble at Ford Test Track**

NOTE: Citizens experiencing physical disabilities may assemble at Ford Test Track where parking will be available.

**Jobs and Manufacturing:  
On the Critical List**

**Leadership in Windsor has been ringing the alarm**

- Manufacturing used to account for 1 in 3 jobs in Windsor;
- Now it is 1 in 4
- In the last 4+ years we've lost 35% of the manufacturing jobs.
- From 51,200 in May 2002 to 33,500 in March 2007.
- Windsor has lost 17,700 jobs.



**Loss of manufacturing jobs in Windsor affects everyone**

- Manufacturing workers earn and spend close to \$2.5 billion a year.
- Supports regional economy
- Major contribution to income tax
- But it used to be more
- The loss of 17,700 manufacturing jobs means a loss of over \$1 billion in payroll wages annually.

Unemployed Help Centre), municipal councillors,<sup>65</sup> NDP MPs or their staff,<sup>66</sup> the Essex County Local of the National Farmers' Union of Ontario, local owners in the tool and die industry, and representatives from the Downtown Business Improvement Association. CAW members from Chatham and Tilbury, about an hour away, also began attending these meetings. Since the meetings were open to the public, the local CBC Radio's Municipal affairs and labour reporter Gino Conte was also often in attendance.

65. Ken Lewenza Jr., Percy Hatfield, and Caroline Postma all attended at least one coalition meeting, with the first two in regular attendance. Hatfield, a former CBC reporter, served on the coalition's Communications Sub-Committee.

66. Joe Comartin, NDP MP for Windsor-Tecumseh, was in attendance several times. Brian Masse, NDP MP for Windsor-West, sent staff from his constituency office.

In fairly short order, the coalition developed a media and community outreach strategy which included a store-front office, a website<sup>67</sup> and email list, TV and radio spots, billboards, a poster which was distributed by volunteers throughout Windsor and Essex County, a flyer with information about the crisis mailed to 150,000 homes in advance of the rally, and press conferences and press releases during the week prior to the rally highlighting the impact of job loss on different sectors of the community. Union activists from non-CAW locals created sector-specific flyers for their membership, highlighting the link between their own work and the manufacturing jobs crisis.<sup>68</sup> Another group of activists worked on visual installations for the rally site, which involved compiling job loss statistics and creating gravestones for each workplace closed in the last 20 years.<sup>69</sup> They also made a banner that rally participants could sign, like a life-size petition. Meetings took on the atmosphere of a war council, combining progress reports from each group, allocation of tasks and responsibilities, and pep talks and reminders about the urgency of the issue and the need to bring out “our constituencies.” As if coalition members needed any further evidence of the crisis at hand, General Motors announced in mid-May 2007 that they did not have another product for their Windsor Transmission plant, and that they intended to close the facility by 2010, putting another 1200 CAW members, from Local 1973, out of work. The coalition meeting later that week was an emotional one, as the news was indeed a “crushing blow.”<sup>70</sup>

The outcome of two months’ work in this pressure cooker atmosphere was remarkable: on 27 May 2007 38,000 people “by organizers’ estimates” marched in Windsor in a spirited rally of community unity.<sup>71</sup> The convergence

67. This website was [www.ourjobsourfuture.ca](http://www.ourjobsourfuture.ca), but is no longer accessible on the internet.

68. OECTA, for instance, distributed a flyer to its membership emphasizing the impact of manufacturing job loss on their students, whose families were experiencing economic instability, and declining enrolments as families left the community for jobs elsewhere. A similar flyer for the University of Windsor was written by activists from the Windsor University Faculty Association, CAW 2458 (University staff), CUPE Locals 1001 (maintenance) and 4580 (teaching assistants) on the understanding that the university administration would send it out via email to all university staff and students. In the week before the rally, then university President Ross Paul revoked permission to send the flyer, and the unions had to rely on their own (incomplete) communications networks.

69. These activists created a permanent location for this information via the website [www.JobsGraveyard.ca](http://www.JobsGraveyard.ca), which includes a database of plant closures and numbers of jobs lost in Windsor and Essex County, Chatham-Kent, and has started to expand to include job loss in other regions of Ontario and Canada.

70. The GM Transmission Plant was closed on 28 July 2010. Gord Henderson, “Little to celebrate,” *The Windsor Star*, 19 May 2007; Canadian Press, “GM closes transmission plant in Windsor,” *The Toronto Star*, 28 July 2010 <<http://www.thestar.com/business/article/841515-gm-closes-transmission-plant-in-windsor>> (1 March 2011).

71. Craig Pearson, “Thousands march to support labour; Call for action,” *The Windsor Star*, 28 May 2007.



### Jobs Graveyard

Credit: Jamey Essex

of three separate marches at the intersection of Drouillard and Seminole, in the heart of the historical industrial district visibly ravaged by deindustrialization, was thrilling and moving, bringing tears to many people's eyes.<sup>72</sup> The importance of this achievement in comparative terms is also notable, given the relative passivity of most of the rest of the labour movement in the face of these events. For instance, a similar rally in Oshawa on the same day drew 600 people. The CLC-sponsored national rally on Parliament Hill on 30 May drew 3000 people.<sup>73</sup> Windsor's contribution to the Ontario Days of Action in October 1997, after a much longer organizing campaign and with broad politicization of many sectors in the province, only drew "close to 30,000" people.<sup>74</sup>

72. The convergence was particularly moving because, with three separate marshalling areas, each march seemed quite small and participants were worried about the turnout. It was only when the three marches met that the real scale of the event was realized and marchers' spirits were immediately buoyed.

73. Our Times, "Rallies for Jobs," *Our Times* 26.3 (June/July 2007), <[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa5404/is\\_200706/ai\\_n21293081](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa5404/is_200706/ai_n21293081)> (28 May 2008); Les Whittington, "Job rally falls on deaf ears; Angry workers demand plant closings strategy but Harper cites low unemployment rate," *The Toronto Star*, 31 May 2007 <<http://www.thestar.com/article/219811>> (15 August 2011).

74. CAW, "Day of Action Closes Windsor," *Contact* 27.36 (26 October 1997), <http://www.caw.ca/>



### Windsor's Banner Petition

Credit: Jamey Essex

In other words, the Windsor rally probably constituted the largest mass action in the city since the 1945 strike, and certainly the largest single community-based action in the recent fight to defend manufacturing jobs.<sup>75</sup>

The Windsor mobilization was successful in terms of meeting the immediate goals of mass community participation because of the continuing strength of the CAW's internal mobilizing structures and capacity to rapidly access material resources and committed volunteers. The CAW locals could rely upon a still-strong financial capacity and internal networks of shop floor representatives and union activists schooled in the Paid Education Leave program and involved in broader social issues and organizing. Also, Windsor's activist community is constituted by very dense and long-standing networks, glued together by multi-generational family ties and social relationships. Most coalition participants had long worked with each other, either at the Labour Council<sup>76</sup> or in previous coalitions, such as that which organized the Windsor Day of Action in 1997 or the protests against the Organization of American States (OAS) meeting held in Windsor in 2000. Indeed, Windsor's

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en/4409.htm (1 March 2011).

75. CBC News, "Thousands Protest Auto Industry Job Losses," CBC.ca, 27 May 2007, <<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2007/05/27/manufacturing-rallies.html>> (28 May 2008); Craig Pearson, "Mass rally places spotlight on jobs," *The Windsor Star*, 27 May 2007, <<http://www.canada.com/windsorstar/index.html>> (28 May 2008).

76. The Windsor and District Labour Council includes a "Social Justice Member at Large" drawn from the community on its executive. Also, United Way Labour Programmes staff attend council meetings regularly; see [www.wdlc.ca](http://www.wdlc.ca).

Labour Council has been collaborating with the Windsor United Way since 1973.<sup>77</sup> In other words, the Windsor coalition could mobilize through pre-existing “social capital” built through close personal ties and previous rounds of union-community cooperation and struggle.

Despite these strengths, important contradictions in message, strategy and process were also evident. Although these tensions were managed in the course of the mobilization, particularly given the crisis atmosphere, they remain unresolved. Their longer-term implications for the sustainability and effectiveness of coalition work in particular and working-class capacity in general were not explicitly addressed. These tensions can be seen in the way the issues were framed, which strategies were adopted, and in the character of relationships amongst coalition partners.

### ***Framing Problems, Opponents and Solutions: Employers or Governments?***

THE PRIMARY DIAGNOSIS of the problem of manufacturing job loss was rooted in the CAW’s analysis of the role of federal industrial and monetary policy. Rather than directly challenging the decisions of employers to shutter profitable plants, abandon communities that had given them generations of workers’ labour, and put workers into competition with each other for jobs, the coalition focussed on the failure of the federal government to create and maintain a good investment climate for manufacturing in Canada. Although the problem of “the corporate agenda” and of “manufacturing companies ... not re-investing ... despite business sector profitability” was raised, that corporate agenda was located in the decisions of the Harper Government rather than auto companies (or other manufacturers) themselves, not to mention previous Liberal governments. In other words, reference to the corporate agenda was abstracted away from the actual authors of that agenda.<sup>78</sup> The main problem was the sitting Federal Government’s focus on corporate tax cuts and unwillingness to rethink trade agreements or the high “petro-dollar” fuelled by Alberta’s oil and gas industry.<sup>79</sup> In the coalition’s strategic discussions and public statements, the target was the federal government rather than employers. Employers were not to be directly targeted or mobilized against because, as one CAW leader put it, “business is the source of jobs and investment” and so we must work

77. Janice Manchee, “Unions and the United Way: From Charity to Change,” *Our Times*, 25 (April / May 2006), 31. The initial partnership between the WDLIC and United Way Windsor was a “joint project to train union activists about community resources so they could link union members in need with the community agencies and services their donations supported.”

78. Although no explicit reasons were stated for focusing on the current Federal Government as the culprit in manufacturing job loss, even though these losses had begun prior to 2006, this emphasis is consistent with the CAW’s commitment to strategic voting and to cooperate with both automakers and Liberal policy-makers (whether present or future) to secure subsidies for Canadian auto manufacturing.

79. Our Jobs Our Future Coalition. *Community March and Rally Invitation: Stand up for Canada’s Manufacturing Sector* [flyer] (Windsor, 2007), 3.

with rather than “threaten” them.<sup>80</sup> The coalition’s interpretation of the political-economic structure conformed with the hegemonic neoliberal view that workers and communities need to attract investment by appealing to capital and its needs in the context of a competitive global economy. In practice, this constituted a departure from both the CAW’s two-decades-long rejection of the logic of competitiveness as antithetical to workers’ interests<sup>81</sup> as well as their previous willingness to use economic power to make social change.

The official silence over the employers’ actions, choices and responsibility for the current crisis was punctured on the day of the rally by the spontaneous, creative efforts of a small group of workers who had not been participating in coalition meetings. They appeared along the march route wearing and selling t-shirts which read “Will Work for Food,” with “food” represented as though it were the Ford Motor Company Logo. Symbolically, the culture jamming of the Ford logo represented not only the company’s own historic obligations to the community that had worked for generations in its plants, but also its responsibility for the impoverishment and growing desperation of Windsor’s working class. This message clearly had significant resonance for the crowd, as the 1000 shirts they had made were sold out by the end of the day.<sup>82</sup>

Given that the problem was framed as one of bad public policy, solutions were to be found at the level of government action. In that sense, the rally was an attempt to raise public awareness about the issue and galvanize support for the CAW’s policy alternatives. A large turnout was strategically important as a means of putting visible pressure on the federal government, because as Lewenza Sr. argued at the pre-rally activist meeting, they “can’t ignore 30,000 people.”<sup>83</sup> The main policy responses sought by the CAW-led coalition and highlighted in the community-wide mail-out included “fair” and “balanced trade” on the lines of a “new North American Auto Pact,” a monetary policy which brings down the value of the Canadian dollar, the adoption of “Buy Canadian”

80. Personal notes, 22 March 2007.

81. It is worth noting that the CAW’s official position against competitiveness and concessions has, since the 1990s, been accompanied by concrete accommodations to this logic, particularly visible in the negotiation of local agreements that supplement the employer-wide master agreements. Wells shows how the acceptance of lean production methods in the Ford Oakville plant in the 1990s was linked to the desire to prevent jobs from being transferred to other Ford plants and attract investments. The logic of “concessions-for-jobs” has continued through the increasingly common practice of negotiating local shelf agreements, which secure concessions prior to work being transferred to the facility. In that sense, the CAW’s position on these matters has become much more complex than its official policy would imply. See Wells, “When Push Comes to Shove,” 187–88; CAW, “Local 1285 Members Endorse DaimlerChrysler Agreement,” *Contact*, 37.10 (16 March 2007), <<http://www.caw.ca/en/3704.htm>> (15 August 2011).

82. Personal communication, 27 May 2007.

83. Personal notes, 6 May 2007.





#### Culture Jamming the Ford Motor Company

Credit: Jamey Essex

policies by governments and public institutions (especially municipalities), and public investment in key economic sectors.<sup>84</sup>

However, the issue of how to translate numbers of people into a form of strategic power that might shift policymakers' decisions was never fully fleshed out. Although coalition members were aware that a provincial election was approaching in the fall of 2007, there was no explicit connection made between the 27 May rally and the building of an electoral bloc to put material pressure on local Liberal incumbent MPPs Sandra Pupatello and Dwight

84. Our Jobs Our Future Coalition, *Community March and Rally Invitation*, 4. These policy ideas were also central to Phase 2 of the *Manufacturing Matters* campaign, officially launched in mid-2008. Phase 2 focused on lobbying governments for changes in trade and procurement policies. At the federal level, lobbying efforts concerned demands for a Federal Manufacturing Task Force as well as opposition to the proposed Canada-South Korea Free Trade Agreement. At the local level, the CAW held campaign schools for union and community activists to develop local campaigns to pressure municipal governments to adopt "Buy Canadian" policies, which were successful in Thorold, Niagara Falls, St. Catharines, Woodstock, Kitchener, and Toronto. See Canadian Auto Workers, "Fighting For Canadian Jobs: Report on Phase 2," December 2007, <<http://www.caw.ca/en/3486.htm>> (12 August 2011).

Duncan.<sup>85</sup> Given the non-partisan nature of the coalition, and the existence of an alliance of sorts between CAW national leadership and the Ontario Liberal government,<sup>86</sup> the strategy was to remain one of “voice” which CAW leaders could later use in lobbying efforts, not electoral mobilization. Moreover, no attempts were made to use the 27 May event in Windsor to build mass participation for the 30 May event in Ottawa.<sup>87</sup>

### ***Framing the Community: Place, Class and the Politics of Solidarity***

AS WITH ALL UNION-COMMUNITY coalitions, a key political question concerns the framing of “the community” itself. As Amanda Tattersall argues, there are multiple definitions of community implicit in both academic and activist language. “Community” can refer to “organisation, common interest/identity and place.”<sup>88</sup> Which definitions of community are dominant, and whether multiple meanings are complementary or contradictory, has an impact on the strategic decisions, effectiveness and durability of union-community coalitions.

From the October 2006 Town Hall meeting onwards, the “community” being mobilized had a primarily geographic character. Although certain particular interests – the jobs of auto workers – were being defended, so too was the sustainability, social cohesion and quality of life of *Windsor as a place*. Part of what was being mobilized was the incredibly deep emotional attachment Windsorites have for their hometown. With so much of the population the sons and daughters of auto workers, the identification with the struggle of previous generations had a strong emotional charge for many. As Lewenza Sr. put it, there was a risk of “betraying our fathers’ and grandfathers’ legacy” if Windsor as a community was not defended.<sup>89</sup> Throughout the mobilization, many spoke of the pain they felt at the prospect of having to leave, or having their children leave, in order to seek economic opportunities. All of this spoke to the coalition’s ability to mobilize powerful emotions invested in the population’s “sense of home” by invoking “local relationships with others, shared

85. In fact, an electoral challenge to provincial Liberals was explicitly off the table, given that Buzz Hargrove, Ken Lewenza Sr. and Gary Parent attended Sandra Papatello’s nomination meeting in July 2007. Dalson Chen, “CAW and DCX back Papatello; Acclaimed as Liberal candidate,” *The Windsor Star*, 11 July 2007, <<http://www2.canada.com/windsorstar/news/story.html?id=7db57890-f707-4f28-b9fc-8a9cf28f2b17>> (1 June 2008).

86. Savage, “Contemporary Party-Union Relations,” 16.

87. A group of about 30 local CAW leaders and activists went to Ottawa and participated in the lobbying efforts and demonstration.

88. Amanda Tattersall, “Bringing the community in: Possibilities for public sector union success through community unionism,” *International Journal of Human Resources Development and Management*, 6 (2006), 187.

89. Personal notes, 1 October 2006.

values and identity, a childhood or family heritage, continuity and familiarity” rather than the more abstract analysis of political economic trends.<sup>90</sup>

The coalition’s ability to define “community” and its interests on its terms was important in the local framing contest with anti-union media and local politicians. The CAW and its historic militancy was presented as in part responsible for the city’s economic woes. This view that the CAW was “too militant,” “defending its own interests,” and an “impediment to investment” was (and continues to be) a pervasive part of the local Windsor discourse. For instance, during a radio call-in show on AM800 in late April 2007, 70 per cent of 800 callers expressed this view of the union.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, constructing the CAW as the “heart of the community,” defending rather than harming “the community interest,” was a central concern and why the unifying language of place rather than the more divisive one of class was used.

However, the emphasis on Windsor as defining the boundaries of the community meant that real class divisions and power inequalities were masked or sublimated.<sup>92</sup> As Deborah Martin has argued, while “place provides an important mobilizing discourse and identity for collective action,” it can also “obviate diverse facets of social identity” in order to constitute a strategic unity.<sup>93</sup> As such, the “community” of Windsor included not just other unionized workers and those marginalized in the local economy and served by community-based agencies, but also the local business and political elites.<sup>94</sup> The emcee of the October 2006 Town Hall meeting, for instance, introduced key community allies present, listing not only representatives of the local United Way agencies, but also the local real estate board, Big Three car dealerships, and privately owned tourist attractions.<sup>95</sup> Repeated mention was made

90. James M. Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography, and Creativity in Social Movements* (Chicago 1997), 93.

91. Personal notes, 3 May 2007.

92. This is in stark contrast to the discourse which held together the anti-neoliberal coalition which organized the Days of Action, in which the (capitalist) class character of the government’s policy agenda was overtly problematized.

93. Deborah Martin, “Place-Framing’ as Place-Making: Constituting a Neighbourhood for Organizing and Activism,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 93 (September 2003), 730.

94. Others have argued that the CAW’s negotiation of the “Framework of Fairness” with Magna International in October 2007, the centrality of lobbying for government subsidies for Big Three automakers, and the narrowing definition of ‘concessions’ also represents the embrace of more collaborative relationships with employers. It could also be said that the CAW’s *de facto* acceptance of lean production and the team concept in many plants since the mid-1990s also represents this shift, although union leaders and staff have emphasized the pragmatic nature of that accommodation and never defended its virtues. See Wells, “When Push Comes to Shove” and Sam Gindin, “The CAW’s Direction: Some Questions,” *The Bullet* 10 (14 December 2005), <<http://www.socialistproject.ca/bullet/bullet010.html>> (7 March 2011).

95. Personal notes, 1 October 2006. No leaders of other unions from the Windsor area were

of approaching the Windsor Chamber of Commerce to participate in coalition meetings, even though it was also acknowledged that they were “not friends of labour.”<sup>96</sup> However, Dan Moynahan, owner of Platinum Tool Technologies and president of the Canadian Association of Mouldmakers, and representatives from the Downtown Business Improvement Association and BluesFest Music Festival did become active members of the coalition.<sup>97</sup>

The desire for a broad-based alliance with local capital in the hopes of appearing friendly to business (and their potential investments) had an immediate impact on strategic discussions. The concern to attract local business to the coalition – or at least not frighten them – dominated discussions about how to communicate to the public and what kind of actions would be organized. At the first community coalition meeting on 22 March 2007, city councillor and former CBC Windsor reporter Percy Hatfield indicated that two prominent business people<sup>98</sup> had expressed to him their “nervousness” that militancy would further discourage industrial investment, tourism, and the marketing of Windsor, a concern echoed by other CAW leaders.<sup>99</sup> The need to move away from confrontational to respectable tactics out of fear of “scaring investment away” was repeatedly emphasized at coalition meetings. The 27 May event was to be referred to as a “rally” rather than a “demonstration” because of the latter term’s “negative connotation” amongst the business community. The rally was to be an expression of “community unity” and “family” rather than division or conflict, a day not of anger but rather of “solidarity and friendship” and “to love each other.”<sup>100</sup>

Again, local media’s interpretations of the causes of manufacturing job loss had significant influence over how the coalition framed its activities and messages. Nowhere was this better expressed than in the *Windsor Star* editorial which appeared the day before the rally. It argued that the Windsor labour movement’s “reputation for hard-nosed bargaining and confrontation,” as represented by the CAW’s slogan “Fighting Back Makes a Difference,” entailed strategies no longer appropriate to “fighting for jobs in lean times.” Since

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introduced at this event.

96. Personal notes, 26 April 2007.

97. Dave Hall, “Lost jobs spur call to action,” *The Windsor Star*, 9 May 2007, <<http://www.canada.com/windsorstar/news/story.html?id=131c4506-63d4-48eb-8004-a1566c9339c7>> (12 May 2007).

98. The two business interests in question were the Colasanti family, owner of Colasanti’s Tropical Gardens and a well-known tourist attraction in Essex County, and Jenny Coco, head of the Coco Group of Companies (Coco Paving, Coco Developments, and Coco Homes) which are involved in local construction and new home development. Colasanti is a donor to the Liberal Party, while Jenny Coco donated to Jim Flaherty’s bid for the leadership of the Ontario PC Party.

99. Personal notes, 22 March 2007.

100. Personal notes, 22 March and 2 April 2007.

Community Rally  
Poster  
Credit: Stephanie  
Ross

A poster for a community rally. The background is a black and white photograph of an industrial area with a playground in the foreground. The text is overlaid on the image. At the top, the title 'Our Jobs Our Communities Our Future' is written in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Below it, the subtitle 'Standing Up For Canada's Manufacturing Sector' is centered. The event details 'Sunday May 27, 2007 9:00 AM' are listed. Three 'Marshalling Areas' are detailed: Area #1 (Drouillard Rd), Area #2 (Stodgell Park), and Area #3 (Drouillard Rd). The rally time is 'Rally 11:00 am' at 'Ford Test Track Park'. A website and phone number are provided at the bottom. A small note at the very bottom says 'Digitally designed and printed by community volunteers'.

**Our Jobs  
Our Communities  
Our Future**

**Standing Up For  
Canada's Manufacturing  
Sector**

**Community  
Rally**

**Sunday  
May 27, 2007  
9:00 AM**

**Marshalling Areas**

**Area #1**  
Drouillard Rd - between  
Wyandotte Street and  
Riverside Drive  
**Parking**  
Gorski Preferred Parking  
(same lot as labour day)

**Area #2**  
Stodgell Park -  
Northwest corner of  
Kildare Street and  
Seneca Street  
**Parking**  
GM lots on Kildare

**Area #3**  
Drouillard Rd - along  
Chrysler Centre,  
between Tecumseh  
Road and Grand Marais  
**Parking**  
DaimlerChrysler lots on  
Chrysler Centre

**Rally 11:00 am**

**March 10:00 am**      **Ford Test Track Park**

[www.ourjobsourfuture.org](http://www.ourjobsourfuture.org) or call (519) 944-4036 for info.

Digitally designed and printed by community volunteers

Windsor was “not bargaining from a position of strength,” the interests of “the community” were best served by the avoidance of “confrontational images” and “outdated rhetoric from a bygone era that plays well to the hometown crowd” but not to potential investors.<sup>101</sup> Lewenza Sr. mirrored this framing in his rally speech, saying “To the business community, don’t be scared of us ...

101. The Windsor Star, “The Rally: Image and Message,” [editorial] *The Windsor Star*, 26 May 2007.

We're open for business.... There's not a more generous, hard-working community than the community of Windsor-Essex County."<sup>102</sup>

These concerns were internalized in coalition planning and expressed through a number of seemingly apolitical decisions about the timing, location, and activities of the rally. At the second coalition meeting, Lewenza Sr. (from then on chairing the meetings) announced that the CAW had decided upon a date and structure for the rally. Three marches, each leaving from one of the Big Three's plants, would converge at the Ford Test Track in the industrial eastern side of the city. On the one hand, the marches would tour and bear witness to Windsor's crumbling industrial infrastructure and would have some participants retracing the path of the historic 1945 Ford strike blockade,<sup>103</sup> mobilizing both the meanings of and emotional attachments to previous rounds of labour movement struggle. On the other hand, marchers would remain well away from downtown businesses such as the busy Windsor Casino, Chrysler Canada's headquarters, tourists, and traffic. The rally would take place on a Sunday, so as not to interfere with the City of Windsor's business, which involves renting the Test Track out for kids' soccer. The suggestion that rally participants from Chatham-Kent could organize a convoy on Highway 401 to slow traffic and interfere with the just-in-time auto commodity chain was strongly discouraged, because we "don't want to piss people off." Symbolizing the emphasis on family and reinforcing the non-militant tactics to be used, there would be pony rides and inflatable castles for the kids, much like the Labour Day parades.<sup>104</sup> The aim was to "send a loud message" while also being the least disruptive of "business as usual" in Windsor.

The non-adversarial framing of the rally and the decision to use non-militant tactics did not go uncontested. At the October town hall meeting, many CAW members were lined up at the microphones wanting to express their anger and frustration (some booing, for instance, at Essex Conservative MP Jeff Watson),

102. Quoted in Pearson, "Thousands march to support labour."

103. In September 1945, two weeks after the end of the Second World War, UAW Local 200's 10,000 members went on strike for ninety-nine days to secure a dues checkoff and hence union security from the famously anti-union Ford Motor Company. The strike was historically significant for its innovative tactics – strikers ironically blockaded the plant with vehicles – its wide mobilization of local community and national and international labour solidarity, and its outcome. The dispute was not resolved on the picket line, but rather sent to an arbitrator, Supreme Court Justice Ivan Rand, who issued his famous ruling in January 1946 setting up the automatic dues checkoff (but not the union shop). Also known as the Rand Formula, the automatic dues checkoff was to become a central component of the post-war Canadian industrial relations system, providing unions with an unprecedented level of financial and organizational security and eliminating the problem of individual "free riders" who benefited from successful union action but did not have to pay the costs. For a more detailed discussion of the Ford strike, see Don Wells, "Origins of Canada's Wagner Model of Industrial Relations: The United Auto Workers in Canada and the Suppression of "Rank and File" Unionism, 1936–1953," *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 20 (Spring 1995), 208–214.

104. Personal notes, 2 April 2007.

but few had the chance to speak as selected representatives from the various segments of the community were given priority. At the first coalition meeting, a CAW member expressed his frustration at the emphasis on collaboration with business, saying that “business is not our friend, and won’t side with us no matter what we do.” He recalled that, as a PEL instructor, his students had presented him with a 2x4 to symbolize the militant spirit of the education he was helping to deliver. He asserted that “sometimes, we need a 2x4” and suggested this might be one of those times.<sup>105</sup> Lewenza Sr. himself acknowledged it was “frustrating” not being able to contemplate pulling people out of the workplace for even a day to engage in a political strike, not to mention the pain of having to “kiss asses” every day to manage job loss.<sup>106</sup> Others wistfully recalled the excitement and empowerment felt during the Ontario Days of Action, when people *did* leave their workplaces, and wished a similar strategy could be used to save manufacturing jobs. However, overall, there was an acceptance that withdrawing workers’ labour for political purposes was simply not possible in the present circumstances. As Lewenza Sr. put it, “we’re not that radical yet ... one day we will be, but not yet.”<sup>107</sup>

The strategic importance of mobilizing external solidarity from members of other unions, especially in the public sector, was also recognized, and representatives from CUPE (both the municipal workers’ Local 543 and the CUPE District Council), Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO), Ontario Elementary Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA), and Windsor University Faculty Association (WUFA) were consistently present at coalition meetings. While the business community was often invoked in discussions, it was understood that other unions could actually bring people out to a rally. However, the CAW’s view of the importance of these unions in the mobilization was contradictory. There was a recognition of the strategic importance of public sector unions’ mobilizational capacity, since it was crucial to reach beyond the CAW and the manufacturing sector and demonstrate that the community “really cared” about manufacturing jobs. In other words, and given views heavily promoted in the local media, it couldn’t be a rally of the CAW only, which would only reinforce sentiments that the union was defending its own narrow sectional interests. As such, other unions were encouraged to take CAW materials and modify them for their workplaces to produce sector-specific literature that would appeal to their members.

However, the need to reach out to other unions was mixed with some mistrust that they could actually deliver, and perhaps a bit of ambivalence at having to rely upon the mobilization efforts of other unions and communities in the region. When it was suggested that the rally date be moved to 26 May to coincide with the last day of CUPE Ontario’s annual convention (being

105. Personal notes, 22 March 2007.

106. Personal notes, 3 May 2007 and 6 May 2007.

107. Personal notes, 3 May 2007.

held in Windsor and drawing over 1000 delegates), the idea was quashed because “we needed to show we could mobilize our own community and not rely on outsiders.”<sup>108</sup> Vehement exchanges took place in several meetings over whether the coalition should focus on mobilizing in Essex County and Chatham-Kent, areas both integrally linked to the regional auto commodity chain, with the CAW Windsor leadership arguing that we had to focus on “our own community.”

In general, community allies’ motivation to participate was most often framed as an expression of gratitude to and dependence on the CAW for both jobs and community services. This message ran through every document, public information session, and strategy meeting. An oft-quoted message was that, “[f]or every job in a major auto facility (assembly or powertrain), a total of 7.5 jobs depend on that job – including ‘upstream’ jobs in the supply and parts industries, and ‘downstream’ jobs in consumer industries and services.”<sup>109</sup> The contribution of autoworkers to the federal, provincial and local property tax base, and therefore to the sustainability of public sector jobs, was also emphasized. Perhaps most of all, and beginning at the October 2006 town hall meeting, Windsor’s social cohesion was dependent upon the CAW’s participation in the United Way’s annual fundraising drive. With much pride, it was noted that the Ford workers’ Local 200 had again donated the most per capita to the United Way of any group in the city, and that a plant closure raised serious questions about the viability of community services. This message was later echoed by Windsor United Way Executive Director Sheila Wisdom, who pointed to the \$17.5 billion put into the local economy every year by auto industry jobs: “This is the money that buys groceries, supports retail businesses and restaurants.... It’s also the money that supports the social fabric of this community. It supports schools, breakfast clubs and fundraising campaigns for colleges and universities. It’s the money which supports the quality of life in this community which is now being diminished.”<sup>110</sup> Although such charity fundraising is not unique to CAW’s Windsor locals – fully 45 per cent of Canadian union leaders indicate that welfare and charity activities are “very important for their union”<sup>111</sup> – the importance placed on it as an expression of their collective identity is remarkable.

108. Personal notes, 2 April 2007.

109. CAW, “29 Crucial Things You Need to Know About the Current Auto Crisis,” CAW.ca (n.d.), <<http://www.caw.ca/en/5210.htm>> (3 March 2011).

110. Hall, “Lost jobs spur call to action,” A3.

111. Kumar and Murray, *Innovation and Change*, 6. For a fascinating history of the origins of the “Community Chest” movement which was the precursor to today’s United Way, and the connections between the “modernization” of private charitable giving and the modern welfare state, see Shirley Tillotson, *Contributing Citizens: Modern Charitable Fundraising and the Making of the Welfare State, 1920–66* (Vancouver 2008).



This depiction of local economic and social relationships rightly emphasizes the importance of good working-class wages to community sustainability and does reflect a deeply-felt commitment to give back to the community. For instance, in early May 2007, workers at the soon-to-close Ford Casting Plant gathered for a group photo, which they sold to each other in order to donate the proceeds to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, despite facing their own economic insecurity.<sup>112</sup> This reflects in part Tillotson's contention that "the post-war [community] chests [that later became the United Way] managed to contribute to a welfare state culture of universal entitlements and inclusive citizenship – a culture of justice...."<sup>113</sup> However, despite the undeniably positive impact of such charitable fundraising, it also introduces troubling dynamics into an alliance between those constructed as "the heartbeat of the local economy" and those who are not so central and even dependent on that heartbeat. The politics structured into charitable giving differs from other forms of union-community alliance. While an equal partnership between allies is never guaranteed, coalition work is usually premised upon the notion that partners to a joint project or campaign come together to defend or fight for shared interests in a way that will benefit all.<sup>114</sup> Charity, in contrast, is based on an unequal relationship between those who "need" help and those in a position to give it. Charitable campaigns mobilize union members based on the obligation of the more fortunate to "care for" and "give back" to vulnerable and marginalized members of the community. This obligation is at the same time one of solidarity and paternalism. Union members' feelings of pride and powerfulness are predicated upon an inegalitarian relationship in which the unemployed, ill, abused, or poor are grateful for help.

Talk in the coalition assumed that charity relations, because they were solidaristic, were sufficient as a relational glue and set of motivations for community participation in the rally. This discourse took for granted rather than challenged inequalities within the Windsor community, and in particular within its working class, that made it necessary to fund social services through CAW volunteerism and charity. Rather than constructing an alliance based upon challenging the insecurity of community-based agencies and the failure of governments to ensure stable funding for essential social services which had led to the need to rely on CAW charity, the implicit aim was to restore the *status quo ante* of good auto sector jobs supporting services for marginalized

112. Grace Macaluso, "Foundry Workers Count Down," *The Windsor Star*, 4 May 2007, <<http://www.canada.com/windsorstar/news/story.html?id=4c2791d9-650f-43fe-97ae-136079b90666>> (12 May 2007).

113. Tillotson, *Contributing Citizens*, 22.

114. In the various typologies of union-community coalitions, several acknowledge the possibility that the relationship between allies can be inegalitarian. However, none of them take up the issue of charitable giving as a particular form of union-community alliance, nor explore its potential implications. See Tattersall, *Power in Coalition*; Nissen, "The Effectiveness and Limits of Labor-Community Coalitions"; and Frege, Heery and Turner, "The New Solidarity?"

working-class people. As Mary-Beth Raddon puts it more generally, the contemporary conditions of philanthropy actually “confirm and validate the process of neoliberalization in the charitable sector ... by legitimizing social inequality ... and by promoting a narrow ideal of citizenship.”<sup>115</sup> In that sense, as an organizer for another union put it, charity relations constitute a kind of “trickle-down economics in the labour movement.”<sup>116</sup>

In the context of framing the community’s motivation to engage in the rally, social solidarity quickly turned into a *quid pro quo* relationship. For instance, it was argued that, given Local 200’s fundraising record, “we’ve earned consideration” from the community.<sup>117</sup> One prominent anti-poverty activist suggested that the CAW should send letters to all the organizations it had donated money to out of their local Social Justice Funds, telling them “we supported you, now it’s your turn to support us.”<sup>118</sup> In that sense, motivational frames were premised upon a union-community relationship defined by the exchange of money for loyalty. Charitable giving was coded as an instrumental investment in the loyalty and gratitude of the community which could be cashed in when the union required broad political support and therefore imposed certain responsibilities on the part of the recipients.

However, little time was spent thinking about who exactly were parties to this exchange relation and bound by its obligations. While Windsor’s unemployed, working poor and socially marginalized rely upon United Way services, their relationship to the CAW is mediated by the agencies’ executive directors and staff, whose own jobs are contingent upon successful fundraising. Given that these are service agencies rather than social movements, it was never clear whether community-based agencies could effectively mobilize their clients. Nor was much thought given to whether the discourse of gratitude would be a convincing and respectful appeal to those long shut out of the “good jobs” in the local economy. Despite the CAW’s commitment to save good jobs in Windsor, the polarization of the local labour market has in fact been exacerbated by the union’s escalating acceptance of what Jeffrey Sallaz calls “attritionary outsourcing.” In order to achieve permanent reductions in their total workforce, auto companies have “engage[d] in a prolonged though subtle ‘war of attrition’, in which requests for concessions eliminating jobs entail not hiring new workers, rather than firing current employees.”<sup>119</sup>

115. Mary-Beth Raddon, “Neoliberal Legacies: Planned Giving and the New Philanthropy,” *Studies in Political Economy*, 81 (Spring 2008), 28. Raddon’s focus is on elite and corporate philanthropy, but the contradictions of charitable giving that she describes are relevant to dynamics within the working class as well.

116. Personal communication, March 2008.

117. Personal notes, 1 October 2006.

118. Personal notes, 22 March 2007.

119. Jeffrey Sallaz, “Manufacturing Concessions: Attritionary Outsourcing at General Motors’ Lordstown, USA Assembly Plant,” *Work, Employment and Society*, 18 (December 2004), 696.

In the context of the Canadian auto sector, this strategy is evident in buyouts for relatively junior workers, who have the prospect of retraining and taking up new jobs, early retirement incentives, and forms of “vertical deintegration” in which parts plants are sloughed off by the Big Three and workers (even if they continue to be unionized) end up making considerably less than before.<sup>120</sup> Despite these being seen as job-saving strategies, which may well have slowed manufacturing collapse in Windsor, the union’s acceptance of them has facilitated a permanent restructuring of the local labour market, such that there will be fewer “good jobs” in the community in the long-run and thus necessitating forms of social support for the growing ranks of the working poor. In a counter-intuitive way, then, the focus on charity worked to mask the CAW’s growing separation from the rest of the non-union working class and to obscure inquiry into the broader community implications of the union’s responses to employer demands for concessions.

A Local 200 activist challenged the “charity for solidarity” equation at the first coalition meeting. He insisted it wasn’t a lack of consciousness of how bad things are that explained why more (especially non-union) community members weren’t engaged in the defence of manufacturing jobs. Rather, he argued, “the rest of the working class has been taking a shit kicking for a lot longer than auto workers. CAW members are just now starting to feel the problems others have been living with for a long time.” In his view, the CAW had been “insulated from this reality” and its failure to mobilize around other workers’ hardship was a source of resentment in the community.<sup>121</sup> However, the strategic implications of his comments, which may have required a different communications strategy and set of appeals to other working-class Windsorites, were never addressed.

### ***The Politics of Coalition Decision-Making***

THE INEQUALITIES in the relationship between the CAW and community allies were also evident in the narrow scope of decisions presented to the coalition for its consideration. The first meeting of the organizing committee began not with a broad discussion of message, strategy or aims, but rather with logistical questions of parking, the stage, and PA system. While the meeting did broaden out to include a discussion of the political and strategic terrain (as discussed above), this starting point was indicative of the role the CAW envisioned for the community in planning the rally.

Subsequent meetings reinforced the sense that the community’s role was to remain at the level of tactics, working within and implementing an already-defined plan and message rather than altering it or raising fundamental

120. Sallaz, “Manufacturing Concessions,” 688; Sam Gindin, “Concessions in Oshawa: The End of an Era?” *The Bullet* 14 (22 March 2006), <<http://www.socialistproject.ca/bullet/bullet014.html>> (3 March 2011).

121. Personal notes, 22 March 2007.

questions. For instance, the mail-out sent to Windsor homes was not jointly authored by the coalition (or even its Communications sub-committee), but rather a reformatted version of the CAW's PowerPoint presentation introducing the *Manufacturing Matters* campaign to its own members. Although a draft version of the document was circulated at a meeting in early April, there was no debate on its contents and it was sent out as proposed. Similarly, the non-partisan aspect of the campaign was also never up for debate, although the question was raised both explicitly and implicitly in various ways.

There can be several interpretations of the overall lack of strategic debate in the coalition. One could posit that a wide consensus on strategy existed, and therefore no such debates were required. However, there were indications at and in between meetings of dissenting views which were not fully expressed. One could also say that the urgency of the situation, of having to organize a successful mass demonstration in such a short time frame, made unity a pre-eminent concern and raised the costs of framing disputes to such an extent that participants sat on their objections. It could also be said that other coalition participants did not have the organizational capacity to articulate and advocate for an alternative strategic vision, particularly compared with the CAW's ability to draw on extensive financial and intellectual resources.

While there is truth in all of these interpretations, another factor lies in the type of coalition itself, and the political implications thereof. The origins and dynamics of the Windsor coalition best resembles a combination of what Tattersall calls "*ad hoc*" and "support" coalitions. *Ad hoc* coalitions tend to form in response to crisis, and usually involve short-term requests for money or support with no joint decision-making. Support coalitions involve deepening *ad hoc* relationships into some joint planning of an event or campaign, with "a closer integration of common interest and organizational buy-in through a more cohesive structure." However, the character and strategy of both these types of coalition tend to be dominated by the initiating organization, and the building of deeper, long-term, and mutually beneficial relationships is not guaranteed.<sup>122</sup> In nearly all its respects, the union-community coalition formed in Windsor in the spring of 2007 conforms to this characterization, and the implications of these decisions and relations are still playing out today.

### **Conclusions: Coalition Work and the Question of Working-Class Capacities**

THE PERVASIVE SENSE OF CRISIS in Windsor's local auto industry in 2006–2007 kicked the local labour and social movements into high gear, resulting in an effective union-community coalition that carried off an impressive mass mobilization and achieving at least the short-term goal of displaying community unity in defence of good jobs and a way of life. The *Manufacturing*

122. Tattersall, "There is Power in Coalition," 99–102.

*Matters* campaign did rely on and produce strong internal and external mobilizing structures that surpassed similar subsequent mobilizations in Ottawa, Sudbury, and Hamilton. This highlights the importance of long-term union-community engagement over many rounds of struggle in creating an infrastructure of resources and trust relationships in building the capacity for resistance in hard times.

However, this case also indicates that mobilizing structures, even long-standing and durable ones, are not enough: the ideas and strategies used to mobilize people, frame their relationships to each other, and define the basis of their solidarity matter, and make particular kinds of future relationships more or less likely. With this in mind, on most of Tattersall's criteria for coalition success, the results of the 2007 mobilization are much more ambivalent. In terms of the specific external outcome desired – changing government policies on trade and investment – little to no impact was made. Neither can the coalition be said to have reshaped the local political climate or prevailing discourses about the causes of the manufacturing crisis. The coalition was unable to serve as a space for fostering oppositional culture and alternative analyses of the political economic situation independent of those promoted by either business interests or political power holders. Instead, the inclusion of local business and political leaders in the coalition and the obsessive concern for the mobilization's impact on "attracting investment" accepted the competitiveness framework and led to a non-confrontational strategy which ultimately had little impact on either employer or government decisions.

The particular ways that union-community relationships were constructed and appealed to also revealed some of the contradictions in longer-term patterns of union engagement with the community. The framing of both the problems faced and the collective identities being mobilized failed to challenge class inequality and other forms of injustice/oppression in Windsor by relying on powerful yet problematic place-based definitions of community. These framing choices led to inclusion of local capitalists and political elites in the coalition, regardless of their role in promoting or benefiting from anti-labour politics. The inclusion of other segments of the local working class was prioritized, but in subordinate ways. The treatment of public sector unions as "junior partners" in the coalition, the mobilization of "charity for solidarity" to pull in those reliant on United Way programs, and the lopsided forms of decision-making power in the coalition all raise questions about the long-term capacity of Windsor's labour movement to effectively articulate and organize around the broader interests of Windsor's working class.

Such capacity to unite the working-class community in deep and sustainable ways is more crucial than ever, as other workers come under attack from employers and governments. In the aftermath of the *Manufacturing Matters* campaign, for instance, Windsor itself faced a very contentious strike by the City of Windsor's inside and outside municipal workers in the spring and summer of 2009. Despite solidarity efforts by local labour leaders and activists,

forms of scabbing (like garbage pickup for hire) were widespread.<sup>123</sup> Eddie Francis, Windsor's mayor at the time, was re-elected in the Fall 2010 municipal elections and has subsequently privatized garbage collection (although that work has also since been unionized). The *Manufacturing Matters* coalition's decisions are not directly responsible for "failing" to manage the divisions that increasingly accompany public sector strikes of this nature. However, the community's reaction to the municipal workers' strike, following so closely on the heels of the largest community mobilization in defence of "good jobs", does raise questions about the capacities built (or not built) by the coalition, and in particular the local labour movement's ability to generate and sustain active community support for a range of social justice struggles beyond the CAW.

Ultimately, this case asks us to think carefully about the specificities of union strategy and their implications for the renewal of working-class (and not just union) capacities. This case illustrates that what seems like impressive social movement capacity can actually rest on discourses and relationships that can demobilize and divide the working class over the long run. The choices unions make over how to frame their issues, goals, strategies and tactics, whether conscious or not, have long-term implications for building working-class unity and power. As communities continue to grapple with economic crisis and the means of creating not just effective forms of resistance but also capacities for greater economic democracy and equality, these lessons must be heeded.

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123. Jeff Noonan, "The Windsor CUPE Strike: Implications for the Labour Movement and the Left," *The Bulletin* 236 (9 July 2009), <<http://www.socialistproject.ca/bullet/bullet236.html>> (7 March 2011).