

# Table of Contents

'Finally Got the News' screening: reading material . . . . .	1
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# 'Finally Got the News' screening: reading material

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Finally Got the News Saturday, June 28, 8pm, £0 The Pullens Centre, 184 Crampton St, Elephant & Castle, London SE17 Rare screening of documentary (dir. Steward Bird, Rene Lichtman, Peter Gessner) on the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, from wildcat movement to formidable independent workers organization, inside and outside the auto factories of insurgent turn-of-the-'70s Detroit.

Shot as the events were happening, the film features interviews with participants and footage from inside the plants. With speaker Brian Ashton, ex-car industry shop steward. Below are brief descriptions (with URLs) of six online texts, which combine to form a sort of virtual 'reader' expanding on the content of the film. The first three deal directly with the the Detroit events, their historical background and immediate aftermath. The last three go further into the surrounding questions of class struggle, racial politics and industrial production and its evisceration.

1 & 2. Martin Glaberman, Black Cats, White Cats, Wildcats: Auto Workers in Detroit; Dan Georgakas & Marvin Surkin, extract from Detroit: I do Mind Dying: a Study in Urban Revolution (one url for both texts). Historical account by Glaberman of class composition in the Detroit car industry leading up to the events around DRUM/ELRUM/League of Revolutionary Black Workers. Followed by excerpt from the book Detroit: I Do Mind Dying (republished by South End Press, 2004), including a detailed and critical statement by John Taylor, a white Appalachian auto worker involved in the struggles. <http://libcom.org/library/black-cats-white-cats-wildcats-martin-glaberman>

3. A. Muhammad Ahmad, 1968-1971: the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. Narrative of the League's genesis, activity and breakdown. Ahmad gives another version of many of the same events covered in the Georgakas/Sukin book, which he attacks for 'grossly distorting the history', also criticising the film Finally Got the News and the movement's highest-profile 'intellectual'/administrative leaders. The criticism comes from an explicitly black nationalist standpoint, but Ahmad also denounces 'the inability of the out-of-plant leaders to relate their theory to Black workers' reality, failure on their part to listen to and learn from the workers and to treat them as equals'. The intellectuals eventually ordered all members into Political Education classes; underlying the ideological split over 'the capitalist exploitation model and the colonial model', claims Ahmad, were unresolved 'social contradictions' between the college-trained 'Marxist-Leninists' and the shop floor workers. <http://libcom.org/library/league-revolutionary-black-workers>

4. James Boggs, Pages from a Negro Worker's Notebook. Short book often cited as DRUM/LRBW influence, published in 1963 after Boggs broke with CLR James' Facing Reality group. Historical survey emphasises workers' struggle beyond and against unions; precocious futurecasting sections imagine a proletariat fully deindustrialized by military keynsianism-driven 'automation', with the resulting mass unemployment and race-category breakdown supposed to be a devastating and/or revolutionary force. Unworldly as the optimistic bits can sound today, there's no question about US capital's state-sponsored rush to deindustrialize, with the Detroit plants gutted and GM floundering in its core business as a health insurance/pensions fund. <http://historyisaweapon.org/defcon1/amreboggs.html>

5. Ferruccio Gambino, The Transgression of a Laborer: Malcolm X in the Wilderness . Essay by a former Potere Operaio militant, using FBI files to trace the metamorphoses of Malcolm X's mortal enmity towards the racial state, focusing on his life as a labourer before, during and after prison (when he became a 'grinder' at Gar Wood, Detroit).

<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/lobby/2379/gambino.htm>

6. Ferruccio Gambino, A Critique of the Fordism of the Regulation School. In which Gambino pulls apart the 'Fordism/postfordism' stereotype of industrial production, arguing that 'Fordism' in the only meaningful sense was defeated by the US industrial working class by 1941. Myths surrounding 'Toyotism', 'just in time' production and 'globalism' are also neatly skewered.

[http://www.wildcat-www.de/en/zirkular/28/z28e\\_gam.htm](http://www.wildcat-www.de/en/zirkular/28/z28e_gam.htm)