

# Blacks And Women; Scapegoats

Now that the automobile industry has all but collapsed because of the uncontrollable flood of foreign cars, and the catastrophic drop in consumer demand, business leaders and economists are frantically rounding up suspects, the people who will be blamed for the decline--more precisely, the murder, of what was once America's premier industrial sector.

Not surprisingly, many management people are pointing their fingers at workers, specifically women and minorities. Several weeks ago, for instance, the lead story in the Wall Street Journal, the business community's most prestigious mouthpiece, blamed the closing of Ford's Mahwah, New Jersey plant on the workers. The Journal's headlines were an indictment: "Mahwah, N.J., Site Was Hurt By Absences, Vandalism," the paper declared. To add a little more spice to the story, the editors added "Marijuana on the Night Shift."

"Built in 1955," the Journal's reporter noted, "Ford's Mahwah plant quickly developed a history of labor and quality problems. Some blamed them partly on a high proportion of black and Hispanic workers who hadn't had experience on assembly lines."

As if blacks and Hispanics weren't enough of a headache, the Journal pointed out that "additional problems" arose in 1976 and 1977, when "there was a major influx of women as Ford tried to comply with federal mandates for equal opportunity."

The women, according to the Journal's sources at Mahwah, "weren't up to assembly line work. Indeed, they were supposedly so clumsy that they kept cracking windshields on trucks because they couldn't handle the heavy equipment."

By running such a damning and unfair story on the workers of Mahwah, the Journal is setting forth what is rapidly becoming the official corporate line on America's economic

problems: declining or stagnating productivity business would have us believe, is caused by over-paid, lazy, and inferior workers, in this case, blacks, Hispanics and women. As expected, scarcely a word is ever uttered about the devastating impact of imports, or the disastrous mistakes of management.

An examination of the facts, however, punctures and quickly deflates the assertion that blacks and women are significant causes of deteriorating quality and productivity in the auto industry. First of all, auto manufacturing has always had a fairly large proportion of black and female workers. Back in the late 1960's, when the auto companies were doing well, there were roughly 220,000 female auto workers. In 1977, about 240,000 women worked in the auto factories, hardly a gigantic increase. The same holds true for blacks--the proportion of black workers in the auto industry has not increased significantly during the last 10 to 12 year.

What is more, there is no evidence to support the claim that blacks and women are less efficient or more careless than white males. Such an assertion rests not on fact but on nothing more than crude, blatant prejudice.


As to the argument that American workers have priced themselves out of the market by demanding exorbitant wages while their counterparts in Japan, Germany, France, Italy and Sweden (the five major sources of foreign cars) settled for less, a look at the statistics tells quite a different story. Between 1967 and 1979, for instance, hourly compensation for American manufacturing workers increased by 151.3%. But the hourly wages for workers in Japan increased by 433.5%, in France by 354.0%, and Sweden by 324.5%, and in Germany by 237.4%. So, it is abundantly clear that the issue of high wages is a false and misleading one.

All of these baseless accusations against workers come at a time when the economy continues to sink into a deeper and more damaging recession than predicted. The business community, which has done nothing to control imports and which has mismanaged large sectors of the economy, now needs scapegoats. Workers, as usual, are the easiest and most defenseless targets; they are being dragged on stage to receive stern lectures about the sanctity of hard work, frugality, and respect for their employers.

But it is getting harder every day to convince workers and minorities that they the victims of recession, are the fundamental cause of their own suffering.

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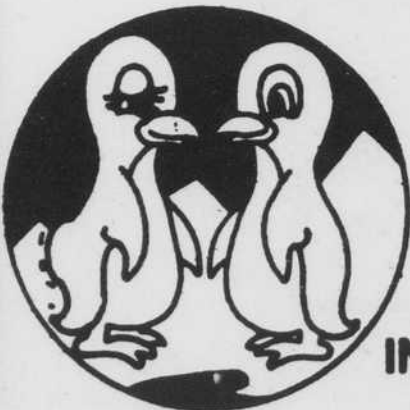


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## Crossword Puzzle

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12			13					14		
15								16		
	17			18		19			20	
21		22				23		24		
25				26	27					
28				29				30	31	32
			34	35				36		
37	38	39						40		
41				42	43	44	45		46	
47			48			49		50		51
52						53				
54						55			56	

- ACROSS**
- Concealed
  - Cut off
  - Slumbered
  - Flower
  - Dimmer
  - Contended
  - Conscious
  - State: abbr.
  - Chemical compound
  - Bond
  - Uncivil
  - Mutineers
  - Poems
  - Barter
  - Spreads hay
  - Owens
  - Summit
  - Slip away
  - Fly aloft
  - Bees
  - Fish
  - Fabulous bird
  - Cycles of changes
  - Sun god
  - Concepts
  - Median
  - Rent
  - Renounces
  - Oner
  - Insect
  - Bitter vetch
  - Rub out
  - Decay
  - German city
  - Animal
  - Pronoun
  - Knock
  - Valor
  - Director
  - Age
  - Inferior
  - Practice
  - Cattle roundup
  - Body of water
  - avis
  - Equitable
  - Transmitted
  - Peer Gynt's mother
  - Concerning
  - Letter
- DOWN**
- Owens
  - Trespass
  - Mocked
  - Affection
  - Singles
  - Confined
  - Exempted
  - Statute
  - Elevate
  - Hazard
  - Woody plants
  - Musical syllable

**Answer to Puzzle**

S	R	E	T	N	V	R	E	N	O	L
E	S	S	E	N	E	R	S	V	E	L
E	V	E	R	A	V	E	S	I	D	E
C	H	E	R	S	E	R	S	C	O	R
V	N	N	I	S	E	S	D	R	O	N
R	O	S	E	S	E	S	E	S	E	S
S	O	V	E	R	S	E	L	O	S	E
A	C	M	E	S	H	A	S	T	E	S
E	D	E	T	R	A	D	E	S	E	D
S	L	S	E	S	R	E	E	S	E	S
B	I	T	T	E	R	E	S	T	E	R
E	L	I	T	E	S	T	R	I	E	S
E	A	V	A	R	E	S	T	R	I	V
A	L	E	R	E	N	E	S	E	R	E
P	A	L	E	R	E	S	E	R	E	S
L	O	P	S	L	E	P	T	H	I	D