

Jobs Crisis Forum: The time for excuses is over; create jobs now

By **JAMES PARKS**
National AFL-CIO

Shonda Sheen of Yellow Springs, Ohio, was laid off in December 2009 and is about to run out of unemployment benefits. Because of state budget cuts, she also could soon lose the health care nurse who helps care for her mother who has dementia. At the last job she applied for, she was told 450 others had also applied for the same position.

Sheen and Bob Stein, a 60-year-old former salesman who has been out of work since May 2010, are two of the 14 million Americans who are unemployed — and their story is not being told in the midst of the debate over the deficit. Sheen and Stein, who are both members of Working America, spoke to a July 11 forum on “The Jobs Crisis — Moving to Action: A Dialogue Between Workers and Policymakers” at the AFL-CIO in Washington, D.C.

“All I want is a decent job,” Sheen said. “I want to work. I love to work. I’m scared. I don’t know what’s going to happen to my mother. I have a home to pay off.”

The forum, moderated by Bob Herbert, distinguished fellow at Demos and an award-winning journalist, drew a sharp contrast between the policies that got the country in this economic crisis and are currently being advocated to get it out, and what is needed in order to

spark a real economic recovery.

Stein says it’s frustrating to try to find a job in an economy that generated only 18,000 jobs last month. “I was set to lose unemployment as of the second or third week of December, and [politicians] were fighting back and forth and it was predicated on the Bush tax cuts. I was caught right in the middle of that,” he said. “The thing that was so upsetting is when you heard about the number of people about to lose their unemployment check. I thought, ‘OK, I understand that you’re adamant about this Bush tax cut thing, but you’re holding us all hostage. You’re playing politics with people’s lives. People use their unemployment. This will stimulate and help the economy.’”

The panel also included AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, Sen. Al Franken (D-Minn.), Rep. Sander Levin (D-Mich.) and Heather Boushey, a senior economist at the Center for American Progress.

Panelists noted that many in Washington continue to push deregulation and tax cuts as the way out of the economic hole, without acknowledging the role that those policies played in creating the current economic conditions. The strategy to encourage corporations to spend their billions of dollars in profits is doomed when politicians don’t first acknowledge the truth that working people drive the economy as con-

sumers. Without good jobs or shared prosperity, corporations won’t spend and our economy can’t prosper.

Trumka said working people are frustrated with both political parties. “The time for excuses is over,” he said. “People don’t care about why it [creating jobs] isn’t getting done. They just want to get it done. We can create jobs if we want to. It’s a matter of political will.”

More and more economists are coming around to the idea that the economy is faltering because of a lack of demand, Boushey said. The best ways to increase demand, she said, is to invest in things that generate demand, like infrastructure aid to the states, education and long-term unemployment benefits.

Noting that the middle class is the engine of our economy, Franken said retaining tax breaks and loopholes for the rich, as Republicans have proposed, won’t increase demand. Rich people can only buy so much stuff, Franken said, then they save their money.

“The idea that those at the top who are richer than anyone has ever been in history — why they can’t pay a higher percentage in taxes is crazy,” Franken said.

The forum was hosted by the AFL-CIO, Change To Win labor federation, Demos and the Economic Policy Institute.

HOW TO FIND UNION-MADE TIRES

The U.S. Department of Transportation requires that all tires sold in the United States carry a code which shows, among other things, the company and plant that made the tire. The code would look like this: DOT BE XX XXX XXX

The two symbols (either two letters or a letter and a number) which follow “DOT” indicate the company and the plant where a tire was manufactured. For example, the above code indicates a tire made by B. F. Goodrich in Tuscaloosa, AL. The following is a listing of all U.S. and Canadian unionized tire plants and their DOT codes. By comparing this list to the code on the tire you are buying, you can be certain you are getting a USW-made tire.

CODE	COMPANY, CITY
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BF	B. F. Goodrich Woodburn, Ind.
VE, YE, YU, 8B	Bridgestone/Firestone Des Moines, Iowa
D2, E3, W1, Y7	Bridgestone/Firestone Lavergne, Tenn.
2C, 4D, 5D	Bridgestone/Firestone Morrison, Tenn.
UP	Cooper Findlay, Ohio
UT	Cooper Texarkana, Ark.
JU, PC, UK	Goodyear Medicine Hat, Alberta
DY	Denman Tire Warren, Ohio
JJ, MD, PU	Goodyear Gadsden, Ala.
DA	Dunlop Buffalo, N.Y.
JN, MJ, PY	Goodyear Topeka, Kan.
JE, MC, PT	Goodyear Danville, Va.
JT, MK, TA	Goodyear Union City, Tenn.
JF, MM, PJ	Kelly-Springfield Fayetteville, N.C.
CC	Yokohama Tire Salem, Va.

* Any Goodyear racing tire made in the United States is a USW-made tire.

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