

**Statement of Edna Dawson  
Team Leader  
Collins & Aikman Plant, Holmesville, Ohio**

**Thank you for the opportunity to share my story. My name is Edna Dawson, and I work at a Collins & Aikman Plant in Holmesville, Ohio. This plant supplies parts to automobile manufacturers. Also, with me today are co-workers, Wanda Patterson, Dixie Akers, Arie Schegel Fulton, and Linda Kendell.**

**In May of 2003, our plant began experiencing a new kind of union organizing drive from the United Steelworkers of America. We have experienced several organizing drives before, but they had always been secret ballot elections, and we consistently voted "No" as a plant to union representation.**

**Our plant Manager announced to us in May of 2003 that this union organization campaign would be under a so-called "neutrality agreement" that Collins & Aikman had entered into with the United Steelworkers of America. The difference, he explained, was that the company would remain neutral in this campaign, and there would be no secret ballot election, that just a majority of cards signed would give the union the right to be recognized as the bargaining agent for the plant. We learned, in fact, that the company was anything but neutral. They were assisting the union in pressuring us to unionize.**

**When the campaign began, we discovered that the union people were going to be in our cafeteria each and every day during breaks and lunch, listening to all of our conversations. They would then propose themselves as the solution to our problems. They went to our homes several times attempting to get us to sign union authorization cards. In most cases there were more than just one of them, and several people felt intimidated by this tactic. I know people in my plant that had to throw the union representatives off their private property even after they had made it clear that they were not interested. I know numerous people that signed cards just to stop from being harassed. This constant pestering lasted for 90 days.**

**There are rumors that this backroom deal was signed because the steelworkers pension fund handed over \$25 million to the investment firm that owns Collins & Aikman. This agreement also shows that wages and benefits are already determined if the union gets a majority of the cards signed. And we also have learned that it has been agreed to in advance that we will eventually be required to pay union dues on penalty of being fired from our jobs.**

**I'm proud to say that up to the current time, we have so far been able to resist union organization despite all the coercion and pressure to sign cards. We formed our own employee committee and fought with everything we could on our own. What we are asking for is that we abide by the National Labor Relations Act, and be allowed to vote in secret ballot elections, so that the threatening and intimidating atmosphere is eliminated and we are allowed to exercise our democratic rights.**

**We're thrilled to be here in Washington to let Congressman Norwood know that he is doing the right thing, and we support his secret ballot protection act.**

**Thank you.**