

# ULTERIOR MOTIVES

*An agitprop play in one act*

*By Ned Zimmerman*

## *Cast of Characters*

The Prime Minister

The Boss

Reporter

Shop Supervisor

Worker 1

Worker 2

## *Scene 1: The Factory Floor*

*A photo opportunity is underway. The Prime Minister hands a novelty cheque to the Boss—the Reporter snaps pictures. The Shop Supervisor and the Workers stand uneasily to the side.*

PRIME MINISTER (*smirking*): Today is a great day for the Canadian worker. My government's corporate tax breaks will ensure that the owner of the Ulterior Locomotive factory and others like him will be able to keep creating good Canadian jobs for years to come.

BOSS (*with a wink*): Of course, of course! Always a pleasure doing business with you Canadians.

WORKER 1: I don't trust that guy any further than I can throw him.

WORKER 2: Well, that's what the union's for, isn't it? They've got our backs.

WORKER 1: I guess so. Still...

REPORTER: Can we get a picture of you in that locomotive, Mr. Prime Minister?

PRIME MINISTER (*rudely, to Shop Supervisor*): You don't have a problem with that, do you?

SHOP SUPERVISOR (*deferentially*): No, sir.

The Prime Minister climbs into the "locomotive" and waves as the Reporter snaps a picture.

## *Scene 2: Boss's Office*

*The Boss is on the phone.*

BOSS: Well, Governor, I'd sure as hell love to be back in the States again. You guys have the unions figured out better than these damned Canucks. (Pause.) Well, I think I have an idea. You'll be hearing from me.

*He hangs up the phone. A knock on the door.*

BOSS: Come in!

*The Prime Minister enters.*

BOSS (*obsequious*): Mr. Prime Minister! What a pleasant surprise.

PRIME MINISTER (*curtly*): You wanted to see me.

BOSS: Yes, I just—I had a question about that five million dollars you gave us three years back. Are there any—er—*conditions* as to how I can use it?

PRIME MINISTER (*with a laugh*): Of course not. What do you take me for?

BOSS: Well, it never hurts to ask. Just so you know—I'm gonna have to make some changes around here. The union might not like 'em.

PRIME MINISTER: You know how I feel about unions. Do what you gotta do.

BOSS: I'm so glad we understand each other.

*They shake hands and exit.*

### *Scene 3: Factory Exterior*

*There is a padlock on the factory door. The Workers hold signs: "LOCKED OUT"/"HOW WOULD YOU LIKE A 50% PAY CUT?" The Shop Supervisor is talking to the Reporter.*

SHOP SUPERVISOR: And I'd ask you, and your viewers, and our government—how would YOU like to have your pay cut in half? We've got five hundred workers here whose livelihoods are on the line.

WORKERS: Shame! Shame!

SHOP SUPERVISOR: My union couldn't accept these terms, so the owners locked us out.

REPORTER: Is the Prime Minister taking your calls?

SHOP SUPERVISOR: No. I guess he got all he wanted when he had that photo op three years ago. He's done with us now.

WORKERS: Shame! Shame!

*The Boss enters. The Reporter rushes over to him.*

WORKERS: Shame! Shame! The workers, united, will never be defeated! The workers, united, will never be defeated! (*Repeat until audience joins in.*)

BOSS (*interrupting*): I'm sorry, but if the union can't understand the realities of this recession then we're going to have to make them understand. It is regrettable that this has become necessary, but I'm here to announce that we're going to have to close production operations at this factory.

REPORTER: You mean—you're shutting down the factory?

BOSS: Yes.

REPORTER: Permanently?

BOSS: Permanently.

WORKERS: Shame! Shame!

BOSS: Our neighbours to the south have made me an offer that I'd be foolish to refuse. And it just so happens that I have this cheque—(*produces novelty cheque from first scene*)—for five million dollars. Which should just about cover my moving costs.

SHOP SUPERVISOR: But what about our families? Our children? Our mortgage payments?

BOSS: You should've thought about that before. So long.

*The Boss exits.*

WORKER 1: Wait a second. There's five hundred of us, and one of them.

WORKER 2: Let's take back our factory! The workers, united, will never be defeated!

SHOP SUPERVISOR and WORKERS: The workers, united, will never be defeated! The workers, united, will never be defeated!

*The Shop Supervisor and the Workers tear off the padlock and open the factory doors. They link arms, turn and face the audience. The Reporter snaps a picture. Curtain.*

## *Special Thanks*

Celina, my collaborator on the seminar project that inspired this play.

The “Concordia Progressive Arts Club”—in alphabetical order, Adjani, Alex, Allie, Amy, Christina, Eden Olivia, Manouchka, Michael, Peter, Rae & Sydney.

Rachael, Ted & Liz.

The members of the Canadian Auto Workers Local 27 in London, Ontario.