

Live Bait & Ammo #142: Work to Rule the Union

“Good news is driving into the Bay City GM Powertrain plant Thursday as officials plan to announce millions of dollars in investments at the plant and, possibly, more jobs.” [Bay City Times, 2/17/10] But new investment by GM, sad to say, doesn’t necessarily mean union jobs.

Former members of UAW Local 239 in Baltimore who are presently laid off as a result of an assembly plant closing were pleased to learn about new investment in a GM Powertrain plant in Baltimore. But then, they learned they are excluded from transfer to the plant.

According to GM it’s a “stand alone facility” and thus not subject to the UAW national agreement. The new stand alone plant is being built right next door to the old plant. A new GM plant in Brownstown, MI also labeled “stand alone” is non union. A new stand alone Delphi plant in Kokomo, IN is also non union. Will any new investments by GM mean more UAW jobs? Or has the Concession Caucus begun the final stage of the sell out? First the farm and now the cattle?

Or will new jobs simply be restricted to new hires at second tier wages as they are at SPOs? We have also learned that GM is replacing UAW members at Ryder Trucking with a non union company owned by one of the most notorious predators in Detroit, Manny Maroun. When UAW members who have paid dues for over 20 years are restricted from jobs at GM in favor of new hires or non union workers, it is fair and reasonable to ask, who is the UAW representing? Active workers? Or the VEBA’s stock dependent bottom line?

When the Con Caucus tells GM parts workers that it is in their best interest to voluntarily reduce severance packages and SUB pay because GM may close their plant, it is indisputable that the Cons are representing the company not the workers. Neither severance nor SUB pay has anything to do with competitiveness, because neither benefit is paid until the competition is over.

Does the UAW VEBA comprise a conflict of interest that renders the UAW unable to fulfill their duty of fair representation? The evidence is mounting. Perhaps the question could best be answered by the NLRB. It’s certainly a relevant topic for delegates at the UAW Constitutional Convention scheduled for this June in Detroit.

There was a time when the UAW acted like a union and respected its Constitution and its members. For example, the old UAW never entered into negotiations without the approval of the membership taken in the form of a strike vote per Article 19 Section 3 of the UAW Constitution.

Has your local taken a strike vote? Or is your local bargaining committee part of a renegade union seeking to negotiate concessions without membership approval? A union without strike authorization isn’t in a position to bargain, it’s in a position to beg.

Pete Bennet, a UAW Local 2093 retiree and former Bargaining Committee member who was a soldier of solidarity before we coined the name, writes: “I had a good time today reviewing 30 years worth of membership meeting minutes. What I looked for were motions to enter into negotiations for local agreements and motions to conduct strike votes for local and national negotiations. Below is a list of dates our minutes show passage of motions and which event they were for.

- * 4-16-80: Motion to conduct a strike vote for local negotiations
- * 5 -7- 82: Motion to open local negotiations
- * 8-14-84: Motion to hold a strike vote
- * 3 -6- 85: Motion to conduct a strike vote at the discretion of the shop committee
- * 8-18-85: Strike vote conducted for national negotiations (GM)
- * 7-11-90: Motion to enter local negotiations
- * 8 -?- 90: Strike vote conducted for national negotiations (GM)
- * 5 -1- 96: Local strike vote conducted for local agreement (AAM)
- * 2- 6- 08: Strike vote conducted for both local and national negotiations (AAM)

A real union upholds its own Constitution and respects that the highest authority in the union is the membership. The Concession Caucus currently in control of the UAW does neither. Work to Rule isn’t limited to the shopfloor. It also applies to the union. Work to rule the union.

sos, GreggShotwell@aol.com

www.warriorsoflabor.com

www.soldiersofsolidarity.com

www.factoryrat.com

Labor Donated