

Live Bait & Ammo # 61

Miller has changed his tune. He says he wants a "consensual" agreement with the UAW. Consensual is an interesting choice of words. Consensual is the word defense attorneys use in date rape cases. Your consent will not make the date less shameful.

Miller's stall and delay tactic is rope-a-dope. He wants to lull us into complacency and knock our lights out. GM didn't spin us off to take us back and Delphi didn't hire Miller for his consensual personality.

As one analyst told me, "Miller pulled the suicide defense." He put a gun to his head and said, "Give me concessions or I'll pull the trigger."

My committeeman, Dennis Krontz, said, "Oh, no! That's not necessary! He doesn't have to do that! I'll pull the trigger for him."

If you are fed up with threats and intimidation, you have two choices: call the bluff or fold; strike back or roll over; consent or kick ass.

We may be the small dogs in this fight but we have more fight in us than any other animal on the block and nothing to lose but our wages, pensions, benefits, seniority rights, job preference, vacations; in short, our fur. There are thousands of us willing to fight back for all we are worth. We made GM and we can break GM.

Some people believe they can retire and glide off into the sunset without a care. Some people imagine that if they just sit there and stare, all their dreams will come true. Some people think television is reality and the couch is a safe place. But when the wolf is at the door your remote control won't save you. The wolf will not go away just because you pretend no one's home.

Who will take care of your interests when you are retired and can't vote on the contract? The members you left behind with a broken union and poverty wages? The Concession Caucus opened a new door in negotiations -- take aways from retirees. Where will that end? Do you think GM won't be back for more? The Concession Caucus sent a clear message: retiree benefits are up for grabs.

Real hope is fighting like hell against all odds. Likewise, optimism isn't the dopey notion that everything will turn out right in the end because we are nice people. Real optimism is confidence in one's ability to prevail. If we aren't willing to stop production and drag GM kicking and screaming to the bargaining table, we have no right to cry rape after the fact. No resistance means consent.

A reporter asked me, "If you strike and shut down GM, won't you be biting the hand that feeds you?" We aren't biting the hand that feeds us. We are biting the hand that slapped us, cheated us, and robbed us. First, we'll bite the hand. Then, we'll go for the throat. What have we got to lose?

The leaders of the Concession Caucus are already waving the white flag. They're talking about concessions and compromise and "equality of sacrifice" as if the big cheeses didn't have golden parachutes strapped to their asses.

Why should we make sacrifices? We're not responsible for mismanagement and fraud. They're not bankrupt. GM-Delphi drained profits from the US and sheltered the assets overseas. They act like extortion is a business plan. GM-Delphi's intent is to break the union in half. The CC can wave the white flag over their own grave. Soldiers of Solidarity will not stand down.

The Concession Caucus accuses SOS of dividing the union but they are the ones who brag about their partnership with GM-Delphi and stick us with a two tier wage that condemns new hires to a life of poverty. What could possibly be more divisive than two tier?

The company-union partnership never won us job security. Now the CC's partner is threatening to close plants and throw UAW members out into the street. In return they expect our consent for a deal that will temporarily protect pensions by sticking younger workers with a pay cut and closing plants.

We go face first into a cow pad and they call it a "soft landing"? If we consent to that plan, active workers will one day do the company's dirty work and decertify the union. Once we start cutting each other's throats, no one is safe. The only real social security is solidarity.

Your silence will not protect you. If we are silent, GM-Delphi will steam roll us. Do you recall what happened to the steel workers? Do you recall what the President of the Steelworkers Union, Leo Gerard, said when Steve Miller and Wilbur Ross conspired to deprive 95,000 retirees of their pension and health insurance?

There's a very good reason that you do not recall what Gerard said. He didn't say anything. There is a very good reason that you do not recall the outrage and the resistance. There wasn't any. Miller expected the same consensuality from the UAW but SOS crashed the party.

On Dec 13 the Automotive News reported that Tower, a major supplier for Ford, expected to get a "consensual" agreement from the UAW. On January 6, Tower petitioned the court to revoke the UAW contract, cut wages, slash benefits, and dump pensions.

Did anyone hear a squeak out of the Concession Caucus? Your silence will not protect you. Silence is considered consent and consent is not painless. Do you recall what Miller said last Fall? "No one will like it, but in the end they will do it, and they will do it the right way."

We will indeed do it the right way but it won't be Miller's way and he will not like it when we pull the trigger. One wrong move on his part could incite a wildcat strike and one wildcat could incite a stampede. If Miller's buddy, Judge Drain, strips us of our contract, workers who have been sitting on the fence will make the leap.

Our survival depends on our willingness to take the fight to the enemy and attack where it hurts the most -- at the point of production. We need to exert our power where we have the most leverage -- the shopfloor. We can make them or break them at the point of production. It's a lesson I will never forget and one Miller will long remember when it hits him.

Allow me a short digression. I hired into GM and joined the UAW 27 years ago. I didn't know much about how unions worked. I soon learned. At 6:30 one morning we were sitting around sipping coffee and trying to wake up to a new day of the same old shit. A foreman who was new to the area told us to get up and get to work. "Right now," he said. "I'm the boss." We said, "Yes sir, boss." We went right to work. Thirty minutes later every machine in the department was down. Then

skilled trades came out, tore the machines apart, left parts all over the floor, and went off to look for the missing parts. They didn't come back. There was no production that day. Every department behind us went down like a domino.

The next morning that same foreman said, "Good morning, gentlemen." Then he got the hell out of there and we went back to the business we know so well: the business of making car parts.

Workers controlled the shopfloor. The shopfloor was our turf. We didn't plan this direct action. We didn't even talk about it. It was understood. It was automatic. That's what the old timers taught me about unionism.

The Concession Caucus intentionally emasculated the militancy of the UAW rank and file. The Concession Caucus promoted competition between workers and cooperation with the bosses. The Concession Caucus promoted alienation from workers in other countries and partnership with the company. When the Concession Caucus promoted "Buy American" all they did was provide cover for Anti American Corporations to to invest our legacy overseas. Instead of promoting international solidarity they promoted teamwork with the bosses and we are the losers. We don't need collaborators, we need soldiers who are willing to defend their turf. Soldiers who believe that we are worth fighting for.

An information picket can galvanize enthusiasm, but it does not threaten the sanctity of the bottom line. A strike, even if you win, comes to an end. But once workers understand they can control the shopfloor, we will win day in and day out. The shopfloor, not the bargaining table, is the battle ground.

Playing it safe is more dangerous than the risk of fighting back. Your silence will not protect you. Miller is not only a ruthless predatory capitalist, he has the heart of a Nazi. If we don't fight back we will lose more than money, we will lose our self respect.

I heard a supervisor tell a worker that the situation at Delphi is out of our control. He said, "I don't like it either but I still have to come to work every day. We have a job to do and we have to do the best we can." His thinking is irrational because it does not acknowledge the situation has changed fundamentally and the

relationship is abusive. To act as if everything is normal when it is obviously not normal is insane.

We have a job to do. We have to defend ourselves, our families, and our homes. Your silence will not protect you.

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