

Live Bait & Ammo # 66

How do you negotiate with a hostile employer without taking a strike vote?

You approach the bargaining table waving a white flag.

How do you get the members to ratify concessions?

Keep them in the dark, rush the vote, and echo the employer's threats.

How can a company legally pay for union expenses in contract negotiations?

Funnel the money through a dummy corporation, i.e., the Center for Human Resources.

-- Quotations from Chairman Shoe

The news is out. The Concession Caucus cut a deal to save GM at the expense of Delphi workers. Call it buy out, buy down, or buy off, the reek of concession by any other name smells the same.

The UAW doth protest too loud when the Answering Machine recites, "Nothing could be further from the truth. The parties are not close to working out such an agreement. There are many, many, significant issues yet to be resolved. Overall the situation has changed very little since our last meeting." [Press release, 3/9/06]

In other words, don't pay any attention to the man behind the curtain. Those strings and levers won't affect you. Very little has changed since the last meeting at which workers were advised the best they could expect was job loss, pay cuts, and retirement insecurity as their reward for making GM-Delphi umpteen billions of dollars over the years — a legacy of labor which executives squandered and/or sheltered overseas. "Trust us," recites the choir of answering machines. "We have a plan." Put your noses to the grindstone, keep up the good work, and rest assured we will divert plenty of hard cash into the coffers of honorable porkchoppers in charge of programs that will pay off in ways you won't ever see.

Don't pay any attention to what you read in the papers. When the time is right we will spring it on you just like we did at Visteon — on Memorial Day weekend. It will be over before you know it. You won't feel a thing at first, just a little prick.

“Overall the situation has changed very little” since 2007 negotiations began in 2005 when Visteon tore up the National Agreement and Gettelfinger promised he would not reopen the GM contract.

But the big questions still hang overhead like guillotines.

What happened to the Delphi pension fund since Delphi has so few retirees?

What happened to the GM VEBA, the trust fund for retiree health care?

What happened to the COLA diversion for retiree benefits conceded in 2003?

GM used the money for capital investments at Saab, Fiat, Volvo, Suzuki, Isuzu, Hyundai, and Direct TV. Same story at Delphi.

In 2001 Delphi contributed zero dollars (\$0) to the pension plan and announced a pension shortfall of \$2.36 billion. In 2002, '03, '04, and '05 Delphi underfunded the pension. UAW appointed pension administrators looked the other way as the pension fund evaporated and Delphi purchased assets overseas — assets roughly equal to the amount the pension is underfunded. In recent bankruptcy filings Delphi valued investments in foreign subsidiaries at \$2.9 billion. The pension is currently underfunded \$2.6 billion.

Delphi's pension was fully funded at the time of the spin off. In May 2000 Delphi reported contributions of \$2.35 billion to the pension fund. One year later the pension was underfunded \$2.36 billion. Where did all the money go? We want to know the results of SEC and FBI investigations before we ratify a contract with the company located off Crooks Rd exit in Troy, Michigan.

We deserve truth and accountability not concessions, delays, prevarication, and excuses. We have heard management's demands. What about our demands?

We should demand GM-Delphi sell the foreign acquisitions purchased with our hard earned dollars and fully fund the pensions. We should demand that those guilty of dereliction of duty, the Board of Directors at GM-Delphi, be replaced. We should demand fraudulent executives get fired and profitability be restored by dumping the burden of non productive desk pilots and their double dipping, joint funded tail gunners. We should demand to know by what diabolical formula twelve cents was deducted from our cost of living in the last quarter. We should demand an end to two tier. We should demand No Concessions.

We already made concessions. The UAW surrendered thousands of jobs without a fight. We produce as much or more with half as many workers. The increased productivity is enormous. Concessions never saved a job or sold a vehicle. If GM was half as good at marketing as they are at downsizing, they wouldn't have to count the same dollar three times to balance the books.

"Overall the situation has changed very little since our last meeting." Press one for more options. (1) "Nothing could be further from the truth."

Delphi is leading the Concession Train and every swinging turkey neck is jumping on board. Concessions aren't the solution and the C-Train won't stop at Delphi. Delphi is just the beginning.

2007 negotiations are advancing full speed ahead. Gettelfinger is longing to announce an historic first: the whole shebang, each Big 3 contract, plus Delphi and Visteon, completed before the Bargaining Convention. Retirees and new hires were disenfranchised when the Concession Caucus negotiated two tier and takeaways from retirees without a vote from affected parties (the two tier supplement wasn't ratified). The C.C.'s ultimate goal is non expiring Living Agreements that won't require any involvement from the rank & file at all.

"Overall the situation has changed very little since our last meeting." Press two for more options. (2) "The parties are not close to working out such an agreement."

The UAW has been bargaining for nine months yet we are deeper in the dark than a blind miner in an abandoned shaft. The Concession Train would have come and gone long ago if it wasn't for the rank & file resistance mounted without direction or support of union officials. The only light at the end of this tunnel is the steadfast resistance of workers on the shop floor and retirees circling like hawks on the internet.

The rank & file are up in arms over concessions but union officials are backing down and crouching behind timid statements like, "We can't take an adversarial position with management."

What other position is there? I'd answer my own question but I'd have to pull a Lenny Bruce and I don't feel like getting arrested for obscenity.

Miller hit us in the teeth and he intends to finish us off before the final round. Adversity is not a choice when you're under attack, it's an ultimatum. Fight back or lose everything you ever worked for.

"Overall the situation has changed very little since our last meeting." Press three for more options. (3) "There are many, many, significant issues yet to be resolved." There certainly are.

Miller intends to close or sell a dozen plants. We saw what the Concession Caucus pulled at Visteon — the patsy defense. Don't hurt me and I will be your turncoat, your trained table rat eating scraps off the floor.

Gettelfinger views the Ford-Visteon MOA as a model for GM-Delphi. The Visteon Memorandum of Agreement is seven pages long including one attachment. The MOA is open ended. It's not what's in the contract, it's what's not in the contract that is most important — solidarity.

Visteon members "agree to cooperate with respect to the negotiation and implementation of Local Competitive Operating Agreements" (whipsaw). If the two Visteon plants returned to Ford do not ratify a competitive agreement they "shall be transferred to the LLC" and sold or closed (threats). A joint "Oversight Committee" will strong arm any Local that is not cooperative (more threats). All new hires will fall under the two tier supplement which means the door is cracked open for two tier at Ford (more concessions).

Gettelfinger may view this arrangement in a positive light, but unlike Visteon, Delphi employees are not GM chattel "for life." If he thinks we will be strong armed into "competitive" virtually yellow dog contracts, he better come prepared for battle.

It is economically impractical for us to accept any contract that divides the union. Two tiers is too many. Concessions for low seniority members is worse than a feckless strategy, it's sabotage. Any effort to divide us should be rejected out right. There is nothing more pragmatic in collective bargaining than the ideal of solidarity. If we sell ourselves short with buy outs, buy downs, or buy offs, the debt will come due with a vengeance. There is no acceptable concession for extortion, fraud, and racketeering.

“Overall the situation has changed very little....” This message has been interrupted by an SOS.

We are engaged in a battle for the survival of the American Dream. Miller is on a mission to destroy the middle class and eradicate every worker’s hope for a decent standard of living. The current struggle isn’t just about Delphi. It’s about all workers in all walks of life.

SOS has one mission: Protect workers by encouraging the rank & file to exert power on the shop floor and in the union halls. Work to Rule at the point of production and send an army of No Concession delegates to every union meeting, council, and convention.

We have the right to make an informed decision and we deserve adequate time to study any proposal that is presented. Vote No until you Know the Whole Truth.

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“Overall....” Hang up on the Answering Machine and consult with your brothers and sisters at the Rank & File Meeting

March 19, 2006
2:00-5:00 p.m.
St. Andrews Episcopal Church
1025 3 Mile Rd. NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49505

and make your voice heard.

For more
information: www.soldiersofsolidarity.com & www.futureoftheunion.com

stay solid, shot