

Live Bait & Ammo #18

Members of UAW Local 2036 in Henderson, Kentucky are caught in the crossfire of union/management cooperation. When Accuride, the largest manufacturer of steel truck wheels in North America, couldn't break the local union with an eighteen month lockout, the Rollover Caucus of the International UAW mugged the unsuspecting loyalists of Local 2036 from behind.

The International Executive Board cut off all strike benefits including medical insurance in a ruthless attempt to force a yellowdog contract down their throats. It didn't work. Down in Kentucky blood is thicker than treachery and greed. Down in Kentucky where fat cat union bureaucrats claim workers are too ignorant to stick together, members of Local 2036 are determined to teach turncoats and corporate louts what solidarity is all about.

Billy Robinson, president of Local 2036, first got word of the betrayal from an Accuride management source two weeks before the Rollover Caucus tightened the noose. He called a mandatory meeting. He felt members deserved the right to reconsider ratification under the sudden threat of an economic stranglehold.

A good fighter can take a punch without blinking. Local 2036 voted overwhelmingly against even thinking about ratifying a contract that would gut their union.

Accuride's proposal would not recognize union officers on the shop floor, would not permit deduction of dues from the payroll, would not mandate that employees belong to the union, would not recognize classifications, and would not honor seniority rights even in the event of layoff.

The proposed contract would reduce vacation time by more than half, permit a schedule of twelve hour workdays without overtime pay, and impose insurance premiums on workers.

Contractual language would give the company the right to cancel, modify, amend, change, delete, or suspend, any or all portions of the [pension] plan. The health insurance would also be subjected to the caprice of Accuride Corp.

Needless to say, subcontracting would be unilateral and unrestricted.

No reason was given for the withdrawal of strike benefits until Local 2036 refused to knuckle under. Now the Rollover Caucus has threatened to place an administrator over the affairs of Local 2036. In other words, impose a dictatorship and teach them how to vote right. The Rollover Caucus contends there's a need to restore democratic procedures, and otherwise enable the Local to adequately service its membership and meet its obligations.

Adding irony to insult, the Rollover Caucus claims that Local 2036 awarded Accuride economic weapons to use against the membership, threatening economic failure, destruction of the Local, and decertification.

How does Yokich and the Rollover Team sleep at night? You can bet your union dues their beds are sumptuously feathered.

As of December 1999, the strike fund stood at \$787,658,079 with only 445 members on strike. That strike fund does not belong to the Rollover Caucus. It belongs to you and me, dues paying union members. The Rollover Caucus has done irreparable harm to union organizing in the South and the reputation of the UAW on the whole.

The betrayal in Kentucky is nothing new. Kowtowing to union busters became fashionable in the '80s. Instead of fighting to refurbish aging plants and reinvest in traditional union towns, the Rollover Caucus accommodated the corporations' quest to dismantle union strongholds and disseminate the workforce.

Bonds were broken. Communities were destroyed. Families were torn apart.

The New UAW as Yokich likes to call it rolled over at Caterpillar, rolled over in Flint, and rolled over on the wholesale outsourcing of Delphi and Visteon.

The New UAW traded parity for profit sharing, and the shorter work week for excessive overtime. In the New UAW work rules dissolve on contact, classifications and lines of demarcation are redrawn to suit the managers, and new hires are deprived of equal pay.

The New UAW doesn't fight outsourcing or downsizing, they negotiate the terms. Screw the New UAW. We want the Old UAW.

If the Rollover Caucus is successful in their attempt to help Accuride impose this yellowdog contract, many union members will refuse to return to work and the scabs will take over. At Caterpillar, Yokich set a precedent. He forgave scabs the back dues they owed and placed Local 751 in receivership.

Yokich is a withered vestige of the proud UAW legacy, yet every month his face grinning like a flying squirrel disgraces the pages of Solidarity Magazine.

On May 8, a coalition of labor union activists will demonstrate on the steps of Solidarity House in support of Local 2036.

We have three demands:

- 1) Reinstate UAW Local 2036 Strike Benefits. Make Solidarity the Top Priority.
- 2) Confront Anti-Worker Corporations. Stand Up for Workers' Rights Everywhere and Always.
- 3) Respect the Dignity and Autonomy of Local Unions.

You can send donations to: Henderson Workers Solidarity Fund:
c/o Billy Robinson
PO Box 248
Sebree, KY 42455

For first hand information you can call Billy at home at 270-835-2111, or at the union hall at 270-826-8237. If you are in the area, visit the union members in Henderson. They are still maintaining a picket.

Billy told his members, I pledge that if you want to continue this fight, I will be in this parking lot until I turn to dust.

Show support by attending the Rally, May 8, from 2:00 - 4:30pm.

If you can't make it at that time, stop by anyway. We'll be picketing Solidarity House all day long.

Or simply call Solidarity House at 313-926-5000 and say:

"A line in the sand has been drawn in Henderson, Kentucky. Which side are you on?"

In Solidarity,

UAW Local 2151