

Live Bait & Ammo #176: Sabotage, Wildcat, and Riot

These are the worst of times. When the wick of our collective conscience is a lie, politicians mime conviction, and sheep submit with passionate intensity.

The center cannot hold. The perps are in control. Who can we trust in the worst of times?

When GM razed Buick City in Flint, and transferred the factory to China, UAW Reps called me a communist. I thought duplicity had plumbed the depths, but depravity knows no bottom.

The UAW was once regarded as a clean union. Now International Reps do the perp walk as their corporate co-conspirators pay wrist slap fines and lounge like lizards in sunny confines. In the worst of times crime pays and hard work is rewarded with debt.

Today UAW members work harder for less and pay a price steeper than monetary loss. The price they pay, day after day, is the shame of a union demoralized by temps, tiers, and treachery. The center cannot hold.

The 2019 UAW-GM strike was orchestrated to lend credibility to negotiators with no more street cred than snitches, narcs, and purse snatchers. Strikers acted with conviction in the worst of times. I couldn't feel more impressed. They knew damn well they'd been pimped out. But they took a stand for the least of their brethren: temps and tier workers. In a time of doubt and double cross they walked the walk most people are scared to talk because in the worst of times leaders lack conviction and lies are broadcast with passionate intensity.

Who can we trust?

We can trust our fellow workers. The people we work with day in and day out.

UAW-GM members proved it on the strike line. Did they gain what they deserved? No, because the International UAW is in league with the corporations. Don't take my word for it. Read the contract. The slush fund is concealed in layers of bullshit covered with flies but pay offs are spelled out to the nickel and dime. It may be legal, but it isn't ethical, and the details dance with the devil.

UAW-GM members own the moral high ground. They acted with dignity in the face of treachery. They were not only betrayed by UAW Reps, GM spit on the sacrifices they made for the company in 2007, 2009, 2011, and 2015.

There is a new movement in the UAW: Unite All Workers for Democracy [UAWD]. They recognize the war against working people can't be won in one workplace, one union, or even one nation.

Corporations cross every border they please with impunity. Capitalism trumps the law.

GM and their UAW toadies tell us to compete with foreign workers and to buy American. Then, they build Buicks in China and invest profits made in America all over the world. The name of the game isn't competition, it's monopoly. Bankruptcy was a business plan to cut wages, whipsaw, and speed up.

Did bankruptcy deter production? Did the Corps ever stop pumping out product and paying bonuses to crooks?

UAWD has broad aspirations but they recognize they have to begin with the union they work in. They propose a Special Convention with the goal of one member, one vote which they expect will end corruption.

One person, one vote is a knee jerk American reaction. We take for granted everyone deserves a vote. As much as I like, trust, and admire the members of UAWD, I have my reservations.

Given the level of disgust with UAW International Reps I wouldn't be surprised if they were all replaced in a Special Convention. Trouble is, the swamp is deeper than the top echelon. Every appointee owes loyalty to whomever appointed them. Every appointee assumed the position by dint of unsavory commitment to a lap dog hip deep in the muck of corporate suck. Let's face it: for generations the perp walkers have been appointing bootlickers dumber than themselves.

The source of corruption in the UAW is not in the UAW Constitution. Despite the company-bought-off mob in the International, the corruption is not in Solidarity House, it is in the contract.

Jointness is a diabolical product of the contract and if it isn't rooted out, no election will suffice to restore solidarity as the primary principle and guiding ethic of our union.

Who can we trust to tell the corporate slime bags the con game is over?

The same people who went on strike for equality.

Tom Laney is the Jack Kerouac of the UAW. He's the most energetic solidarity spokesman I know. He doesn't need a script because he speaks straight from the heart. I have a high regard for Brother Laney because he always professes an innate belief in the essential goodness and courage of working people. He makes me feel hopeful in the worst of times.

But I must confess he can aggravate me. When I feel that way I have learned it's time to take a good hard look at myself.

When Laney pisses me off it's usually because I am leaning on the cane of some academic ideology rather than listening to my gut. When I feel he has crossed me it's because I'm relying on the brittle rubric of some ism I picked up in a book written by someone who never labored for a living.

I love reading. I respect scholars. But the hard truth is ideas don't change shit until workers pick up the pitchforks. That's not opinion. It's history. Emma Goldman said it best. "If voting changed anything, they'd make it illegal." No wonder they deported her. She scared the shit out of the ruling class.

Jointness, company-union partnership, all that so called teamwork bullshit meant wage cuts, speed-up, temps, multiple tiers: whipsawing, whipsawing, whipsawing.

The gorging devotion to dog eat dog shit-canned solidarity. The bastards put us through the competition meat grinder with no more compunction than a poacher who leaves a gut shot buck to die in the marsh.

We can't simply vote our way out of this mess.

Workers need to feel they can make a difference in their daily lives on the shopfloor or they won't even bother to vote. They know it's pointless unless they can pry the poacher from their midst with their fists. Person to person, department by department, local by local, region by region. I don't doubt the power of coworkers in solidarity for a moment. I have seen it. I have lived it. There is nothing more real and legitimate.

Workers can dismantle phony teamwork programs. Appointees will be dis-appointed or they will hide. When workers stop complying with phony teamwork programs the charade will slink away like an exposed snitch.

We used to go into teamwork meetings and kill time/production and not agree to a damn thing. We just brought up management's incompetence. When they tried to implement job killing schemes, we sabotaged. It's time to take it to the next level. Righteous anger is our due.

Workers don't vote for change. They sabotage, wildcat, and riot.

Stay Solid, Gregg Shotwell