

Live Bait & Ammo # 58

The UAW gave GM the biggest concession package in history and GM responded by spitting in our collective faces. The announcement of plant closures and the elimination of 30,000 jobs underscores what UAW dissidents have asserted all along: Concessions Don't Save Jobs.

For Delphi workers the plant closures mean NO EXIT. The news strikes them like a door slammed in their faces. We aren't alone. Thousands of supplier jobs will be lost in the wake of GM plans to idle production. There's nowhere to run, nowhere to hide, and everything to fight for.

Since the announcement of bankruptcy at Delphi the UAW International has gone into the bunker crouch: hands over head, head between knees. What little information we do get is delivered to Local Presidents and Bargaining Chairs unsigned. Local leaders are expected to bear responsibility with their own signatures. When reps don't want to leave tracks, you know you're about to get stabbed in the back.

The latest unsigned information sheet described the "Benefit Guarantee Letter." Already the language is changing. Formerly it read, "GM will provide up to seven years of pension credits". Now it reads, "up to seven years of additional pension credits can be earned by a Covered Employee who continues to work at Delphi or a successor employer." [Emphasis added]

In other words, if an employee wants to salvage a pension, he or she must continue to work for Delphi at reduced wages. The need to earn additional pension credits coupled with the lack of transfer opportunities handcuffs us to the pay cut. There is no exit. Fighting back is the only option.

This latest bit of untraceable information states, "there is no contractual or legal advantage to retiring at any time now or in the near future if one is currently retirement eligible." If now or later makes no difference, should we deduce that the screwing is complete? Countersunk, so to speak?

The letter concludes, "This summary is based on current understandings of contractual obligations and pension laws. This is neither a Summary Plan Description nor the Plan document." [Emphasis added]

"Current understandings?" Why the plural? Is there more than one understanding? Does the modifier "current" imply the "understandings" are temporary and thus, subject to change at some later date?

There are many questions but no International Rep has stepped forward to answer those questions. If there was a legitimate contract or supplement that enumerated the terms of the GM Benefit Guarantee, all our questions could be answered by Local Benefit Reps. But no such document exists.

Shoemaker said the Benefit Guarantee was part of our contract. If Judge Drain voids the contract, will the Benefit Guarantee be drained as well? Does anyone else find it suspicious that we can't see a "Summary Plan Description" or the actual "Plan document"?

GM insists its liability ranges from 0 -12 billion dollars. The wide range of the estimate indicates that the guarantee is in negotiation and the outcome is uncertain. The UAW's reluctance to produce a legally binding document indicates the exact language is uncertain. The UAW's unwillingness to sign letters of information concerning the Benefit Guarantee indicates that UAW reps themselves are uncertain. The International insists we must trust them without question but their history renders their credibility uncertain. The only thing we can be sure of at this point is uncertainty.

The UAW is dominated by the Administrative Caucus. After 25 years of collaboration with the companies, the Ad Caucus may as well change its name to the Concession Caucus. Different names, same difference, like two sides of a coin called company/union.

We must prepare to mount a Vote No campaign because the Concession Caucus [CC] will try to sell us out. This is not speculation, its historical perspective. The CC has the same world view as the corporate bosses, i.e., workers must compete against each other. The CC believes workers must sacrifice for the good of the

company and as a result they feel duty bound to deliver concessions to their "partners in the business."

The CC's slogan is "Buy American" because they believe the union's mission is to promote the company by selling cars rather than organizing workers. It's a falsehood. If the CC had organized America rather than sold America you could buy any name plate you wanted and feel rest assured it was union. Furthermore, the transplants and non union suppliers wouldn't have a competitive advantage because the CC would have taken workers out of the competition rather than thrown them to the dogs.

Let's quit speculating and rely on what we know for a fact. The CC already agreed with Delphi on benchmark "competitive wage and benefit levels".

In the Delphi-UAW Supplement signed on April 29, 2004 the CC determined that \$14 per hour was "competitive". How can they argue differently now? Furthermore, the Supplement eliminated COLA for the first four years, and granted only 70% of COLA until the third quarter of the sixth year of the agreement. On top of that the CC agreed to reduce health care benefits and eliminate defined pensions.

Miller wants even deeper pay and benefit cuts. There is a pattern here.

At the Lear plant in Comstock, MI, Local 1231, (which was formerly GM, then Delphi, then Lear) UAW members were coerced into accepting a wage cut in order to "save jobs". Under the terms of the 2004 contract a machine operator who used to make wages equal to GM-Delphi standards was reduced to \$18.64. The plant is now closed. The work was disbursed to other Lear plants that "won" the whipsawing competition. At an IPS conference in May 2005 UAW VP, Bob King, gave Lear an award for being "union friendly" because they let him "organize" new Lear plants that took work from previously organized Lear plants. This isn't speculation, its fact. The CC sanctions outsourcing, then calls it a victory when they organize the old work at reduced wages.

Based on historical evidence we can reasonably expect the CC to deliver a concession package that includes a promise of "job security". That's right, "job security". Every concession contract and tax abatement comes with the promise to

"save jobs". The promises never materialize, but hustlers never let little things like facts get in the way of a sweet deal. The CC is determined to come to the aid of GM by sacrificing members in the parts supply sector again. That's not speculation, it's their MO.

We must prepare to fight the war on two fronts. First against GM-Delphi, and second with a Vote No Campaign against the concessions the CC is sure to deliver wrapped in buy outs and bonuses and sparkly promises.

Liberals fight for a cause, radicals fight for their lives. Our lives are on the line. How well we organize on the shopfloor will seal our fate. This is not a battle one can retire from. There's nowhere to run and nowhere to hide. GM-Delphi is determined to take away everything we ever earned: wages, pension, benefits, seniority, and humane working conditions.

We don't need to hear any more crap from International Reps about how we need to get more "involved". We are involved. We are involved in a battle every day with a company that treats us like scrap. In fact, we can't escape. We are on the front lines of the class war and we don't need to hear another dumb ass speech promoting V-CAP as the hallmark of unionism.

The barn is burning. The Big Three and their Two Ugly step sisters, Delphi and Visteon, have been talking about partnership, teamwork, and "growing the business" since 1984. The real goal was always soften the target and move in for the kill. The kill is here. No politician is coming to the rescue.

What we need are tools and direct action tactics, not bureaucratic bullshit and information pickets condoned by Miller because, as he related in a voice mail to management, the pickets "won't disrupt production." That's what counts -- production.

Miller is the master ringleader of sideshow distractions like executive compensation. The real issue is the looting of our pensions and the destruction of our standard of living. We need to exert pressure at the point of production, the true fulcrum of worker leverage. If we take the battle to the shopfloor, the intersection of Cost and Profit, we can turn the cutting edge of the axe against

Miller and his band of incompetent frauds. We can force them to exit by grinding the gears of production until their ears bleed and their wallets weep.

Fighting to improve the terms and conditions of our labor is the primary purpose of the UAW. Jointness is not a part of the UAW Constitution. Jointness is collusion and collusion is anti union. Any worker who helps management cut jobs is a scab. We should organize SOS meetings in cafeterias and breakrooms with the sole intent of controlling the shopfloor.

We have a legal right to defend our interests. Resistance is "protected concerted activity" as defined by the National Labor Relations Act. We don't have to go out in the street to look for the fight. The fight is right here on the shopfloor. We don't need to look for someone to organize. We need to organize ourselves. We don't have to look for leaders. We are leaders, every one of us.

The power is in our hands. We want good jobs and we want justice too. Let's stop pretending that someone will save us. Let's fight our own fight, right here, right now, on the shopfloor. The slogan of the Rank and File Movement isn't Buy American, its Organize America. Workers will rule when they work to rule.

In Constant Solidarity,

P.S. My sincere thanks to everyone who has made donations to help support Live Bait & Ammo. Paper and ink do cost money. Unlike an appointee, I would get fired if I used the company copier. Likewise, when union officials use union funds to campaign for or against a caucus, they violate federal law. For example, union funds support Grand Valley Labor News and the Perspective.

The next Rank & File Meetings are scheduled for December 4, 2:00-5:00pm in Bay City, Michigan, and December 11, 2:00-5:00pm in Flint, Michigan. Call 616-451-4401 for details, or email