

Live Bait & Ammo #161: King Pawn

Dave Yettaw always said, “The corporations are playing chess and the UAW is playing checkers.”

Not anymore. UAW president Bob King is in the chess game. He’s playing a pawn.

King said, “What’s really important for our members to know is they [Ford] didn’t have to do this. They did much more than they technically would have had to do under our agreement.” [UAW: Ford agreed to raise profit sharing, *Detroit Free Press*, Brent Snavely, 1-28-2011]

Is Ford generous or calculating?

King and his business partners know that UAW members feel they have sacrificed more than enough and it is time to win back concessions. Profit sharing is the checkmate move.

Profit sharing limits wage growth because it doesn’t accrue and compound.

Profit Sharing ties workers’ gains to the company’s tail and melds our identity as working class into the folds of the company dress code. It’s classic bait and switch.

First, profit sharing. Then the switch from union members to *team members* or, better yet, *associates*. Corpo-rats are guilty of both wage and identity theft.

UAW negotiations with Ford, Chrysler, and GM set the benchmark for manufacturing workers.

King’s stated goal for the UAW in 2011 is parity with nonunion auto makers.

Parity with nonunion shops means no defined benefit pension;
reduced health insurance benefits;
disregard of seniority;
a dumbing down of trades;
an increase in temporary and flex workers to tamp down wages;
and profit sharing instead of raises.

Raises accrue and compound, but profit sharing is a short range gain in a lifelong game.

Whatever the corpo-rats give once, they take back twice.

In 1970 the UAW went on strike for sixty-seven days and won unlimited cost-of-living-adjustment [COLA]. Between 1976 and 2006 the UAW diverted \$1.52 [not adjusted for inflation] in COLA raises and ten quarters of “Travel COLA,” that is, the final cost of living adjustment in each contract—*Travel COLA*—was donated to company coffers [bonuses].

Do you see how the game is played?

Workers fight to gain a living wage by chasing inflation, then porkchoppers give it away to stay in the bosses’s good graces. In 2007 Gettelfinger diverted up to ten cents of COLA per quarter, and in 2009 the government sponsored bankruptcy wiped the COLA formula clean off the books.

The corpo class justifies this slash and burn because of losses. But they don’t want us to scrutinize the balance sheet over the long term. That would be too much like chess and we are supposed to restrict our strategic thinking to checkers.

In 2009 GM and Chrysler wiped out more debt than they ever lost because they wiped out future debt, cut the next generation of workers' compensation in half, and tied the union to the company's roller coaster with a retiree health care trust based on stock. Ford wants parity without the mess and King Bob is so eager to help he's hyperventilating in the Detroit Free Press.

The corps want to bind workers' earnings to the sliding scale of profit sharing at a rate to be determined at a later date by the same bookcookers who ran America's flagship industry onto the reefs while the corps invested overseas.

Don't listen to the shill. Keep your eyes on the action.

GM only sold 30,000 vehicles *less* than Toyota last year. In 2005, '06, '07, GM sold 9 million vehicles worldwide. In 2010 GM sold 8.39 million vehicles. [Wheels, *New York Times*, 1-28-2011, Paul Stenquist].

The corps are playing chess not checkers. They are willing to lose in the short run to profit in the long run. That's what investment means.

Profit sharing means that workers will be compelled to work harder, longer, faster, and less safely and humanely for the chance of sharing in profits fixed by creative bookkeepers.

Sure, Ford was generous this year, as the shill said, but not without a long term plan to take back everything they once gave, twice.

Profit will go up in one hand and down in the other.

The deal shakes out like Three Card Monte—a short con involving an inside man (the corps), an outside man (the government), and a shill (a porkchopper like King).

Foreign, domestic, or default card? Can you guess where profit is hid?

The corporations are playing chess, while office rats are playing checkers in feudal drag, that is, competing to save King Capital, one square at a time.

The best bet for workers is unlimited Cost of Living Allowance without the diversion scam. When prices rise, as they inevitably will, COLA will rise likewise. But profit sharing neither accrues nor compounds. COLA should be the level standard of all union contracts. Let's take our share of the profits in base rate wages that build rather than gamble our standard of living.

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