

Live Bait & Ammo #184: Shout Them Down and Throw Them Out

Active and retired Flower Funders are flouncing around like weekend revolutionaries in flip-flops eager as cheerleaders to heap accolades on the latest International UAW President appointed by the crooked Ad. Caucus.

Rory Gamble was installed as President by convicted felon, Gary Jones, on his slide out the door and rubber stamped unanimously by the Executive Board of Dittoes. Protection is a racket.

What is Gamble's redeeming social value in this obscene debacle? Who knows? Maybe he's the only one who escaped the fire at Solidarity House with a clean pair of shoes.

International UAW officials are rolling over like bowling pins. Indictments breed singers and the chorus of snitches has investigators scurrying. Every rat on the sinking ship wants to plea bargain or feign sanctimonious ignorance.

Federal agents aren't impressed with Gamble's reform plan but Flower Funders are promoting the status quo like it was whipped cream. Now I don't think voting has the virtue of snake oil but how could direct election of all UAW officials make matters worse than an entire echelon of piecards in handcuffs?

Everyone in the International was appointed by a shifty-eyed double-dealer whose sole intent was covering tracks. Does anyone believe these porkchoppers ever appointed an ethical staffer? Let alone a solidarity soldier. Well, Jerry Tucker comes to mind, but they fired him and robbed him of pension and health care.

I read a cookie cutter essay by a Flower Funder denouncing the notion that democracy was a solution to systemic corruption running rampant in the Administration Caucus that has dominated the UAW for seventy years.

The signatory of this boilerplate actually claimed that One Member, One Vote for International reps would lead to “. . . electing new and often inexperienced leaders who would inevitably make substantial and ill-advised staffing changes to the detriment of our organization, making us weaker and more susceptible to the corruption and influence it was designed to protect us from.”

Holy shit. I can smell the stink of his ink as I type the quote.

An admonition to maintain the status quo on a sinking ship is demonic. These dog-eat-doggers think a tail in the mouth is a brass ring because they have no taste and their own tails are numb from all the shagging. Where does it end?

The UAW Bargaining Chairman at GM in Fort Wayne takes orders from dealerships. Yeah, they give him vin numbers and he hunts them down as fast as he can. GM pays Bargaining Chairs sixteen hours a day seven days a week, whether they are in the plant or not, just to keep them “fat, dumb, and happy.” No wonder he's hustling for dealer

perks rather than pushing solidarity unionism. He makes more money than Gamble if you don't look under the table.

The feds are investigating the IUAW but not the Big 3 Auto-Corps because law enforcement is an arm of Capital not justice.

The Big 3 Auto-Corps created the nefarious Training Centers and the congruent funding that channels company dollars into the pockets of the felonious Ad. Caucus. But the feds aren't examining obvious over the table bribes because it's a contractual scheme. It's not ethical but it's legal like qualified immunity.

Capitalism isn't above the law, it is the law. Labor is bought and sold and trashed right before our eyes. Crooked Ad. Caucus lackeys are brokers. They get rewarded for selling us out. We get wage cuts, they get kickbacks.

Sponsorship of the Training Centers, which is tax free and State supported, began as the "nickel fund" and grew into pay as you go—carte blanche for lavish bribes to the Ad. Caucus in exchange for a slash and burn attack on autoworkers.

With lavish corpo-funding the Administration Caucus turned into the Concession Caucus and slashed jobs, cut wages, decimated solidarity, purged pensions, whipsawed workers, and burned trust in the union. Oh yeah; and turned organizing into a sweetheart deal with the corps by promising non-union wages.

The planned corruption of the UAW by the Corps isn't new. "The 'Warren Strategy' spelled out the main bargaining objectives for the 1984 negotiations."

I can't emphasize enough how important it is for every UAW member to read "A Tale of Corruption by the United Auto Workers and the Big Three American Automakers" by Thomas Adams. Click the link. It's important information for autoworkers.

It explains shit like this: "For example, UAW president, Bob King and secretary-treasurer, Dennis Williams were the two-person board of directors for the "International UAW Region 9 New York Training Initiative," a nonprofit tasked with training Perry's Ice Cream workers . . ." That's right, ice cream. But that's just the icing.

Here's the real steal. "The theft of \$4.5 million from the NTC almost seems charming when compared to the potential for corruption presented by the \$61 billion UAW Retiree Medical Benefits Trust. Between 2009 and 2017 functional expenses in excess of \$200 million annually for the trust have been reported to the IRS under the category of "other." The Medical Trust headquarters occupy the entire top floor UAW-GM Center for Human Resources building in Detroit. General Holiefield, Norwood Jewell, and other UAW officials implicated in the training funds scandal are current or former directors of the training centers and the medical trust administrative committee."

Ad. Caucus boilerplate that asserts direct elections would cause worse results is not only stupid, it implies the rank & file is more diabolical than the present raft of criminals. And investigators haven't hit the bottom of the snake pit.

Rory Gamble wants to convince the feds that a government takeover of the union isn't necessary. I hope he is convincing because we know the government is anti-union and we can't trust a takeover by the State to ensure power to the workers. Gamble has erected an Ethics Committee but who appoints the committee? It's a rhetorical question corralled with circular logic.

The feds are concentrating on the money trail but UAW members have another issue: representation. In March Travis Watkins, a Bargaining Chairman in a unit of UAW Local 167 was fired by a GM contractor for informing members that two fellow workers were escorted from the plant for Covid-19 symptoms.

Yep, that's all it takes to get fired and not represented by the UAW.

President Gamble has a clear opportunity to intercede on behalf of Watkins and consequently the membership, but he ignores the situation. Gamble gets a big fat pitch right down the middle of the plate and he keeps his bat on his shoulder.

Silence is a message of complicity, loud and clear. Gamble's partnership with the company is more important to him than his duty to the membership.

The debate over One Member, One Vote for all International officials has circulated throughout the UAW for decades. Adamant Ad. Caucus resistance is a red flag. Why does Gamble & Co. resist democracy?

Personally, I don't believe voting is the end all and be all because it reinforces the notion that the rank & file can't govern themselves and that leaders can be held accountable by elections. Accountability based on elections has proved questionable.

Let's take a lesson from the young folk on the streets of America today. Do you think they give a shit about Biden time? Do you imagine they believe voting changes anything? Did Obama make Black Lives Matter successful? Elections don't drive change, they reinforce learned patterns of helplessness.

I don't believe the UAW will be reformed in a Special Convention or a Constitutional Convention because the Ad. Caucus exercises total control of proceedings. I was a delegate at the UAW Constitutional Convention in 2002 when Regional Director Warren Davis defied Ad. Caucus control. The Ad. Caucus came back the next day and wiped out the whole UAW Region 2 rather than accept Davis's legitimate election. (See LB&A#33 & LB&A#38)

Rank & file members would fare better if they took over their own Locals and organized horizontally, Local to Local, across the map. Confront lies. Halt whipsawing. Damn favoritism. Ditch jointness. Dump appointees. Workers rule when they work to rule.

Let me tell you a story. Late one night in 2010 I got a call from an autoworker in Indianapolis. I didn't know him but he got my number from Theresa Barber, a dedicated soldier of solidarity. So I called Theresa and confirmed the connection.

UAW Local 23, a GM stamping plant, was in the midst of a solidarity struggle. The Ad. Caucus wanted to turn the Local into scabs. That's right. They wanted the Local to reopen and ratify a new contract that would cut wages, benefits, and working conditions. It was a sweetheart deal for a new owner and a plan to whipsaw other stamping plants.

I wrote two anonymous fliers that night. I don't know how he did it but he was able to download my emails, print them out, and distribute them the same night.

I couldn't tell this story at the time because it was all on the downlow and I won't mention the names of any active workers now. But ten years later, here's the gist.

The next day I connected with a couple other rank & file workers and I wrote fliers for them to sign. They fed me the information, I spun my craft, and they signed and distributed the fliers. I connected with the Bargaining Chairman Greg Clark as well but kept everything on the downlow. Over the next couple weeks we flooded the plant with solidarity leaflets.

The Ad. Caucus wanted members to ratify this scab contract under the threat of closure and the rank & file said, Screw it. We're not going to be scabs and get whipsawed against our brothers and sisters in other Locals. Greg Clark told Indianapolis Star reporter, Ted Evanoff, "There's no sense in us setting a precedent and taking a wage cut. We're not in this just for ourselves. The decision we make here affects not only Indianapolis. If we give in, the company will go after the people in the plants in Marion, Flint, and Parma for the same thing."

The UAW Constitution, Article 19 forbids negotiation "without first obtaining the approval of the Local Union." Local 23 voted 382-22 against reopening their contract. But the Ad. Caucus ran roughshod over the will of the members, shitcanned the UAW Constitution, and fabricated a yellowdog contract. This is the crux of Ad. Caucus corruption: they represent the bossing class not the working class.

The Ad. Caucus sent a porkchopper, Mike Grimes (since convicted of bribery), to impress them with his power of persuasion. The night before Grimes's podium pounding pontification, I wrote my favorite flier of all time, which concluded, "Shout Them Down and Throw Them Out." I'll be damned if they didn't do just that. (See the video made by Theresa Barber.) "Get out! This is our house!" they shouted. Grimes left with his tail between his legs.

Despite overwhelming Local Union resistance the Ad. Caucus demanded a mail-in ratification vote on the yellowdog contract they concocted without consent of UAW members. In order to secure the results Local 23 members took the ballots to the union hall, and recorded 412 no votes in front of a video camera.

I went to Indianapolis to meet with members of UAW Local 23: good solid union people, gold standard. Some of the members I talked to lacked sufficient seniority to guarantee the opportunity to transfer to another GM plant. Nonetheless, they voted against the scab contract. They'd rather lose their jobs than be scabs.

I remember at a rally in Indianapolis Greg Clark said, "Now I know what soldiers of solidarity means." And then he taught me something I'll never forget.

A lot of members were angry at the UAW Local 23 President. They felt he had invited the International Con Caucus into their Local affairs and thereby betrayed them. When I asked Greg how he felt, he said, "No hard feelings. He has some personal problems. They manipulated him." Mercy. Magnanimity. Integrity. That's when I knew Greg Clark belonged to the oldest religion—Solidarity. For Clark principle comes before personal conflict or personal reward. Resentment and petty vengeance are beneath his dignity.

When the stamping plant in Indianapolis closed Greg Clark expected to transfer to another plant. He wasn't ready to retire, but the Ad. Caucus in collusion with GM obstructed his opportunity. Greg was walked out of the plant by Security.

GM said they needed a grievance, which at that point was in the hands of the International, to process either his transfer, or his pension and settlement pay. Greg Clark went three years without any income or health insurance. Mo Davison was the Regional Director and Bob King was President of the IUAW at that time.

In The Inferno, Dante's poem of a journey through hell, traitors were relegated to the Ninth Circle — "lowest, darkest, and farthest from Heaven." Davison and King have a reservation waiting for them in the Ninth Circle.

Here's the point of my story: Clark could have sold out the members of UAW Local 23. He could have betrayed solidarity and secured a cush job. Greg Clark chose principle. He chose justice, solidarity, honesty. As he said, "We're not in this just for ourselves." Bob King and the backstabbing Ad. Caucus exacted vengeance.

What if we had a solidarity soldier like Greg Clark at the helm of the International UAW today? Would he clean house? Would he represent Travis Watkins rather than GM? Would he speak with courage and conviction? Would rank & file members trust him?

Maybe I am wrong about elections. I sure would like the opportunity for UAW members to elect a man of principle and integrity like Greg Clark.

Be safe. Stay solid, Gregg Shotwell, 6-12-20