

Live Bait & Ammo # 74

The Concession Caucus said, “We have a plan, we just can’t tell you what it is.”

We got our first glance at the plan. You don’t have to read the fine print, it’s stamped in big bold letters: SELL OUT. And the jumpship-leadership is pushing it hard.

Members with less than 27 years feel abandoned. Members with 27 years or more feel coerced. The future of all concerned is in jeopardy. It’s not a healthy predicament from any perspective. Delphi Labor Relations and the UAW International rep together recommended, “Take it to your lawyer.” Not your union, “your lawyer”.

Normally, when a plant is downsized members with twenty-eight years seniority go out with 95% of gross wages plus bennies for two years and full retirement when they qualify for thirty-and-out. The new deal—SAP—puts workers out with 60% of their wages before taxes.

SAP is declared “voluntary” and without “duress”. So why do I feel like my arm is twisted behind my back and the perp has a gun to my spouse’s head? Voluntary? No duress? Where will it end? Since Gettelfinger instituted takeaways from retirees, SAPs can look forward to turn about is fair play from now until the end of their days.

SAP protects the Corps more than the workers. GM will be off the hook for the cost of the buy off because GM will be reimbursed by a restructured Delphi through the spin-off indemnity clause. This means the buy off will be financed by sacrifices made by lower seniority members and new hires. How long before they come after our health care?

And then there's the "right" to transfer back to GM. We didn't chose to transfer out of GM, so why do we have to reapply for our status as GM employees? We didn't choose to transfer our GM pension credits to Delphi, so how is it we are expected to work for Delphi at reduced wages and benefits in order to earn our GM pension credits?

We don't vote on the SAP as a union. Each member has to make an individual decision. The feeling of isolation induces anxiety. We need to remind each other that we are in this turmoil together. We can assert our dignity through solidarity with our fellow workers.

Whatever our "choice", we should stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters. Don't reject those who choose to leave. Don't neglect those you leave behind. Our future security is bound together. Send the company and their concession partners one strong message: the bonds of our solidarity are stronger than your diabolical manipulations.

Members who elect to take the SAP can still help us resist concessions by working to rule, voting no on the contract if it is less than we deserve, and by supporting delegates who are still invested in the workplace: delegates who are willing to challenge authority; delegates who will stand up and speak out for Delphi workers and their families; delegates who will openly appeal to GM members for their support in our struggle; delegates who will send the International a strong message: **WHAT HAPPENS AT DELPHI IS THE FUTURE OF THE UNION.**

Too many of the campaigners will go along with anything the Concession Caucus tells them. Appointees have to go along with the Caucus or they will lose their appointments. If we choose to elect delegates who will only smile and nod, we may as well save the Local's money and just send a note— "Whatever you want to do is fine with us" —because that is how they will act.

Ask prospective delegates what they stand for. Ask them if they submitted any resolutions. Ask them if they have something they intend to say at the convention. Ask them how they stand on concessions and union democracy. Ask them if they will stand up at the microphone in front of the whole convention and tell GM workers, “GM and Delphi members voted together on the national contract. Now it’s time for GM members to go back to their locals and demand a strike vote in support of the contract. Stand in solidarity. Show support for Delphi workers, here, now, at this convention.”

Ask the glad handing campaigners if they have any point in going other than for fun.

We need delegates who aren’t afraid to speak truth to power; delegates who have demonstrated a willingness to protest injustice; delegates who will take a stand. Like Dave Yettaw used to say, “You can elect anyone to a position. The question is: will he take a position after you elect him?”

(sos, shotwell)