

Live Bait & Ammo #97:

Won't be Fooled Again

“Speculation about a UAW contract is like religion: everyone has an opinion but only the dead know the outcome.” [Live Bait & Ammo #44] Or as they say on the shopfloor, “We’ll get the Highlights this year but we won’t get the Lowlights until next year..... when it’s too late.”

Why speculate? Instead of guessing what we’re going to get, look at what we got since the last “historic agreement”: Wage cuts, COLA diversions, VEBA, Plant closings, Job loss, Buy-offs, Temps and Two Tier.

Oh yeah, and a signing bonus.

We already have a VEBA. The first thing VEBA did was pickpocket retirees. The second thing VEBA did was pickpocket workers. The average Ford and GM worker donated at least \$2,000 to VEBA last year. The outcome is history. Don’t speculate, look back.

The VEBA is a done deal. They’re not going to let the turkeys vote for Thanksgiving. The UAW already controls the VEBA. In their phony lawsuit against GM, the UAW won the legal right to negotiate reduced benefits for retirees. Ford and GM will enhance the VEBA with cash and equity in the company, wash their hands and walk away from any motivation to demand national health care. No vote necessary because retirees can’t vote. Don’t speculate, look back.

The Two Tier Supplement was negotiated at Delphi and Visteon in 2004 **after** the ratification. No one ratified the Two Tier Supplement. When I appealed the decision not to allow members to vote on the Supplement per Article 19 Section 4

of the UAW Constitution, the Concession Caucus argued that we had ratified the Supplement **before** it was negotiated. Besides, new hires were “a null class,” they asserted.

The VEBA scam has been promoted as protection in the event of bankruptcy. If the companies are close to bankruptcy, where are they getting billions of cash to **Vandalize Employee Benefits Again**, and what the hell good is it for the UAW to have equity in a company on the verge of bankruptcy? So our president can have a place at the table? The Board of Directors Banquet?

We already have Two Tier. The Concession Caucus has effectively strong armed local unions into outsourcing jobs and reorganizing them at lower wages. On top of that, they’ve manned the lines with underpaid temporary workers who don’t have health insurance. Don’t speculate, look back. Two Tier is here.

Further buy-offs are in the cards. As corporations accelerate the transfer of assets overseas, the expanded utilization of temps will facilitate the transition. How do I know? Because they’ll do what they’ve always done until we stop them. Don’t speculate, look back.

Wage cuts have already been deducted in the last four years through COLA diversion and a transfer of the 3% raise due September 18, 2006. You don’t think there’s more to come? The diversion device coupled with a wage freeze will leverage further reductions in the 2007 contract. The whole package will be wrapped in a Job Security ribbon because that’s the tradition.

Concessions don’t save jobs. Concessions pay for severance packages and plant closings. But the Concession Caucus believes it’s their mission to make the companies competitive at the expense of workers and their communities. That’s not speculation, it’s history. Look back.

The Concession Caucus vowed the Delphi/UAW Agreement would “mirror” the GM/UAW Agreement. Likewise, Ford and Visteon. You want to know the future? Don’t speculate, look back at the image reflected in the mirror agreements at Delphi and Visteon.

There are still a few of us from the old religion who believe in solidarity and confrontation as opposed to company unionism. We can still raise our voices and rattle the gates. The Concession Caucus may be surprised this time. The ratification vote in Lockport, NY, where members voted the Delphi contract down two to one, sent a clear message: We won’t be fooled again.

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