

## Live Bait & Ammo #20

Robert Campbell of the Flint Journal, a corporate barker with transparent ambitions for a GM public relations position like his predecessor, Tom Wickham, claims it's now the union's responsibility to make the plant more competitive in order to attract corporate investment. He contends the shop chairman and their staffs must be part agent of change, part business analyst.

For proof he quotes a gaggle of joint cheerleaders who parrot the company jargon about growing the business by competing with other workers and abandoning hard won union principles for management hats and straight jackets. Pure unadulterated malarkey.

Cooperation with the competitive agenda has not saved one single job on the shop floor. The UAW has lost over 750,000 members since the inception of concessionary contracts and cooperation programs. Last year UAW membership fell again by almost 10%. Yet corporate shells and double jointed union mouthpieces continue to mesmerize workers with their competitive/cooperation mantra. Wake up! We're being slaughtered. Competitive/cooperation is a Trojan Horse.

Workers don't need lessons in cooperation. It's in our genes. We understand instinctively that cooperation means helping each other and putting the best interests of the group above personal concerns when necessary. Cooperation means equality and solidarity. It always has and it always will. But in the mouths of the Promise Breakers cooperation means shut up and do what you're told. In the gulag of corporate mentality cooperation means workers follow orders without question. In the Plantation Paradigm cooperation means workers sacrifice their time, their energy, their health, and their families for the bosses' profit.

The bosses never intended to share the coveted right to manage. Jointness stripped the shop floor of classifications, divided the ranks with favoritism, and ground workers down with overloads, overtime, speedups, and continuous disempowerment.

Trade Offs & Payoffs

The mindless echo-babble of competitive/cooperation continues to squabble around the barnyard like a headless chicken, but the hemorrhaging of good paying union jobs gushes unabated. The UAW contract with the Big Three is a butcher block. The corporations never honored the job security terms in the '96 agreement. Yokich winked at that petty infidelity and delivered a contract that concedes even more UAW jobs.

In 1999 Delphi eliminated 11,000 UAW members. According to an article in the May 2000 issue of Fortune magazine, Battenberg expects to eliminate 3,000 more Delphi/UAW members per year, that's more than 30% over the life of the contract. Who is Yokich negotiating for?

A president who can deliver the passive cooperation of union members is an invaluable asset to the corporations and a boon to Wall St. Why shouldn't he be? The International UAW has a cool billion invested in their pension fund. And where is it invested? GMAC, Ford Motor Credit Corporation, and Chrysler Finance Corporation among other conflicts of interest.

The Rollover Caucus doesn't want to hurt their partners, not now when so many of the porkchoppers are set to retire. In 1999 the International in intense negotiations with themselves agreed to sweeten their fat pensions further. How can they maintain their plush living standards as the membership dwindles?

In 1982 the Rollover Caucus reopened the GM contract and shackled the UAW to the jointness wagon. This was the first do-si-do in a sweetheart dance orchestrated to prevent the layoff and/or early retirement of hundreds of International Reps.

As jointness programs accelerated in the 80's, workers took the hit and porkchoppers dipped their greasy fingers in the till. Fat jobs were secured for the loafers and workers got lean. While some UAW members were downsized, laid off, transferred, or pushed into early retirement, others were working compulsory overtime. The OT hours both enabled the layoffs and sweetened the take for joint funds. As union strongholds like Flint were broken up the Rollover Caucus secured their lace at the corporate trough.

The Golden Handshake

In 1983 the Staff Council which is the union that represents the UAW International staff expressed an interest in creating incentives for early retirement. In a letter to the Chairman of the Staff Council, Darryl Greer, Yokich promised to determine a mutually agreeable method of encouraging early retirement among eligible staff or other mutually agreeable arrangement of the sort commonly referred to as a 'Golden Handshake' in order to minimize or negate such contemplated layoff.

But as the snake turns the Golden Handshake wasn't between the Staff Council and the International, the mutually agreeable arrangement was between the International and the Big Three. Joint funds saved International Reps from the downsizing workers suffered. About a third of our International Reps now receive salaries from the Big Three filtered through joint funds. Workers paid the price of that perfidious compromise but the corporations aren't finished exacting their pound of flesh, and their Rollover Partners will be up to their elbows in blood before they're done.

What Happened to the Grievances?

On Workers' Memorial Day the UAW International published their report on the explosion at the Rouge. The report didn't mention the grievances that were filed and conveniently ignored. The report didn't acknowledge workers' complaints about safety as a result of job cuts in the Powerhouse.

Prior to jointness, health and safety problems were resolved through the grievance procedure. Now grievances are pushed aside in favor of a joint consensus that takes into account cost and competitiveness. That consensus led to six deaths.

The president of Local 600, Jerry Sullivan, who regularly has lunch with William Clay Ford was asked by Fortune Magazine what he thought of Mr. Ford. Sullivan gushed. He said that Mr. Ford's concern for the people, for the community, for the environment, -- those are things you just don't see in industrialists. Too bad the local pres didn't mention the boiler problem between swallows.

Where's the accountability of the UAW? We expect the company to screw us. We expect the company to forestall health and safety problems in order to save money, but we pay the UAW to protect us. What, if anything, did the UAW Health

and Safety Reps at the Ford Rouge plant do to address the problems in the Powerhouse? What happened to the grievances?

Since the International cut off strike benefits and health insurance for locked out workers at Local 2036 in Henderson, Kentucky a few union members there have committed suicide. Who is accountable? When will the victims of suicide be remembered on Workers Memorial Day?

### Fictitious Facts & Unbelievable Truths

Our local Quality Network Rep wrote an article in which he stated, We need to separate fact from fiction. Indeed. He asserted, Our union fought at the bargaining table for this right [Quality Network] and to have more democracy in the workplace.

How do more appointments equal more democracy? Who the hell would go on strike for QN? Our union didn't fight at the bargaining table for QN. The Rollover Caucus was bought off with joint funds. In his article he explained that our jobs depend on producing a quality product at a competitive price. Tell that to Buick City, the plant that received the J.D. Powers award for best assembly plant in 1999. But wouldn't you rather drive a Buick made in China?

Joint funds is a part of our national agreement but the International consistently refuses to reveal to union members how much money is laundered through joint funds or how the money is spent. When Dave Yettaw raised the issue at the Constitutional Convention, Yokich told him that it was a bargaining issue. When Yettaw raised the issue at the Bargaining Convention, Yokich cut the mike.

One of the justifications for joint programs is UAW participation in outsourcing decisions. The corporations must certainly feel that is money well spent. Another is training. We are certainly well trained little doggies. We don't bark, we don't beg, and we don't lift our legs on company property. Then of course there's things like trips to Vegas, very educational.

The Center for Human Resources [CHR] which administers joint funds for GM/Delphi is tax exempt because it's a non profit corporation whose purpose is education and training. How sponsorship of NASCAR fits into that criteria I don't

know. But top UAW and company honchos certainly deserve luxurious skyboxes complete with wet bars and catering. They work hard. They play hard.

The CHR spends millions of dollars on salaries, allowances, and expenses for UAW International Reps. Is that why the Big Three can't afford to pay COLA on pensions? Because too much money is lavished on jointness? Of course International reps have had COLA on pensions since 1976. UAW Reps take good care of themselves.

### Golden Parachutes for Reps - - Cement Boots for Workers

A letter in the uncut version of the Delphi contract designated Not to be Published states that International Reps all of whom worked at Delphi plants or other previously divested businesses [Lear? American Axle?] when the leave of absence was initiated, would nevertheless continue to be employees of General Motors for purposes of accumulating seniority. (Ah, the Golden Handshake)

In other words, the pensions of International Reps from Delphi plants like Owen Beiber's son, Mike, won't be turned over to Delphi as our pensions were. What was good enough for the peons wasn't good enough for the Royalty of the UAW. Furthermore, The Parties agreed that these individuals...that hereafter go on leave pursuant to paragraph 109(a) will continue to be treated as part of GM for seniority purposes. That is, future appointees to the International will also get the GM pension rather than the Delphi pension. So you better be good if you want to go to Solidarity Heaven.

That's how we were sold out. Doesn't it make you proud? Doesn't it all make sense? Cooperate with us and we will have a mutually agreeable arrangement of the sort commonly referred to as a 'Golden Handshake'.

"There is Only One Solution"

As news circulates about lawsuits against the UAW, about corruption and nepotism, and investigations by the Department of Labor for criminal wrong doing, I detect a smug satisfaction among UAW members on the shop floor. Finally what we've known all along has come to light and perhaps something will be done to right these wrongs. Don't bet on it. Our CAP funds are used to buy favors from politicians. The legal system has never favored the working stiff.

If we really want to turn this union around we will have to do it ourselves. We will have to take it upon ourselves to organize and demand accountability with real democratic reforms in our union. There can be no genuine accountability without one member/one vote.

As Thomas Jefferson once said, There is only one solution, more democracy. Real democracy can strike up the militancy we need to achieve our goals as unionists not company stooges. Goals like COLA on pensions, smaller work loads, a halt to outsourcing, and more jobs. Real democracy can build the accountability that ensures no one will ever again die in a needless Powerhouse explosion, and that locked out workers aren't deprived of strike benefits.

Last April Yokich made a motion to hold the Constitutional and Bargaining Conventions back to back and the International Executive Rubber Board stamped it. This means that the Bargaining Convention will probably be held in Las Vegas and will consequently deprive many retirees and active UAW members from attending.

We must demand that UAW conventions be held in Detroit where more retirees and active union members will have access; that speeches by pro-business politicians who usurp our valuable time be prohibited; that delegates who are the highest authority at the conventions be given top priority; that resolutions submitted by union members who labor in the factories and warehouses and offices take precedence over the ridiculous, time consuming resolutions on US foreign policy concocted by UAW staff.

More Democracy

We must demand: no more appointments for International Reps' kids. No more appointments, period. All International Reps must be elected by one member/one vote. No more perks from the corporations for cooperation with speed ups, outsourcing, job cutting. A complete separation of powers between the company and the Union. In other words, no more jointness, no more joint slush funds, no more cushy skyboxes at NASCAR.

We must categorically object to multiple pensions and severance pay offs to UAW Reps when they refuse to fight harder for COLA on our pensions and to end the social security reduction and early retirement penalty. If GM pension credits can be rolled over to Delphi then all IPS pensions can become portable. No excuses, no exceptions.

We must demand that all Local contracts be settled before the National contract.

We must demand a full disclosure of National Agreements published on the internet for all to see prior to ratification. If International Reps cut one deal for us and another for themselves as they did with the Delphi pensions, we deserve to know about it. We deserve the opportunity to vote the contract down, and throw the bums out.

Apathy and cynicism are the pillars of the status quo. We need to channel our anger into positive action for change. Our freedom, our dignity, our future depend on the choices we make today. Rollover or stand up with UAW members who want to restore the honor of the UAW with the power of democracy.

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On October 28, New Directions will hold an open meeting. The following day, Sunday October 29, the UAW Coalition for a Stronger Contract will hold an open meeting.

Both meetings will be held in Flint, MI at Walli's Restaurant & Super 8 Motel, G4160 W. Pierson Rd., Flint. MI.

From Detroit, Grand Rapids, or Lansing take I-75 North to Pierson Rd. Exit (East). From Saginaw and sites north of Flint take I-75 South to Pierson Rd. Exit (West).

You can't miss it.

Call 810-789-0400 for motel reservations.

Call 313-259-1436 for free shuttle from Detroit Metro Airport.

For more information call Dean Braid, 517-723-8314.

In Solidarity,

UAW Local 2151