

Live Bait & Ammo #123: You already know the Answer

Ron Gettelfinger said the UAW “will not reopen its contracts.” [“As a Condition of Loan, UAW cannot Strike against General Motors” -Detroit Free Press, 1/08/09]

You know what that means. The UAW will reopen the contracts.

Gettelfinger said the union will ensure that "...what we do is done in the best interest of our members as well as our retirees." [“Autoworkers Union begins talks on Concessions”- Associated Press, 1/08/09]

You know what that means. Grab your ankles.

Rick Wagoner harmonized, “GM can continue to operate without cutting benefits to retirees.” [“Wagoner: Retiree Benefits Safe” -Detroit Free Press 1/08/09]

You know what that means. Don't wake the sleeping giant.

Ron Gettelfinger stands for concessions. That's why he went to Washington: to signal his readiness to make sacrifices on behalf of auto workers. He's well known in tight circles.

Some of Gettelfinger's “most enthusiastic supporters are the top executives of the U.S. auto industry.” [“Union Leader Presides Over Painful Changes” -Washington Post, 5-15-06]

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For example, Automotive News named Ron Gettelfinger “The Person of the Year” and toasted him at a special banquet in honor of his successful capitulation of

every thing the union stands for, in other words, “.....he convinced the UAW's rank-and-file that the concessions were necessary.” [“Gettelfinger Achieved Landmark Labor Deals” -Automotive News, 12/31/07]

The enthusiasm is contagious.

Dale Buss of the anti union Mackinac Center for Public Policy “gushes that the cooperative attitude of Fraser and Bieber pales in comparison to the UAW’s newest strategy under President Ron Gettelfinger.” [“UAW Gets Praise from Unlikely Source” - Rick Haglund, AP, Grand Rapids Press, - 3/2/05]

That’s nothing.

David Cole, the son of a former President of General Motors, and a director of the Original Equipment Suppliers Association, six automotive supplier companies, and the Center for Automotive Research gushed, "Somebody ought to give UAW President Ron Gettelfinger the Nobel Prize....If we were in England, he'd be knighted." [“Manufacturing jobs, UAW at Risk with 2-tier Wage” -Detroit Free Press, 10/04/2007]

Ron is a man of deep, corporate convictions. He believes in “shared abundance”.

“Shared abundance means labor and management can win together, by working on common goals, instead of fighting over who has to absorb the pain created by idle capacity,” he said. At American Axle, Gettelfinger added, labor-management cooperation has helped elevate the supplier to a top-ranked performer — even in the eyes of Wall Street. “Not only has American Axle’s UAW-represented work force increased since 1994,” he said. “Its stock price has more than doubled.” [“UAW Trades 20 Wages for Jobs” --Detroit News, 1/29/04]

Despite his belief in “shared abundance” he’s realistic about the results of concessions “...if you concede a benefit, you figure it’s gone. It would be hard to get it back. I’ve said before, I’ve been in negotiations for a number of times over the years, I don’t ever remember a company calling us up and saying, ‘Hey, you know what? We’re doing so well since those negotiations, we feel like we shorted

you guys and want to give you a little more.' (Laughs) I know once it's negotiated away, it's gone." [Interview: Detroit Free Press, 7-12-05]

That's right, he "laughs" for the record.

Of course realism did not protect him from a stick in the eye. "I did not anticipate that we would be where we're at with Axle," Ron Gettelfinger told the Detroit News. ["UAW: No Role in Axle Talks" -Detroit News, 4/29/08]

Nonetheless, he's a master at squeezing lemonade from bitter rinds.

He gave Delphi everything the company wanted and called it a victory. [see Live Bait & Ammo #WTF]

So, what exactly did Gettelfinger expect when he negotiated funeral arrangements for the UAW in exchange for an underfunded VEBA? He got the shyster's promise, but he didn't get the money.