

Live Bait & Ammo #132: When is Resistance Worth the Risk?

Risk can be calculated in most circumstances. Projected gains may be weighed against the likelihood of loss. But in a game where the house conceals the rules and keeps the score, every action carries more risk than reward. In which case the most reasonable strategy is slow down. At least until the cards are on the table and your gun is drawn. That's my advice.

Michael Moore's advice to Obama on what to do with GM is right on from a socialist perspective, but it's a stick in the eye to the bankster regime in Washington.

Since the government owns a majority of GM stock, it makes perfect sense from a socialist perspective to direct the auto giant to manufacture what is good for America: high speed trains, mass transit, electric cars, and clean energy devices like wind turbines and solar panels.

The government owes it to citizens it purports to represent to act responsibly in its stewardship of General Motors. The taxpayers' stake in GM gives us an opportunity to invest in products that confront the triple challenge of environmental crisis, energy independence, and unemployment. Good cause for common purpose.

To date, the government has invested in a dubious counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, and paid off the gambling debts of reckless investment banksters, ruthless mortgage swindlers, and high risk insurance gamblers. An investment in something practical would be a welcome relief.

The problem I see with Moore's advice is that he directs his message to the consummate capitalist, the President of the United States, rather than workers. Even if Obama wanted to transform defunct auto plants into nationalized centers for energy independence, he couldn't get the act through Congress without a mass movement behind him.

I should note that Moore's advice is identical to proposals presented to a Congressional committee by the Autoworker Caravan [www.autoworkercaravan.org] seven months earlier. The difference is, the Caravan didn't expect the President of the United States to don the mantle of a working class hero. The Caravan was an event staged to appeal to workers.

Hero dependence is a common foible. We imagine that if we elect the right person, whether it's a governor, a mayor, or a bargaining chair, he or she will save us and we can sit back and relax because all that is required of us is to vote. The notion is naive as the religion of children.

Social struggles aren't won by one person. Nationalizing closed auto plants for the common good requires organized resistance. If workers occupied a plant under the banner, "Save our Community", the resistance would have social and moral force — tools necessary to challenge laws that subordinate social justice to private capital.

The proposal to transform defunct auto plants into nationalized centers for energy independence is practical, but the notion that social struggles can be directed from the White House is naive.

The first question is: do we have a group of workers prepared to occupy a plant with the goal of winning investment in the community rather than severance? The second question is: will members of the immediate community support the occupation? And finally, do progressives want to empower workers or write policy papers?

The practice of appealing to the consummate capitalist rather than workers themselves sidetracks direct action and preserves the status quo. If workers in the trenches felt they had artillery support from the ivory towers rather than water balloons, they might think militant resistance was worth the risk.

sos, Gregg Shotwell

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