

Live Bait & Ammo #118: Funneled down the Job Bank Drain

The US lost more jobs last month than at any time in the 124 year history of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The stock market has tanked, as well as bonds and real estate. The banker on the corner smiles like a skeleton. No one is spending money because everything will be cheaper tomorrow. The Fed shovels dollars out the window of a moving train as Katrina searches for a happy ending and Republicans want to..... “filibuster”?

When the tantrums are over, President Bush will appoint a “Car Czar” to strong arm the ranks into a marching band for martyrdom—layoffs, plant closings, bank-ruptured dealers. It’s uncanny how heavy handed politicians are with irony. A Russian title for the federal agent assigned to dictate demands to the auto industry? What next? Hammers and sickles for hood ornaments?

But don’t worry, Wagoner, Nardelli, and Mullaly won’t be hawking their options at the low end. They’ll fleece the cons and field dress the union. Before you know it, they’ll be bitching about taxes and regulations and clearing their nostrils with Ben Franklins.

Meanwhile, Gettelfinger thinks the name of the game is “Concessions”. He informed assembled Local UAW reps that he will unilaterally concede the Job Bank without a ratification vote of the membership. People who haven’t read “The Constitutional Death of the UAW” by Bill Hanline [www.soldiersofsolidarity.com] believed that Job Bank was the lynch pin of our national job security agreement. But as Hanline has often articulated there is “a contract within the contract” that is only binding between the Center for Human Resources and the UAW Staff.

The Center for Human Resources [CHR] is a non profit, tax exempt corporation funded by General Motors. (Ford and Chrysler have similar s-corporations that pay off UAW office rats.) Approximately thirty percent of appointed UAW-GM staff salaries, benefits, and expenses are reimbursed to the UAW International by the CHR. On May 18, 2001 the Detroit Free Press published an investigative article about joint funds: “A Shroud of Secrecy Surrounds Joint Funds”. [http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-8368144_ITM]

“UAW-GM told the Internal Revenue Service that \$85.6 million of the \$186.9 million it spent in 1999, or 46 percent, was for ‘management,’ or overhead, expenses.” Which sounds excessive, but “Union officials say there are adequate checks and balances within the centers: No money can be spent without the approval of both union and corporation.”

Of course in this context union approval does not include the rank & file, it only refers to the office rats, the recipients of the pay offs. Management and overhead exceeds 40% because they place two people, one union and one management, on every job. And they like to party. “Joint-funds business also takes hundreds of UAW officials to the Riviera Resort and Racquet Club in Palm Springs, Calif. Hotel officials say UAW members and auto company representatives fill the 475-bed hotel every January, and at least one week a month through March.”

The reason that Gettelfinger can dismantle the Job Bank without the approval of the members is because joint funds was never ratified by the members. Joint funds is “a contract within the contract” between the companies and the UAW Staff.

In 2006 the president of UAW Local 2151 was approached by the plant manager and the personnel director. Management wanted to put all the local union appointees into the Job Bank. Since they would be paid out of a different set of books, it would make the plant’s bottom line look better. To his credit, the Local Union President, Robb Betts, refused. He didn’t think it sounded ethical. At which point he was informed that ‘everybody else is doing it.’ Robb said, “That doesn’t make it right.”

If we are going to eliminate Job Bank, we should concede all the joint funds and dissolve the CHR and its counterparts at Ford and Chrysler. The entire jointness apparatus with its thousands of appointees should be dissolved. UAW staffers can be funneled down the Job Bank Drain with the rest of the rank & file.