

Live Bait & Ammo #140: GM Parts Workers have Power

In January the UAW rolled out a new series of concessions for the GM parts plants which were formerly a part of Delphi which was formerly a part of GM which was formerly a company that didn't conceal its control of an automotive empire beneath a shuffle of corporate aliases.

The International UAW Concession Caucus insinuated that concessions were mandatory because of the GM "Addendum" which is Latin for dumb excuse. The insinuation was misleading, dishonest, and severely miscalculated the readiness of the rank & file to roll over. The Concession Train collided with an immovable object: rank & file outrage.

Former Delphi workers don't owe General Motors any favors. Under pressure of bankruptcy at Delphi UAW members ratified a contract in July 2007 which satisfied the court and the company that they were competitive. Document 91 of that contract contains the successor clause: "any sale of an operation as an ongoing business would require the buyer to assume the 2007 Delphi-UAW Collective Bargaining Agreement." Period. End of discussion.

SOS let the Cons know we saw through their addendum argument. Furthermore, we questioned who gave the Cons permission to violate Article 19 Section 3 of the UAW Constitution which asserts that no UAW officer may enter into negotiations with an employer without prior approval of the membership.

GM canceled a raise due on January 4, 2010 for the former Delphi workers. The Con Caucus didn't object. They accepted it as a done deal. What they didn't anticipate was rank & file outrage in the face of the UAW's dereliction of duty. The rank & file demanded a grievance and backed Concession Caucus Vice President Cal Rapson into a corner.

Now the Cons are backpedalling. At the Sub-Council in Chicago, January 25-28, Rapson agreed to file a grievance and admitted that the contract ratified in 2007 is legal and binding. SOS pulled a Work to Rule on the UAW International. But the struggle never ends.

The Cons are still pushing the company agenda and insinuating that unless the local unions break the Master Agreement, some of the sites will be closed or sold. They are not ashamed to use the same language as union busters because they are union busters. How else can you describe hacks who advocate that union members break solidarity and strike their own deal with the boss?

The Cons actually told members that if they agreed to reduce their severance packages, they had a better chance of keeping their plants open. They must think we are nuts. Why would workers under threat of closing choose to reduce their severance package? It's like saying, if you cut your own throat, it will save the firing squad bullets.

Why should workers struggling to survive give up raises? Why should workers threatened with a plant closure voluntarily agree to reduce their severance package? Why would the UAW Concession Caucus even suggest such a thing? There's only one possible explanation. They're working for the company. They want to lower wages and depreciate working conditions.

GM has been outsourcing parts and inventing aliases for the last 30 years. The five "keep sites" are five sites that they couldn't replace. They may sell or close additional plants, but reducing severance and wages will only accelerate the process and help pay closing costs. Workers are better off keeping the contract they have and renegotiating in 2011 when GM will likely be in better financial shape. The drive to break the Master Agreement is a union busting strategy.

The GM parts plants have the right to strike in 2011. The GM parts plants could shut down large portions of GM and other OEM's including Toyota. The GM parts plants could raise expectations for genuine pattern bargaining across the board in 2011. That's what scares the Concession Caucus. The GM parts workers have real bargaining power.

sos, Gregg Shotwell

GreggShotwell@aol.com

www.soldiersofsolidarity.com

www.factoryrat.com