

Live Bait & Ammo #146: Hold the Con Caucus Accountable

In 2005 S.O.S. said, “What happens at Delphi will affect all other UAW members.” It wasn’t a plea for help so much as a warning bell. It’s happening again, two months before the UAW Constitutional Convention.

The UAW Concession Caucus is attempting to break a master agreement and defend the corporation’s efforts to impose the concessions contained in a contract “Addendum” on a group of workers who didn’t ratify the “Addendum”.

In violation of the 2007 UAW-Delphi National Agreement still in force at GM “keepsites” raises have been canceled. Likewise, the Monday holiday after Easter was unilaterally canceled.

The 2007 UAW-Delphi contract reads: “Delphi and the UAW agree to adopt the same specified holidays as agreed to by General Motors and the UAW through September 14, 2011.”

To argue that those holidays do not coincide with the UAW-GM contract ratified in 2007 but rather are subject to changes made two years later in a separate ass end agreement is like interpreting the contract by peering through the Looking Glass with Alice.

Will the performance bonus fall through the same rabbit hole?

And if so, what else may disappear?

The 2007 Delphi agreement refers to the 2007 GM agreement not an unforeseen “Addendum”. The contract could not logically refer to an event that was unanticipated at the time of negotiation. To argue otherwise is not only absurd, it’s literally negotiating backwards, i.e., after the fact. Once the 2007 agreement was ratified, the holidays were locked in. What’s important for all union members to defend is the right to ratify all contracts, supplements, and addendums as written in Article 19 Section 4 of the UAW Constitution. Only a Con would argue otherwise.

An addendum to a contract can only apply to the members who ratified it. The Cons cannot use that addendum to alter other workers’ contracts in other companies unilaterally. That is why the UAW is trying to get members at the “keepsites” to reopen their contract and ratify a new set of concessions. Because they know that they cannot legally change wages, benefits, and working conditions, including holidays, without the members’ ratification.

If ratification wasn’t legally required, they wouldn’t go through the trouble. If an addendum is so open ended it affects contracts other than the one specifically intended, and can be imposed on members other than those who ratified it, where does addendum ever end?

GM insists that “keepsites” are a separate subsidiary. They can’t have it both ways.

It has been over three months since GM decided not to pay workers at the five “keepsites” the raise they were due on January 4, 2010. When workers don’t obey the contract, they get walked out. When the company disregards the contract, the UAW Concession Caucus makes excuses for them and tries to bend the contract to suit the company’s wishes. Next, they’ll take away the performance bonus due in May. We’re talking thousands of dollars for underpaid workers.

The Cons whine that the government is making them do it. The problem with that lame excuse is that the government is not in any way involved in negotiations with the five “keepsites”. The bankruptcy is over and the high sheriff left town.

The Cons are on their own and determined to do their best to break the ranks of solidarity and whipsaw the “keepsites” to their knees.

All UAW members should support the struggle of members at the five GM “keepsites”. Otherwise the Cons will demand that they too break master agreements and whipsaw their brothers and sisters. Assembly plants will vie with each other for the lowest wages. Powertrain plants will negotiate separate agreements. Stamping plants will become subsidiaries. And concession riddled addendums will be imposed on workers who were not a party to the ratification.

The Concession Caucus is in contempt of both the spirit and the rule of the UAW Constitution. Hold them accountable or forever hold your assendums.

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