

Live Bait & Ammo #153: “The Decision We Make Here”

The bureaucracy that controls the UAW is officially known as the Administrative Caucus and unofficially as the Concession Caucus. Both names accurately describe their function. They administrate the union bureaucracy and they actively promote wage and benefit cuts for workers.

While the Concession Caucus brags about its internal democracy and touts democracy in organizing drives, the union is essentially controlled by appointees, not elected leaders. Every UAW member who works in a position above the local level is appointed.

Thus, all potential leaders in the Concession Caucus are suck-ups. One isn't appointed for skill or aptitude or passion for the labor movement. One is promoted for his or her loyalty to whomever appointed them. They are not accountable to the members. They are only accountable to their boss. As a result, the International UAW president is the most successful suck-up of all.

How else do you think he got there? And what do you think he does at the bargaining table?

He can only do what he has been trained to do. Suck-ups are not educated to think for themselves or have a world view independent of the corporation. They are trained to suck-up, period. Over the years the gene pool in the Concession Caucus has grown pretty thin because no suck-up is willing to appoint anyone who may challenge the suck-up totem.

Recently, UAW Local 23 in Indianapolis refused to negotiate a concession contract. It comes as no surprise that Mo Davison, the UAW Region 3 Director, would override the UAW Constitution and do the bidding of his corporate masters. Davison is determined to negotiate a contract that would reduce standards to a nonunion level. He is obeying the Concession Caucus protocol precisely as he was trained to do.

All UAW contracts are now referred to as Memorandums of Understanding. The understanding is between the Concession Caucus and the company. The pair is identified in these MOU's as “the joint parties”.

The “joint parties” have decided to make workers pay for corporate malfeasance and to profit off the unemployment crisis by coercing workers into pay and benefit cuts.

And while the “joint parties” are at it, they thought they might as well throw in the eight hour day and everything else that the labor movement ever fought for including the right of workers to decide their own fate independent of coercion and extortion — the pliers of union busters.

The “joint parties” does not include the rank & file. The Concession Caucus would object and say that they are the legal representatives of UAW members, but the fact remains that the Concession Caucus has done an excellent job representing the corporate agenda of competitiveness which means layoffs, outsourcing, subcontracting, wage and benefit cuts, and nonunion working conditions.

The Concession Caucus has not done a decent job of representing workers' interests and that is why they can't win organizing drives. King has the cart in front of the donkey, but from where he's riding, he can't see the difference.

When the company and the union team up against workers it's hard not to feel demoralized, isolated, helpless, and cynical.

Lucky for us there are individuals who refuse to be degraded. There are small determined groups who choose to challenge the status quo and assert their dignity. Everything the majority has abided out of fear or ignorance or laziness is shattered by the revolt of these individuals, these soldiers of solidarity, who dare.

Who dare to think for themselves. Who dare to act on principles. Who dare to reject the despair and degradation heaped upon them by spineless union officials.

UAW Local 23 rejected degradation. As the Bargaining Chairman, Gregory Clark said, "There's no sense in us setting a precedent and taking a wage cut. We're not in this just for ourselves. The decision we make here affects not only Indianapolis. If we give in, the company will go after the people in the plants in Marion, Flint, and Parma for the same thing." [Indianapolis Star, Ted Evanoff, 7-6-10]

UAW members at a GM parts plant in Wyoming, Mi. likewise rejected degradation despite threats and intimidation. UAW members in Syracuse, NY told the "joint parties" to close the plant three times in a row. Ford workers booed Bob King and turned down concessions by an insurmountable margin.

UAW members in Saginaw rejected concessions until the "joint parties" coerced and extorted them. In light of the fact that there are no jobs in Michigan workers in Saginaw reluctantly caved in and were promptly sold to Pacific Century Motors a finance arm of the Beijing Municipal government. They labor on with a knife in their backs and vendetta in their hearts.

At the UAW Constitutional Convention Gary Walkowicz challenged the "joint parties". He said, "It's time to go back to the bridge," in reference to the famous battle the UAW waged against Ford in May 1937. He was booed and derided by the suck-ups.

When Cathy Abney nominated Gary for president she said, "We need policies that put the workers' interest first." She was loudly booed by the suck-ups.

At times individuals arise who stand so tall they cast a shadow over the armies and institutions of repression. At times small groups of workers risk everything to challenge the forces that would degrade them. Together they tear the fallacies of conventional wisdom from our collective conscience. Their refusal to submit is an incandescent action and deserves our vigilant attention.

"The decision we make here," as brother Clark said, affects everyone.

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