

Live Bait & AMMO #114: Concessions we will gladly make

Our Republican friends on the Hill want to make us take concessions until we're earning less than foreign auto plants in Alabama. A fine how do you do. Trouble is, as soon as we reach parity with the Work for Less states, the competition will lower the limbo stick. And they'll keep lowering it until all workers are face down in the dirt.

But many of us agree that the Job Bank is a hoax. At the last GM plant where I worked, management put forty people in the Job Bank and assigned one person to watch them do nothing. The rest of us had to work mandatory overtime to make up for the lost production.

Why would a company pay people to sit down and do nothing and then pay other employees time and half to make up for what the do-nothings weren't doing? It doesn't make sense unless you are keeping two sets of books. One for the company and another for the Center for Human Resources [CHR], a tax exempt non profit corporation that administers funds for Job Bank and reimburses salaries, benefits, and expenses for 30% of International UAW reps.

The purpose of the Job Bank was never to save jobs. The purpose was to silence protest. The Job Bank is in effect a hypnotic drug like Ambien. It puts workers to sleep while their jobs are outsourced. This isn't an opinion, it's a numerical fact. The Center for Human Resources with the cooperation of the International UAW has overseen the reduction of hundreds of thousands of good paying jobs.

It's counterintuitive to pay workers for not working. It's like paying farmers not to grow crops. Unemployment is a drain on the economy. It's nonproductive. It keeps all boats from rising by depressing wages. But for trickle downers there's an upside: degrading workers curbs inflation. Likewise, Job Bank has an upside for the companies. It mothballs workers, gets them off the books, and curbs demand for real job security—meaningful work.

There's only one reasonable solution to the wastefulness of Job Bank and unemployment compensation: work. We should jump on that concession with both feet. There is a lot of work to be done at GM since Hurricane Wagoner hit. The government could invest in rebuilding the manufacturing base just like the governments of Japan, Korea, China, and India have done. How long did it take the auto companies to retool at the onset of WW2? We've done it before and we can do it again. But this time let's beat the fossil fuel burners into cutting edge transports.

Under the current proposals by the Detroit Three, government loans would be used to close plants and cut jobs. How does it help communities or the larger economy to reduce the workforce and undermine the tax base? Any government assistance should be tied to job creation which is why we would gladly concede the Job Bank, a proven job killer, and replace it with a plan to create meaningful work.

Another concession we could gladly make is in the area of UAW appointees who get paid to keep the rabble unaroused. We could save a lot of money by kicking those slackers off the gravy train. For every UAW appointee carrying a clipboard GM has a white collar working hard to double the redundancy. We can afford to concede the UAW Appointees. Put them back on the line and reduce overtime in favor of full employment.

We can also concede the twelve hours of double time the Bargaining Chair gets to sit home on Sunday. Let's concede that payoff. Instead of the company paying union offs to hide in their cubby holes, let's put them back to work until they are called out and actively investigating a grievance. We don't need union offs who are beholden to the boss.

While we're at it, let's give the anti union crowd one they really want: dues check off. Instead of having the company automatically deduct dues from our paychecks, make the union rep come around to each and every worker once a month and collect. Call it, the Accountability Check Off. Workers would pay their dues and the Union rep would hear what they thought of his or her job performance.

There are plenty of concessions UAW members are willing to make. We will give them Ron Gettelfinger's mustache. We will give them Bob King's phony apprenticeship. We will give them Cal Rapson's rap sheet. We will give them Jimmy Settles extra chin. We will give them General Holiefield's bag of wind. We will give them Elizabeth Bunn's deer in the headlight stare.

We will gladly give up the Center for Human Resources and the hundreds of millions of payola connected to joint funds. We'd be glad to flush the waste out of the system

But we won't give up what we have earned. We won't give up our pensions, benefits, wages, or work rules. And we insist that the United States finally live up to world class standards and provide health care for the whole working class.

Jobs with Justice has issued a call for a National Week of Action, December 7-13

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As many predicted, the Wall Street Bailout has proven to be the gross give-away to the same financial bigwigs that have been pocketing millions while wrecking the real economy. Little or no benefit has gone to the working people and the real economy, at a time that we face the greatest economic crisis since the 1930s. By the time Obama is sworn in, hundreds of thousands of additional people will lose their jobs, lose their homes and lose their health care.

It's time for a "People's Bailout" that fixes the real economy, restores a voice for working people in challenging corporate greed, provides emergency help to the victims of the crisis and begins building a fair economy that works for all, addressing crises in housing, health care, jobs, retirement security and the environment.

Jobs with Justice coalitions and ally organizations are calling for a Week of Actions around the country that educate and mobilize in support of a Peoples Bailout.

Immediately we call for:

- Pass an economic stimulus/recovery package, on the scale of the emergency we face, that addresses emergency needs and supports jobs in the real economy;
- Pass the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA);
- Stop evictions due to foreclosures;
- Emergency action so people losing jobs don't lose health care.

Lay the groundwork for a long-term recovery program including:

- Green jobs and clean energy;
- Restore worker justice, including EFCA and other reforms;
- Health care for all;
- Retirement security;
- Re-regulate the finance system and make the speculators pay to clean-up their mess
- Fair policies on Trade and Migration that honor workers here and abroad

Jobs with Justice is calling for this national week of action across the country, in coordination with groups such as Institute for Policy Studies, US Action, American Friends Service Committee, National Community Reinvestment Coalition.

Visit <http://www.unionvoice.org/ct/ApqMkPp1SPDb/> for more information.

What you can do:

- 1) Contact your local JwJ coalition to get involved in activities in your area. We will post a list of actions next week.
- 2) Organize your own event. Visit <http://www.unionvoice.org/ct/ApqMkPp1SPDb/> to download an organizing kit and let us know what you are planning.

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The International UAW is notably AWOL from this call to action in defense of working people. The UAW's inaction is all the more reason for rank & file members to support Jobs with Justice. This crisis isn't about the privileges of the Detroit Three, it's about all workers.

Stay Solid, Gregg Shotwell

