

Live Bait & Ammo #151: Where does Bob King Stand?

In an interview by Amy Goodman on “Democracy Now” June 22, 2010, the new UAW International President, **Bob King**, said, “What we want is companies to recognize the workers’ First Amendment rights. Workers should have a right of free speech. They should have a right of association without being intimidated—in some cases, terrorized—by the boss, without having their jobs threatened or their plants threatened to close. It’s outrageous the way that some employers try to deny workers their rights to organize and their rights—their First Amendment rights, really.”

Meanwhile UAW members at a GM parts plant in Saginaw are being intimidated, even “terrorized”, with layoffs and threats to close the plant if they don’t terminate their contract early and agree to severe wage and benefit cuts.

King is AWOL when the terror is in his own house. Instead UAW officials are colluding in threats of economic terror because workers voted the concession contract down.

UAW officials are circulating a petition for a revote. This is simply cover for a Bargaining Chair who wants to re-negotiate and come back with the same concessions.

A rank & file member, who was exercising his rights under the UAW Constitution, circulated a recall petition against the bargaining committee. He was disciplined. He was reportedly on his break time but distributing in a work area. So the discipline has a basis. The question is: are those who circulate the revote petition held to the same standard?

Workers at the Saginaw GM plant are scared and angry and fed up. “I’ve been here three and half years and every day I get threatened. Every day they tell us we make too much and they are going to close the plant,” one worker said.

Despite the fact workers in Saginaw ratified a concession contract in 2007 and a local competitive operating agreement as well, the company and the UAW insist that workers terminate the agreement and re-negotiate further concessions.

Does economic terror ever end? Will a worker ever feel secure in the USA?

GM is telling workers point blank that the goal of the contract is to make the site attractive to companies that “are looking for a North American base.” In other words a Korean or Chinese company whose real intention is to strip mine the Saginaw facility and ship the work overseas. Both countries are aggressively pursuing an agenda to strengthen their domestic manufacturing capabilities for export. They have no intention of creating jobs in the USA.

In letters distributed to workers from both GM executive, Scott Mackie, and the Vice President of Saginaw Site Steering, Vince DeZorzi, workers were informed that if they didn’t ratify the concessions immediately, GM will wind down operations in Saginaw.

Layoffs were implemented immediately despite the fact that the plant is in critical status which means mandatory overtime. Workers have been laid off out of line with seniority in violation of a local agreement. Coercion and company-unionism go hand in hand.

So where is Bob King? Where does the President of the International UAW, who publicly condemns the union busting practices and mistreatment of workers by Toyota, stand when the terrorism is happening to workers under his jurisdiction?

Bob King claims to “have a lot of passion about social justice that I think came from my upbringing and from my spiritual beliefs.”

Where is King’s passion for social justice when he is actually in a position to do something more than talk the talk?

Come on out, Brother King. Show us what you’re words mean.

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