

Live Bait & Ammo #156: Cuckoos Nest

When vulture capitalists get rebuked like J. D. Norman did in Indianapolis, they move on to the next carcass. Vultures aren't predators. They don't have the skills of a hunter. They prey on road kill. UAW Local 23 is still kicking.

But Norman can't bring himself to abandon the lucrative GM contracts and 2.1 million square feet of capacity lying open in the industrial heartland. Which leads one to believe there's more to this deal than meets the eye. Like money under the table. Like a sweetheart deal with guaranteed GM contracts ala Dick Dauch mode [American Axle]. Like competitive bids that will undermine UAW plants all over the country. Like a back up plant in Monterey, Mexico to ratchet competition in successive contracts. Like a wink and a nod from his cronies on GM's Board of Directors.

Norman's attempt to circumvent the union which rejected him outright by chairing his own offsite meeting reveals his anti union bias. Norman is used to dictating terms, not negotiating with people he doesn't regard as equals. The action begs the question.

What's an anti union guy like Norman want with a bunch of UAW members anyway?

He can't run the plant without them. GM won't give him the sweetheart deal without skilled workers to guarantee the quality. And GM needs a UAW shop to set the competitive downward spiral in motion.

But what's in it for Joe Ashton, the UAW Vice President in charge of the GM department at Solidarity House in Detroit? What's his kickback?

In going behind the backs of the elected Bargaining Committee of UAW Local 23 Joe Ashton has violated Article 19 Sections 3 and 6 of the UAW Constitution. As such he has revealed that he is not a man whom union members can trust. He's a rogue union official.

In a letter intended to persuade members of UAW Local 23 to break the National Contract, ratify concessions, and turn scab, Ashton stated on August 12, 2010, "together [we] agreed to take a look at all the options available." That assertion is a blatant lie unless by "we" he means himself and Norman.

In May 2010 the members of UAW Local 23 voted overwhelmingly at an official union meeting to honor solidarity and uphold the National UAW-GM Contract. The members at a Local Union meeting are the highest authority in the UAW. Their decision is official and Ashton's decision to circumvent their authority is both rogue and despicable.

If UAW International President Bob King were truly committed to workers' rights he would call Ashton on the carpet and dress him down. But King won't because his primary goal is to assist the corporations in their quest to degrade workers.

King is committed to the competitive agenda which pits worker against worker in a contest for the lowest standards. If the UAW Concession Caucus succeeds in setting up a scab shop to undermine other UAW contracts, the lower standard will serve King's argument that members must work for less in order to save jobs. The Concession Caucus contends a job at half pay is better than no job.

The inanity of the argument reminds me of the *Cuckoos Nest* by Ken Kesey.

In this dialogue which takes place between inmates at the mental hospital *McMurphy* represents UAW Local 23 Bargaining Chairman, Greg Clark, and *Martini* represents UAW President, Bob King.

[The inmates are playing cards and betting with cigarettes. Martini rips a cigarette in half.]

—Martini: "I bet a nickel."

—McMurphy: "Dime's the limit, Martini."

—Martini: "I bet a dime." [puts the two halves onto the table]

—McMurphy: "This is not a dime, Martini. *This* is a dime." [shows a whole cigarette]

—McMurphy: "If you break it in half, you don't get two nickels, you get shit. Try and smoke it. You understand?"

Do you, Bob King, "understand"? If you break a union in half, you don't get two nickels, you get shit?

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