

Make Your Vote Count

No one has to read the Lowlights of the UAW-GM contract to know what it's all about. CEOs get bailed out, workers get sold out. No one has to analyze the fine print. This one isn't about nickels and dimes. This one is the big one. This one is about the right to unionize.

We better get it right this time. We won't get a second chance.

If UAW members ratify the contract with GM, they will give up the right to vote on the contract in 2011. Instead, the contract will be decided by arbitration based on parity with non union plants. That's the hidden agenda. The UAW will be effectively decertified as a bargaining agent. Rank and file members will have no more rights than non union workers in 2011. The next contract will make this one look like desert topping.

The government's gift of debt forgiveness comes wrapped in ribbons of union busting ultimatums. Not only do we stand to lose jobs and money, we stand to lose the right to bargain collectively. Post bankruptcy, CEOs will pocket millions in bonuses while workers who sacrificed vacation time, break time, overtime, and raises, will collect repetitive stress injuries and debts. We won't recover.

Workers will once again be forced to pay for mismanagement and fraud.

You think this contract is bad? What do you think we'll get in 2011 when we can't even vote? GM expects to save a billion per year in labor costs on this contract. How much will they take out of our hides when we don't have a vote?

Nonunion transplants pegged their compensation at rates that dissuaded union organizing. But that levee collapsed and the farm is awash with alligators. Toyota and Honda are free to lower compensation to depths heretofore unheard of. \$14 is not the bottom line. Parity with nonunion plants will be lower in 2011 than it is now. And new hires won't be the only ones bending over the barrel. In 2011 UAW members will not only take another pay cut, they will lose defined pension benefits without a vote.

Parity with non union plants means the pension will be converted to a 401-k just like the new hires have now. It's been done before.

On December 31, 2007 IBM canceled its pension plan. Benefits from that plan stopped growing and employees were switched to a 401-k. IBM estimated that employees who were relatively far from retirement age would receive "on average 12 percent less than they would have under the old pension plan." Of course, that optimistic estimate was before the 2008 market crash. IBM expected to save billions and they certainly did. The company saved, workers lost.

If UAW members ratify the new contract, they will lose the right to vote and set themselves up for more reductions in pay, benefits, working conditions, and pension in 2011. Those losses will never be recovered.

Voting yes is like digging your own grave and tipping the executioners.

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