

A HOUSE DIVIDED

Dear Brothers and Sisters, we have become a house divided. And we all know that a house divided will never stand. How did we become a house divided? It is because we as union members have become more concerned about our own Individual benefits as oppose to what is best for our entire membership. We can all point the finger but we all share the blame.

We all share the blame because we allowed the U A W International to negotiate the two-tier wage system. This two-tier system pits the seniority employees against the new hires. We should never have agreed to such a divisive system. No one is willing to admit to voting yes on this divisive system and yet it mysteriously passed. The same thing may happen if we allow this scab contract to come to a vote.

When we adopted the two-tier wage system, we were not thinking of the affects this would have on our new hires. We just thought well, it does not affect me so I will not worry about it. Well, the situation is changed now that JD Norman is offering us that same second-tier wage. We can sympathize with the new hires now that we know what it feels like to be offered a sub-par wage. Also, it has now become cheaper for GM to hire new workers than it is to allow seniority employees to transfer to plants with openings. The fact of the matter is, we are now competing with new hires and temporary employees for jobs.

We have also allowed divisions to creep into our house along seniority lines. There are those of us that can retire and there are those of us that would simply like to make it to retirement. Some of us that can retire are willing to agree to pay cuts because again, it really does not affect their pay. They can simply retire and collect their retirement pay along with the scraps that JD Norman is offering. This self-serving attitude is not what being a union member is about. Imagine what our lives would be like if our union brothers and sisters who came before us had agreed to pay cuts 30 years ago. What kind of life would we be living if our pay had been cut in half 30 years ago? Would we have been able to afford the cars that we drive, the homes that we live in? Would we have been able to send our children to college, or take them on vacations? No, we would not! Fortunately, our union brothers and sisters did not sell us out and we should not sell out our brothers and sisters now.

Brothers and Sisters, the issues that we are facing here at our local have a broader affect on our union membership through GM, Ford, and Chrysler. If we allow our wages to be cut, this plant can be whipsawed against all the other stamping facilities. That means that any bids for new work can be undercut by this plant if it becomes a scab facility. If we allow this attack on our wages to be successful, where will it end? Justin Norman has already shown us that a contract does not mean anything to him. If he were allowed to take over this plant what would stop him from coming back a year later and cutting the wages again? If he

were an honorable man, he would be willing to honor our existing agreement. The money that he is offering in his scab contract would be enough to pay our wages for the rest of the year, so why won't he just honor our master agreement? Because, he is trying to bust our union!

This fight to maintain our wages is going to carry over into the 2011 contract negotiations. The International has already hinted that they will be looking for wage concessions from the rank and file, even after they voted to give themselves a pay raise. If we give in now, it will make it much easier for them to try to justify asking for future concessions. Instead of giving concessions, we need to be fighting to repeal the two-tier wage agreement. If we agree to \$15.00 per hour, the new hires and will never achieve the full-scale wages that we now enjoy.

The only way that we can stand up against these insulting and divisive advances by JD Norman and the Constitutional and Contractual violations by the International leadership is to unite our local. We need to get our house in order. Our local leadership needs to stop fighting with one another and listen to the membership. They need to come together and remember that they work for us, not the Region or the International. Our membership needs to stand together and reflect back to that faithful day in May when our house was united and we said in one united and resounding voice, NO! NOT IN OUR HOUSE!

In Solidarity,

Roy E. Gomillion

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