

Hello,

My name is Doug Kowalske, we spoke at last Saturday's meeting at Metropolitan Airport Hotel autoworker meeting. I promised to forward info to you. Please see attached copy of letter from UAW Retiree Benefits Trust.

**It is very important to understand that these cuts are taking place, literally before the transfer to VEBA had taken place!**

I have sent this information to B. Snavely at the Detroit Free Press, the UAW/Ford reporter. I have sent emails and left numerous phone messages with absolutely no response. Apparently he or his supervisors do not think this is newsworthy.

What follows below is a somewhat abridged letter I have sent to a number of sources.

I will be glad to speak to you about this matter or any other related to Labor issues. Feel free to call or email at any time.

This is an issue that I believe you and your readers might find interesting in light of the current healthcare debate and with Mr Obama's recent meeting with Labor to discuss the taxing of health care coverage.

I am a 60 year old retired UAW Ford worker currently raising two of my Grandchildren. We have been Legal Guardians for the eldest girl, age 12, for about 10 years. We have Legally Adopted the younger girl, age 4 in 2007.

We received the attached letter from the UAW Retiree Medical Benefits Trust on Dec. 28, 2009 regarding changes in dependent coverage.

### **Why does this letter alarm me?**

As you are aware, over the last few years the US Auto Industry has been offering "buyouts" and early retirement to hundreds of thousands of UAW represented employees. Most of the workers eligible for these buyouts and early retirements were older employees with accumulated seniority. Hundreds of thousands of people accepted these offers. On my Retirement Agreement with Ford Motor Co, the phrase "in return, certain LIFETIME BENEFITS , (highlighted and in bold type), will be provided". In addition there are certain ongoing stipulations that any intellectual properties, etc, belong to Ford Motor Co., and a prohibition that you will not seek additional employment with Ford Motor, and will not add to retirement benefits, etc, so there are ongoing obligations between the retiring employee and Ford Motor Co. after retirement.

This was negotiated by the UAW over many years of practice.

When I retired in 2005, it seemed that many, if not most, of my fellow UAW/Ford workers who were near my age were caring for grandchildren in some way. The declining economy and standard of living had meant that many of their sons and daughters had trouble finding jobs that provided for adequate health care for their families. Many of these young parents were forced to work multiple jobs to make ends meet, so grandparents were often called in to help with child care as the

underemployed parents could not afford quality care at the odd hours they often had to work.

This situation also meant that many of these children were now living with grandparents full time.

In addition, these stresses led to divorce and custody battles and often this meant that these children went to live with grandparents for a safe haven from parental strife.

In the past, the eligibility requirements for covering principally supported children under the UAW/Ford Health Care Agreement were generally limited to fulfilling the legal requirements for claiming as a dependent on federal taxes and, if the child was old enough, proof of school registration at your address. Now, however, those requirements have been changed. You must now either be the legal guardian of the child, or an adoptive parent for these same to children to be covered.

How many parents are going to relinquish parental legal rights to these children?

There are millions of "blended" families with children from previous spouses due to divorce and separation. Many have joint custody arrangements. How many of these parents are going to consent to relinquishing their parental rights without extensive, difficult court battles? How many custody agreements, visitation agreements, and so on will now be thrown open to legal action? How many ex-spouses will consent to allow the new spouse to legally adopt their children?

How many children will now be without health care coverage due to this?

### **How many will die?**

This was NEVER disclosed to the membership. I don't believe many would have allowed the UAW leadership to agree to the VEBA if they had known of this. Was this agreement in effect from the beginning?

Who authorized this?

Coverage under COBRA is available, this is mandated under federal law. But it is only authorized for 36 months. COBRA is very expensive, how many of the now \$14 an hour employees will be forced to pay exorbitant COBRA fees for their their, or their spouses' children? I have received the statement from COBRA for one of these children, it is \$750.00 monthly!

I received the letter on, I believe, Dec. 28. The vast majority of UAW/Ford workers were off on holiday until Jan. 4, thus making it impossible for them to contact their Benefits Rep. about this. How very convenient! I'll bet that the phones were ringing off the wall this morning and the Benefit Reps were slammed with angry people.

Unfortunately, I'll also bet that many did not read the letter, or only gave it a quick read without understanding the contents.

Next week, I see UAW Legal Services being swamped with people asking about Legal Guardianship, Adoption, or custody/visitation agreement modifications.

This is opening a big can of worms. It is not right to throw children off health care in the middle of the current Depression. (It sure as hell is a Depression here in the Detroit area!) This is WRONG!!! I am ashamed of the UAW leaders who agreed to this. In light of the Obama Administration's back tracking on health care and the massive double cross of the people who put them in office, this just make me even more furious.

When I received the letter, about 11am, on Dec. 28, I immediately called the number specified and spoke to "Tony". He said he had already received 2 calls about this very subject and said he had not been informed of this by his superiors and was unaware of this change. He expressed alarm at the very things I have discussed above and seemed genuinely concerned that a lot of trouble was coming his way about this.

I have been the Court Appointed Legal Guardian for my eldest grand daughter, age 12, for about 10 years. Further, we have Legally Adopted the second grand daughter, age 4, in 2007. I asked him about my particular situation and he reassured me that they were, indeed covered, as was my wife, but that if one was NOT either the Legal Guardian or the Adoptive Parent of a child formerly covered, they would have coverage terminated on Jan.1, 2010, about 4 days later. He estimated that this action would involve possibly thousands of children. He seemed to be troubled by this.

### **THIS SHOULD NOT STAND!!**

I do not wish to put more trouble on the UAW, these are bad times for the entire union movement. My Grandfather, my Father, my Brother and I are/were UAW members. My wife is a former Garment Worker Union member, My Brother was an AFSCME shop steward at Metro Airport. My other Grandfather was a Union Coal Miner. I have been an elected Trustee in the Parts Unit of Local 600, and an appointed Alternate Committee Rep. and an appointed Alternate Health and Safety Rep. I have been a member of the UAW, the CAW, the Teamsters and the Sheet Metal Workers Union, my union roots run deep. I have been proud to belong to the UAW, a voice of conscience in a troubled world. But today I am embarrassed and ashamed.

I would be glad to speak to you about this matter or any other matter in the future, and about my personal situation regarding this. I have attempted contact local media about this issue but strangely have received no response.

Please feel free to contact me at;

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