

Sunday, February 12, 2012

Two items to add to conference call agenda

Sisters and brothers,

I propose two items for the agenda:

1. Structure committee

2. Next activity

To elaborate:

1. We discussed last year setting up an organizational structure for the Autoworkers Caravan. I think we need that. We have a working chapter in Lordstown, but we don't have a set mechanism for forming chapters or even becoming a member. There is no decision-making process between conference calls. We have had a number of good campaigns—no two tier, vote no at Ford, Chrysler and GM, the skilled trades appeal, and now the referendum vote—and are becoming known, but we need to become more of an organization. I would like to see the "structure committee" set a meeting soon. We don't need anything elaborate with all the usual officers and titles and lengthy bylaws, but having some basic statement of purpose, a steering committee, a membership application, a bank account and a treasurer and a process for setting up chapters would, etc. would help us become much more effective.

2. We need to have some kind of gathering or conference, maybe we could even call it a founding conference, between now and whatever meeting we might be planning at Labor Notes. Or maybe we could build a "speak out." We need to bring people together. A lot of workers took interest in our campaigns and we need to network. We can start the discourse about how to build an opposition presence at the next convention and what we want to push. It is great to get a head start on the referendum vote but that is not enough. As we said in our resolutions in 2010 we need to "rebuild a fighting union." We need to build rank and file strength on the floor. We need a daylong event like we had two years ago in Romulus. Part of it could be a speak out where workers talk about the problems they are facing. I know there are issues in plants on alternative work schedules. Maybe there is an opportunity for work to rule or some kind of public expose—some kind of way to put pressure on the companies and the international not to impose these schedules. There is another big issue I have just become aware of, at least at Chrysler, and that is the treatment of injured workers. When we did the interview with Italian tv we had an injured worker from Jefferson North, who contacted us through the web site, who is on crutches and being told to come back to work. There is a brother in my plant with cancer undergoing chemo being told to come back to work. Another sister had a serious illness and now has vision problems and walks with a cane, but they made her come back to work. Maybe this is an issue we could have a campaign around. I am just brainstorming. But I'd like to see more discussion on building resistance to the treatment were receiving now that the contracts are ratified.

In solidarity

Martha Grevatt

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