

Letter from a displaced GM worker

The UAW works for the company, not auto workers

16 January 1999

To the editor:

As a former GM-UAW employee, I appreciate the coverage and analysis of events occurring within the auto industry. (Isn't it ironic that correspondence from the corporation addresses UAW members as GM-UAW employees?) It has always been my belief that the union worked for its membership, but those days are long gone since the UAW adopted the Saturn concept of a cooperative rather than an adversarial union.

Those of us who rolled up our sleeves to increase productivity and improve quality are now realizing that we were only being used. We had faith in the UAW International and bought their pitch that increased profitability for the corporation meant job security for the workers. However, the betrayal of the Flint strike followed by Delphi's spinoff and the continual erosion of jobs proves that the leadership is unworthy of trust.

It may come as a surprise to many UAW members to find out that the 1987 contract contained language making it a "living agreement." As long as top UAW and company officials agree, the contract can be reopened at any time during its life. Basically this means that workers do not have the authority to vote on whether or not the contract should be reopened.

The mission of the union is first and foremost to secure GM's market position not ensure the job security of its members. The fruits of this strategy were increased profits for the corporation and the elimination of hundreds of thousands of jobs once held by loyal UAW members. The only right UAW members have left is the right to pay dues.

Most workers will try to hang on to their GM jobs because there is no longer a safety-net (corporate-paid layoff benefits) to protect them when their plant closes. To add insult to injury, workers who relocate must also

endure the humiliation of losing years of hard earned seniority. This means that workers with over twenty years seniority with the company will end up with a plant seniority date of 1985.

By making life a living hell for its senior employees, the corporation can entice older employees to accept early retirement as an option. This way the company can replace them with a younger work force at diminished wages and benefits. The present UAW leadership brings dishonor to those who fought hard to build a Labor Movement that is worthy of the name and to the future generations of workers to come.

Thanks again *World Socialist Web Site* for keeping workers informed. I look forward to your perspective on the upcoming 1999 national agreement. It's time that workers overcame outdated ideas of nationalism and stopped competing against each other.

In solidarity,

Dislocated Auto Worker



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