



## UAW's King: The Godfather of 'Sole'

By Jim Waters

To save his crumbling empire, Bob King, president of the United Auto Workers union, offered foreign automakers a deal “they can’t refuse.”

But if they happened to decline the offer, King recently admitted that it likely would doom the UAW, down 50 percent of its membership during the past decade.

What’s “The Godfather” to do? King wants to return to the wistful days of yesteryear in which unionization represented the sole option for autoworkers.

Yes, Detroit rolls out new hybrids and engineers work overtime to come up with innovative and competitive ideas for America’s 21st century transportation needs. But King remains “committed to creating the UAW of the 1940s and 1950s and 1960s.”

Even the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review in the heartland of union country [blasted King](#): “That’s no success formula for *any* company or worker in the 21st century’s fiercely competitive global auto industry,” its editorial stated.

Enough harm would come if King just wanted to run the UAW to the same brink of ruin that America’s automakers recently faced. That would contain damage to his union’s “Antiques Roadshow.” But he wants to use \$60 million of the \$800 million in the UAW’s “strike fund” to force foreign automakers to unionize plants.

So he encourages “associates” — even retired ones — to picket Toyota Motor Sales U.S.A. Inc. dealerships or accuse American Honda Motor Co. Inc. of human rights violations if the foreign automakers refuse his “offer.”

These tactics sound very similar to the union-backed “[Employee Free Choice Act](#),” the proposed “card check” legislation. And by the way, his “offer”:

- prohibits companies from telling workers that unionization could result in job cuts
- requires union-rep presence when workers hear about organizing
- lets arbitrators make key decisions when contract disputes can’t be resolved within six months of a favorable union vote.

In Albion, Ind., population 2,351, a UAW organizer showed up to harass the workforce at a small auto parts plant, including going door to door at their residences.

The company had signed a “neutrality agreement” with the UAW, which allowed the union to conduct a vote on organizing. But the process required workers to publicly disclose their choice. Of course, it immediately became known how workers chose, causing divisiveness among longtime friends and co-

workers. Several workers appealed to the National Labor Relations Board, which ruled workers could use a secret ballot.

The union lost that dispute for the same reason it loses worker support at Japanese and German plants throughout the South: employees enjoy wages and working conditions that rival or even surpass UAW benefits.

American workers aren't stupid.

They know that when a union comes in, the well which management and labor share often becomes poisoned. This prevents innovative problem solving and flexible-workplace approaches. They know that if J.D. Power and Associates gave an award for intimidation, the UAW would win "Best in Class."

They also know what happened to their unionized brethren at the Big Three automakers during the recent economic slump. While scores of UAW members suffered layoffs, companies such as Toyota kept thousands in the South and Midwest employed.

That's a big deal for our part of the country, considering Toyota employs more than 28,700 Americans, operates nine plants in Kentucky, Alabama, California, Indiana, Missouri, Tennessee, Texas and West Virginia and has invested more than \$18 billion in the nation's economy.

"Don" King knows that non-unionized laborers, reasonably happy with their jobs, represent a tough sell for unions. So he claims to want to work "cooperatively" with foreign companies. But if they won't "cooperate," he wants the union's dwindling minions to target them.

That's cooperation all right — in a "Don" Corleone sort of way.

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