

Industry's future was uncertain a year ago

by Ty Granakis

It's hard to believe it was already a year ago when our future seemed uncertain. Truly this has been an interesting time for the auto industry. Over the last year, we made a lot of history. Between the concessionary agreements, plant closures and government involvement, we covered a lot of new territory. I'm glad that's over. ... Oh wait - it isn't, is it? Anyone foolish enough to believe that our troubles are behind us needs to wake up. We are not through the woods, but in the thick of it. And as Ford employees we have the benefit of believing everything's fine because Ford wasn't on the bankruptcy list. Well, if we don't start changing our ways as Americans, we'll ALL be on the next list.

For years I have had the "Buy Union, Buy American" mantra stuffed down my throat. I often pass it on in the articles I write, so it's nothing new to any of us. Many of us have faced the uncertainty of shift elimination, product line ending, or even a plant closing. But this year, we faced the potential of a company (or three) going out of business. That's pretty frightening stuff for those of us who have enjoyed the luxury of job security. I hope this was enough to scare us straight.

I've always written articles in a very straightforward manner. I can see what's happening, and so can my readership. We are smart enough to know better, but many of us continue to shop where we want, buy what we want, and try to pay as little as possible for it. Some of us occasionally look for U.S.A. made products, but even then we often buy what we really want and make excuses for the purchase. (I know this to be true by the number of non-Ford vehicles I continue to see in the parking lot).

Here's one of my favorite examples: "I bought it used. Toyota already got their money. I needed an affordable car for my child to drive. I supported the AMERICAN Toyota dealership, and helped the AMERICAN employees that

work there earn a living. When I buy a new car, I'll buy an American car." This argument used to make sense even to me. I used it to justify my purchase of a used Camaro convertible in 1996. I even bought it from a Ford dealership. It's a Union built American car, so this argument works. Or does it?

Actually, here's what happens: Your child's first car is a Toyota. They love it. They graduate college, get a job and they're ready to replace the car that got them through school with a new one. They think to themselves; "This was a great car. Toyota is a good company, this car lasted me through college. I want a new Toyota. And after all, some Toyota's are made in America..." Your child who will potentially buy many new cars in their life has learned "brand loyalty", and it's your fault. Another example... Your neighbor knows you work for Ford. They see you buying a different product. This sends a signal to them that if you don't have faith in what you build they certainly won't.

With the quality and affordability of American made products, this excuse doesn't work for anyone anymore. Buying foreign products at this stage of the game could easily finish us off. If you doubt this fact, you weren't paying attention in 2009.

In 2010, I would like us to all share our efforts to buy American, and even better – Union. I will continue to provide helpful information to assist in this quest. Every issue of the Vanguard this year will contain a web-site or story to help people find American Made products. I invite everyone to share their experiences, and will be happy to share them with the membership.

This month I invite everyone who is on Facebook to become a fan of "UAW Local 2000" and "Bring it back home." Both are helpful tools to help hard working Americans stick together. See you next issue.

UAW announces results of voting at Ford

The following statement is attributable to UAW President Ron Gettelfinger and Vice President Bob King:

The ratification process for the October 2009 modifications to the 2007 UAW-Ford master agreement have been completed. Seventy percent of the membership in production and 75 percent in skilled trades voted to reject the agreement. Our membership has spoken, and on behalf of the International Executive Board and the National Negotiating Committee we appreciate the participation of our Ford members who took the time to debate the modifications and cast their vote. The ratification process proves once again that the membership is the highest authority in our union and we are respectful of the final outcome.

We recognize that the modifications negotiated with Ford in February 2009 and ratified by our membership were critical in helping our UAW Chrysler and General Motors negotiators shape the agreements at those compa-

nies prior to them filing for bankruptcy. UAW Ford members can be proud of the leadership role they played at that time in protecting our members at Chrysler and GM. Our UAW Ford members can also be proud of their contributions that have positioned Ford to be a strong competitor in a tough market. The positive quarterly results released by Ford this morning are further evidence of the contributions that Ford workers have made.

The additional modifications that were recently negotiated contained product commitments which insured long-term job security for Ford workers. While we will not be returning to the bargaining table, our International Executive Board, staff, local union leadership and membership will continue to work with Ford on a daily basis in an effort to keep new products coming into our plants. We will also continue to work with Ford to insure they maintain the highest ratings in quality and productivity and insure that they remain competitive.