

What's so Fair about the 'Framework of Fairness'?

On October 15, Buzz Hargrove & Frank Stronach jointly announced that they had signed a framework to allow union recognition at Canadian Magna plants. The talks that led up to the agreement began a couple of years ago and were initiated by Magna. If the agreement goes ahead, our union could gain up to 18,000 employees at 45 Magna auto-parts plants.

Does this matter to us?

You bet it does. While we may object to this agreement on the basis that it is taking our union in a direction we don't agree with, there are some more concrete reasons. Most important, all of us know too well what it feels like to get blackmailed for new product. This is equally true for workers in the parts sector. The 'Framework of Fairness' opens up new opportunities to deepen the blackmail by:

- Fully erasing the right to strike replacing it with the weaker recourse of access to arbitration
- Shop stewards do not exist
- No right to independently elect union representatives
- Preserves two-tier wage structures (as in Japanese plants)

The 'Framework of Fairness' could replace any existing contract if Magna got involved with vehicle assembly. (See Framework of Fairness agreement, p. 5, Part B, #1 and p.23, #2). The permanent strike ban, the absence of a steward body, and the clear commitment to the priorities of Magna's philosophy would remain. There is increasing evidence that Magna will be building cars for Chrysler in the near future. The lower wages & benefits in parts plants compared to assembly plants will continue to be used as a tool for blackmail as long as the 'Framework of Fairness' is about helping Magna compete rather than mobilizing solidarity throughout our union to raise auto parts workers' wage & benefits.

What are others doing?

Local 88 (CAMI plant) & Local 222 (GM Oshawa) each passed resolutions against the 'Framework of Fairness' at their monthly meetings. These resolutions will be taken to CAW Council – the 'Parliament' of our union – in early December. There will be more than 800 delegates from across Canada. A clear message of opposition to the Magna deal will be delivered to council.

What is our local doing?

It's not clear. However, at our next monthly meeting on:

NOVEMBER 18 at 10am

a few of us will be bringing forward a similar motion as Local 88 & 222. This motion won't pass without your help. If you disagree with the 'Framework of Fairness' and want to send a message to the rest of our union backing up your disagreement you need to come to the next meeting. If a motion passes, we will join an increasing number of other CAW locals who will deliver a message of oppotion to the December Council meetings.

This is what some others in our union are saying:

"A 'no-strike' clause goes against the fundamental rights of unionized workers. As President I represent not only our 10,000 members employed at General Motors, but also thousands more in the parts sector. It is obvious the threat Magna will pose to our parts jobs should the Magna agreement go forward in its current state. The process of awarding contracts for product is in a cut-throat state already, suppliers employing my members completely lose any level playing field if the right to strike becomes a factor in the competition's favour." *Chris Buckley, President Local 222.*

"This is the first time in my life on an emotional level, I feel ashamed of my union. What my union now needs more than new members at Magna is new leaders that haven't forgotten union principles." *Gord Wilson, retired CAW Director of Education.*

"The question is where are the militants in the CAW – the activists, staff and leaders who know full well what the Magna model means for the labour movement, where is their outrage?" *Sam Gindin, retired assistant to Buzz Hargrove.*

It is important that Magna workers join the union but the right to strike is too much to give up. "Giving up the right to strike is one of the forbidden things for a union." *Bob Nickerson, retired CAW Secretary Treasurer.*

"I am struck by how this agreement sets aside Union democracy at nearly every turn. It sets aside the democratic principles set out in our constitution. It is an affront to anyone who believes in a Union members having a free and unfettered right to elect their representatives." *Jim Reid, 1st Vice President Local 27*

"The [parts] industry has become so cut-throat that in most recent times, corporations have been "linking" awarding new product with concessions, there is no question if the proposed agreement moves forward, the threat Magna will pose - not only to their direct competitors, but more importantly to the overall industry and labour movement." *Jeff Casey President Local 4451*

"This is a travesty. It makes me sick to my stomach." *Gerry Michaud, retired President Local 199*

If you want more details come see me on the door line, B shift or email

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