

AN APPROPRIATE DETROIT WELCOME FOR BOB CORKER

Unfriendly. Just as he deserves:

U.S. Sen. Bob Corker, Republican of Tennessee and nemesis of Detroit automakers and UAW workers in congressional hearings, came to the Detroit auto show for an up-close look Tuesday at the industry he's reluctant to rescue.

And he got a taste of the kind of confrontational grilling that he laid on auto company chief executives and UAW President Ron Gettelfinger in Washington.

"I realize that I'm not popular here," said the trim, 5-foot-7 Corker, a tiny figure buffeted in a sea of microphones, cameras and jostling journalists as he walked the floor of the North American International Auto Show at Cobo Center.

"But I'm proud of the effort I put forth," Corker said of his attempt to forge a Senate deal for auto industry rescue loans that foundered when Gettelfinger balked at Corker's demands for immediate wage reductions and other contract changes. After the Senate rejected a bailout deal, President George W. Bush approved \$17.4 billion in bridge loans to keep General Motors Corp. and Chrysler LLC afloat.

Corker, not unlike the Detroit CEOs after the hearings in Congress, admitted Tuesday that he felt a bit misunderstood. "I don't know how people perceive me," he said.

(Note, this is currently the Free Press' most

popular story, so I'm not the only one taking some pleasure in Corker's discomfort.)

That said, I actually think this was a stunt dreamt up by Mike Cox, our current AG and wannabe 2010 replacement for Jennifer Granholm. Cox wrote a fairly timid op-ed for the WaPo the other day, inviting Senators to come visit the auto show (I say timid because Cox exhibited nowhere near the understanding of the industry—or the cooperation with the UAW—that Thad McCotter did in his excellent speech in the House in November).

And then, voila! There you had Bob Corker and Mike Cox, two reprehensible Republicans, sucking it up to the press today, pretending they might have the key to saving the auto industry. In a touch of theater, they even met at the ~~Cerberus~~ Chrysler booth, an appropriate place for them to discuss how to bail out their buddies in the private equity firm.

Kudos to Corker to actually showing. You think maybe he can take Mike Cox with him when he leaves?