

Live Bait & Ammo #139: Turn Up the Heat

The slumlord at the GM plant in Lockport, NY turns off the heat everyday between 10 am and 10 pm. “Little Hitler” as the general foreman is known thinks his dial down saves GM money. Hammering pipes and raining asbestos may ring a different tune on the company cash register, but Little Hitler can’t see the dollars wasted for the pennies he’s counting.

Perhaps the little dictator doesn’t understand the dynamics of heating and cooling despite the fact the Lockport plant has made radiators and heating/cooling systems for a hundred years. The bean counter sure as hell doesn’t understand how to hold tolerance. You have to work with machinery to know what that means.

Health, safety, and worker morale be damned. Little Hitler has a game plan and the Local Union officers are too busy protecting their overtime pay to fight for workers’ rights and common sense. Besides, their office is heated. No damn wonder they don’t walk the shopfloor.

The shuddering and hammering of steam pipes caused by turning the heat on and off breaks the asbestos wrapping. The asbestos rains down from a height of about eighteen feet scattering invisible asbestos fibers everywhere. Management quarantines the immediate vicinity but products as well as work areas, tools, and machines are contaminated.

Initially, security guards who don’t even have dust masks are stationed around the hazard scene to warn workers away, but of course vehicles are allowed to drive through as if motion was protection and what you can’t see won’t hurt you. Who needs a grievance when you have team concept?

Union officers are too concerned about being “competitive” to care about health and safety, let alone the temperate comfort of workers who can’t wear gloves and in some cases even sleeves because of safety regulations and the tactile demands of manual dexterity that production requires.

The asbestos abatement squad doesn’t speak English, a state of being which rhymes with the slang word for disposable which brings to mind Little Hitler’s real goal: sabotage. He’s killing workers, he’s killing production, he’s killing quality, he’s killing the long term viability of the plant.

But it’s local union officers who are killing morale because they aren’t doing anything to stop it.

Workers are asking themselves, “Why do we pay these guys?”

It’s a legitimate question but it doesn’t follow the money. Union dues support the International and the Local Union, but the money that goes into the pockets of Bargaining Committee members comes straight from the company coffers.

The Bargaining Committee works for the people who pay them, not the people who elect them. Why else would they ignore the obvious needs of union members on the shopfloor?

Union members need to turn up the heat on union leaders. This travesty of justice isn’t unique to Lockport. It contaminates all the plants where union officers are paid by the company to promote the competitive agenda and to quarantine themselves in the comfort of their cozy offices.

Delphi is taking technology out of the GM plant in Kokomo and setting it up in a new plant subsidized by the government. The new Delphi plant is non union. Is Mo Davison, the Region 3 Director, in a coma? Or is he in collusion?

We’re headed for a confrontation but it won’t take place in the clotured confines of the Constitutional Convention. We need to turn up the heat now.

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