

Live Bait & Ammo #6

It's official. Over 80% of Delphi's unionized employees in the US don't think the company is worth the investment. No surprise. We've got the inside traders' edge. We've seen how they exercise the sacred right to manage. We've read the prospectus. We know the plan. Of course you must understand, Delphi provided the stats. In my own estimation, even fewer workers thought it wise to invest in their own demise.

Meanwhile, our new plant manager, Mr. DiEnno, pulled a fast one. He ordered Machine Repair to pull up stakes, take their tool boxes, and roam the open floor in search of a place to call home. He wanted the property for other purposes. The alleged squatters were evicted in order to make room for the stockpiles necessary to make lean production appear efficient,...or a strike ineffective.

Some people expressed surprise that Mr. DiEnno didn't utilize the Quality Network Process. Get used to it. When you want to eliminate waste you cut the fat and there ain't nothin' fatter than Quality Network. Once the workers have swallowed the partnership line, identified with the corporate agenda, given up their confrontational edge, and abandoned traditional union principles, teams are no longer needed. Teams have done their job.

The personnel director at the Toyota plant in Tahara, Japan confirmed that management, not teams, directed job design, work flow, and everything else at Toyota. When sweeping changes were made at Tahara in 1992, the teams were not even consulted. In fact, the teams no longer functioned at all by 1994. (Workers In A Lean World: Kim Moody) If you believe that won't happen here, the brainwash has succeeded and you're ready to have your forehead tattooed with a Delphi Team Logo.

Back in 1996, Rick Corbin, a Cat striker from Local 974 in Peoria, told me to wake up. He said GM would try to bust our union. He said they would prep the ground by softening us up with lots of partnership, cooperation, and team spirit schmaltz. Then they would split us up and bust us down, piece by piece.

It's not about profit, it's about control, and for all the talk of partnership they haven't given up any control. Management is ruthless as ever. They continue to make promises they don't keep. They continue to treat workers like a cost to cut. They continue to invest outside the US.

Ed Northern, Delphi's lean production guru said, I don't close plants, I build plants. We all know where he builds plants. Delphi is the largest private employer in Mexico. The corporation has an agenda and it doesn't include taking care of the people who gave it the best years of their lives. For most of us, a pension based on seniority is the investment of a lifetime.

That investment deserves to be honored and protected, not degraded, plundered, or bartered away. The pension fund at Delphi is underfunded. Why? Because they don't expect to pay. Delphi expects to downsize and GM intends to dump a lot of pension responsibilities and keep

the equity. We deserve a fully funded pension . We earned it. We deserve a guarantee not to be sold, closed, or otherwise flushed down the drain. We should never settle for less.

The UAW has postponed the big confrontation for years and tried to appease the corporate beast with concessions and cooperation. We are not partners. We have never been partners. The policy of appeasement is the counsel of cowards. The strategy of cooperation has failed. The UAW has been cut in half since the advent of cooperation schemes. What do you propose to give the beast next? Your children?

Yokich wants us to believe the corporations are willing to encourage the Independent Part Suppliers to unionize. What a joke. If he expects us to believe that he's either naive or he thinks we are stupid. There are 20,000 more autoworkers in the US today than there were in 1978, but the majority of them are non-union. There's a definite pattern here but it has nothing to do with bargaining and everything to do with destroying the union. Corporate America has no intention of helping the UAW organize anybody.

Last summer Yokich acted surprised by the spin off announcement. No one believed him but of course it all depends on what you mean by spin. On page 413 of the 1996 GM-UAW National Agreement it states that the Quality Council was renamed and reconfigured to accommodate a restructuring within the corporation, namely, DELPHI AUTOMOTIVE SYSTEMS."

A name change, non-material, but enough to satisfy the legal scallywags. I'm not a corporate lawyer, or a professional money launderer, but I think you might call the tidy non-profit, tax free corporation that administers the Quality Network Program an S corporation. The money goes in one end, circles around and after a few tax deductions, comes back out in somebody else's pocket. Whose? Well, the UAW for one.

One out of four International staff are paid for by the tax free Center for Human Resources: salaries, allotments, expenses. Without the convenient guise of the non-profit Center for Human Resources, GM would be accused of buying the union, running a company union, and violating the National Labor Relations Act. We wouldn't want that.

Officially, the UAW is opposed to the spin off, but the only squeaks we've heard so far came from the bed springs. The International hasn't demonstrated any visible opposition to the shake down which sends a silent but obvious all clear signal to Wall St., much like the bogus job security provision in our last contract. Delphi is an omen not an oracle.

Delphi is dependent on GM but GM does not need Delphi and neither does anybody else. Delphi is not going to attract new business from GM competitors because everybody knows GM still controls and dominates Delphi. The money hasn't changed hands, it's only changed pockets. And in the switcheroo our pension fund came up short. You don't think there's a plan here?

Delphi openly admits the intention to reduce our wages and benefits. Delphi tantalizes the stock hounds with forecasts of plant closings and sales. Delphi is setting the agenda and leading the UAW around by the nose. A once proud union has been reduced to a sideshow.

Last summer in the home of the sit down strike Yokich and Shoemaker agreed not to strike again for the duration of the contract, which is akin to the NRA agreeing to buy guns but not ammo. We should be striking Delphi plants now, and sending a clear message that we oppose the spin off and do not intend to go down without a fight. What do we have to lose? GM has made their position clear.

GM plans to buy from non-union suppliers and create a competitive force that will drive wages down to the lowest common denominator. Unless we stick together they will break us down plant by plant. If we settle for a two tier wage that takes advantage of new hires, our pensions will be in jeopardy. Like my old friend Stan Samdal said, A pension is only as good as the members who are still working.

Our best bet for the future is to fight for the new hires and not accept anything less than equal pay for equal work. If our first contract begins with concessions, it will be downhill from here on out. If we don't demand an iron clad guarantee of job security for every plant in the Delphi system, they will pick us apart and throw us to the dogs.

It's not too late to resist the spin off. On page 13 of the prospectus it states: GM is not obligated to complete its divestiture of our common stock. Furthermore on page 27 it states: GM has also advised us that it would not complete the Distribution if its Board of Directors determines that the Distribution is no longer in the best interests of General Motors or its stockholders.

Are you prepared to let these negotiations be handled in the backroom by golf buddies? Who says you can't go to the Bargaining Convention in Detroit March 28-30? Who says you can't go to Solidarity House and make your concerns known? Who says you can't demonstrate? Who says you have to keep your mouth shut and do what your told? Who says it's none of your business? I want to know.

In Solidarity,

UAW Local 2151, Coopersville, Mi.