

## Live Bait & Ammo #46

About ten years ago I met some Delphi workers from Juarez, Mexico at a Labor Notes Conference in Detroit. I was appalled by the stories of abuse they suffered at the hands of Delphi management. It drove home the message that management has no ethical standards. Without the resistance of a strong union, exploitation knows no boundaries.

I asked one of the Mexican workers what we in the UAW could do to help them. He said, "You need to help yourselves." I'm beginning to see what he meant.

American union bosses form partnerships with management because they have no street creds. The Department of Justice runs roughshod over our civil liberties and calls it law and order. Corporate crooks shred contracts, export jobs instead of products, defraud investors, and tell us not to fret because the market is self regulating. Conservative gasbags pump up the national debt while banks move offshore and tax havens are protected by the Patriot Act.

The former president of UAW Local 1981-National Writers Union, Jonathan Tasinni, argued in a hearing before the Department of Labor that the NWU was not a union. It was a singular if not proud moment in UAW history. Tasinni claimed that most of the writers were free lance. Does this mean then that baseball players, actors, and musicians can no longer claim membership in a union? Never mind that a good many NWU members are employees under contract. Tasinni's goal was to obviate federal protection for union elections and the prohibition against raising dues without the consent of the members. [<http://www.yourunionnews.com/>]

Elizabeth Bunn was originally hired by the UAW as legal counsel. She didn't become a UAW member until she joined the NWU after they affiliated with the UAW in 1991. As it now stands, the International UAW Sec.-Treas. does not belong to a union. We've come a long ways.

The Detroit UnFree Press [9/30/03] reported that U.S. District Judge Paul V. Gadola dismissed a lawsuit by UAW members because they filed too late. Judge Gadola said GM workers should have known "the UAW grievance process was futile and therefore should have filed the lawsuit earlier." The Detroit UnFree press reported [10/11/03] that another federal judge dismissed criminal charges against two UAW

officials accused of prolonging an 87-day strike at a truck plant in order to force General Motors to hire their "unqualified friends and relatives." U.S. District Judge Nancy Edmunds explained, "This indictment attempts to criminalize behavior.... which has not previously been construed as criminal." Judge Edmunds concluded, "Therefore, the court finds that the indictment fails to sufficiently allege criminal behavior."

I cite these reports not to dispute the legalities but to indicate the regard of federal judges for unions. On the one hand, prolonging a strike over the principle of nepotism is business as usual. On the other, union members should know that the grievance process is "futile".

I saw a photograph in the New Yorker [11/22/03] of Paul Bremer, head honcho of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq . He sat on a makeshift stage in Baghdad wearing combat boots, a dark suit and tie, and shades. Does he think he's a Blues Brother, or a porkchopper? The picture was worth, oh say, 15 words: blurred vision, legal suit to impose authority, and combat boots to pound the point home. Florres couldn't have drawn a more succinct cartoon of capitalist aggression and blind ambition unless he depicted Sweeney with his head up Bremer's ashcroft and a caption that read: Labor-Management Partnership.

stay solid,

UAW Local 2151