

## Live Bait & Ammo #14

Speech at the "UAW Coalition for a Strong Contract"

--Flint, Mi. September 18, 1999--

Three years ago I wrote about the Delphi spin-off. Much to Yokich's surprise it was no secret. My story was based on an article that appeared in the May '96 issue of Fortune 500. The author, Alex Taylor, said that GM was eager to get rid of Delphi and a slew of retirees and their health and pension benefits. Jack Smith didn't feel he needed the UAW's stamp of approval to spin off Delphi because the ownership wouldn't change. My point exactly. The money hasn't changed hands, it only changed pockets. We see the same managers speaking out of both sides of the same mouth. What has changed is the control of our jobs. GM has effectively outsourced the entire parts operation. If GM decides not to renew a contract with Delphi, it is no longer outsourcing and Appendix L does not apply. Not that Appendix L was ever anything more than a surreptitious means devised by the Cooperative Caucus to achieve the competitive agenda of their corporate partners. Appendix L is nothing but a convoluted contractual method of promoting Local concessions and whipsawing.

Alex Taylor wrote in May of '96 that the purpose of the spin off was to enable GM to buy from non-union shops. The only thing he could see that would stand in the way was the UAW. Clearly there was no serious opposition to the spin off. The Cooperative Caucus rolled over and the only squeaks we heard came from the bedsprings. At the Bargaining Convention last March Yokich bragged that in regard to the Delphi spin off, I thought someone should take a stand early and I took a stand. Right. After a fruitless eight week strike in Flint Yokich consented not to strike again for the duration of the contract. Yokich single handedly disarmed the only organization that stood in the way of GM's publicly professed decision to disown the components industry. Like a trusted servant he held the door wide open for the Delphi spin off. There's a lesson here.

We can not trust the Cooperative Caucus of the UAW to protect our jobs. They are partners in the business and their strategy of capitulation to the competitive corporate agenda has decimated the membership and castrated the union. With each new contract we get another lesson in concession. Instead of job security we get Appendix L turkey. Instead of COLA on pensions we get COLA diversion. Instead of more democracy we get more appointees. Instead of parity we get profit sharing. Instead of a shorter work week we get excessive overtime. With each new contract it takes a new hire longer to achieve equal pay. The unjustified delay of full compensation is a craftily calculated induction into the Two Tier Wage System, and a deliberate attempt to destroy solidarity. For ala mode we now have temp workers in the auto industry who pay dues but never achieve full status as union members. Screw the New UAW. We want the Old UAW.

In a highhanded antidemocratic effort to silence the voice of rank and file union members, Yokich strapped a muzzle on any talk of modular assembly. GM's agreement to silence discussion on modular assembly is a transparent collusion with the Cooperative Caucus. Despite the gag rule, the reorganization of the auto industry proceeds full steam ahead stretching tentacles in all

directions. While the terms and conditions of our labor are in the throes of the most pervasive restructuring since Henry Ford, the rank and file has been cut out of the debate and our future will be decided by golf buddies at Black Lake.

The Cooperative Caucus is not the only traitor of the working class. Union Brother Steve Donnelly's report from Liverpool, England indicts the British Labor Movement and invokes a vision of our future in America.

Brother Donnelly states:

Ten short years ago, in its indecent haste to sign up new members, the leadership of our union allowed the car components arm of GM to set up a subsidiary outside of the Joint Negotiating Committee agreements. We now see that the long term result of this policy has been detrimental to the established companies within the JNC, only one of which is still trading viably within the combine. Others have either been closed or put up for sale.

We now witness the car component business being transferred to satellite companies directly adjacent to the car building companies, and we see trade unions again ignoring the accepted wages and conditions of the industry in an attempt to gain negotiating rights in these organizations. This policy will result in the loss of jobs within the established companies and will magnify pressure to accept lower wages and worsening conditions. Not just within the component side of the business, but also in the car build companies.

Surely it must be clear to all workers that acceptance of these concepts is of no benefit to car workers. How can we expect enthusiasm and solidarity from workers in these establishments when trade union leaders allow them to work under the degrading conditions of short term contracts where they become members of whichever union has done the dirtiest deal for the short time they are employed. We as trade unionists are therefore guilty of practicing our own form of industrial apartheid by allowing these workers to be classified as second class union members. Are we not enabling employers to get their own way? After all they would dearly love to treat all workers as if they lived in the Third World.

Brother Donnelly's message is evident testimony to the fact that union bureaucrats world wide are partners in the business of controlling and exploiting hard working union members. The porkchoppers are only interested in extorting their own financial gain and securing soft jobs for themselves. The porkchoppers are accomplices in the reorganization that results in what Brother Donnelly so aptly coined industrial apartheid. The corporations could not succeed in their efforts to decimate and demoralize the rank and file without the coercion of their fat cat counterparts in the Cooperative Caucus.

I do not doubt that Delphi will buy labor peace in 1999 by providing an economic package comparable to the Big Three. The Corporations have been buying labor peace for years. It's part of the plan. We get raises, we get lump sum payments, we get profit sharing, we get tuition, we get legal aid, we get the red flag signing bonuses. What we don't get is job security and an end to outsourcing. As long as the corporations can continue to gut union membership they don't mind

spending money. The spin off isn't about money. GM already has all the money. The spin off is about control. It's about busting the union, breaking us down into smaller groups and multiple tiers, whipsawing Locals into yellow dog contracts, and generating a competitive force that will emasculate unions and drive wages and conditions down to Third World standards.

Next year while autoworkers are complacently dining on paychecks fattened with excessive overtime and deep fried in greasy vats of oily compromise, the Cooperative Caucus will be busy forging the partnership that ties our hands, and GM will be busy assuring that no single Delphi plant will ever again have the power to shackle the corporate giant. By the end of the contract (and don't be surprised if Delphi gets a longer contract than the Big Three that would set us out of sync with the assembly operations and further distance us from our brothers and sisters) Delphi's capacity to wage a crippling corporate wide strike will be hamstrung. GM will buy from non-union shops and use job blackmail to compel Locals to give up more and more autonomy in order to compete for a dwindling supply of jobs. A union that buys into the competitive agenda is nothing but a suckers club. The cards are marked. The deck is stacked. Delphi already has twice as many autoworkers in Mexico than it has UAW members in the US. We don't want the lowest bid. It's a losing proposition. There's not a win-win card in the slick dealer's deck.

In the course of the next contract Delphi will concede at the National level and attack at the Local level. After eliminating the threat of the National strike, and inoculating union members with economic shots of complacency mind numbing as Mickey Finns, they will threaten us with job losses unless we concede to their demands to speed up, overload, and basically break the back of the union.

And then we will lose jobs anyway.

It's not about money. It's about control. It's about breaking the union. And the Cooperative Caucus is partners in the business of breaking the union. The Cooperative Caucus has infected the rank and file with a malaise of apathy, powerlessness, and cynicism more insidious than anything the Corporation, the Mob, or the Government could have imposed all together. The only union members who benefit from the partnership folly are International officials and their turkey neck appointees who gobble more perks than a pandering politician; double pensions, COLA on pensions, 100% Health Care coverage, severance payouts, cars. Hell, they even get free oil changes. Plus free trips to posh resort towns, Vegas, Anaheim, New Orleans, Palm Springs. Have you ever heard of a UAW Convention in Flint, Michigan? Hell no. That's where the low life rank and file union members hold their meetings, right in the gritty heart of Historic Sit Down City. The city that represents the heritage the Cooperative Caucus abandoned.

The Cooperative Caucus can not dispute the fact that the mollicoddle strategy of capitulation has perpetuated a dismal flop. The proof is in the numbers. We have lost hundreds of thousands of union members since the inception of the cooperation fiasco. We have witnessed the erosion of union power and the growing cynicism of union members toward the leadership of a once proud and militant UAW. Appeasement is the counsel of cowards. Power respects power not punks. Stop blaming labor law for the failure to organize. If union leaders stopped playing patty

cake with politicians, stopped perfecting their putts with CEO's, and instead threw roundhouse punches, the American public would roar like a stadium of Green Bay Packer fans. Who wants to join a whiny bunch of mealy mouth patsies? The best way to organize is to win grievances, halt concessionary bargaining, and rebel against antisocial corporations. Plenty of Americans would love to join a fighting union that was ready to raise hell. How dare Yokich call the UAW a social movement. The UAW hasn't marched in the streets for an unselfish social cause since Walter Reuther marched arm and arm with Martin Luther King.

I have no doubt that Delphi will succeed because Delphi will buy out the competition, broker mutually beneficial deals with their paper competitors, and accommodate the Cooperative Caucus. The competition game is only intended for workers, not capitalists and their cronies in the Cooperative Caucus. Competition is a device to dupe and divide workers. The real name of the game is Monopoly. Delphi will succeed not because they are competitive, but because they own all the hotels on Boardwalk and Park Place. Union members will never pass Go under the leadership of the Cooperative Caucus. The rank and file doesn't even have a seat at the table.

The UAW has the power to wage an effective strike against Delphi and GM this year. It may be our last chance. By the time the next contract rolls around Delphi's UAW membership will be gutted, our jobs transferred to Mexico and non-union shops, and all products double sourced. We must seize the moment and demand an all out war for the survival and integrity of our union.

Delphi Local Unions have repeatedly hit the streets in a single handed battle against the largest corporation in the world. Those isolated local unions fought for all our benefit. In the summer of '98 Delphi Flint East went on strike in support of the Metal Fab Plant and succeeded in shutting down the whole corporation. And what did they get for their effort? Not a goddamn thing. Where is the United Autoworkers Union when Delphi Flint East needs them? When will the UAW unite to fight for all Independent Parts Suppliers? When will the UAW stop supporting industrial apartheid? We must turn down any contract that doesn't guarantee job ownership. We must turn down any contract that doesn't close the sluice gates of outsourcing to non union shops. We must turn down any contract that doesn't set the precedent of parity with assembly plants for all parts operations. We must turn down any contract that doesn't have COLA on pensions and portable pensions that follow us wherever we go. We must turn down any contract that introduces the double crossing two tier wage or the Shoemaker Special,

Permanent Temps.

Whatever the outcome of this year's negotiations, I believe there is hope. I believe there is opportunity. The people who own GM also own Delphi. The ownership, as Jack Smith said, hasn't changed. They don't want to kill the goose, they just want to choke it a little. The lean modular system stipulates that suppliers situate in proximity to assembly plants. Ideally, suppliers would form concentric circles around assembly plants. There will be major suppliers in the United States for a long time. As Kim Moody points out in his book, *Workers In A Lean World*, the lean system is fragile. (I want to take a moment to plug a couple of books. *Workers In A Lean World*

by Kim Moody and Democracy Is Power by Mike Parker and Martha Gruelle. I believe these are two of the most important books for union activists today. With their education and skills these three talented writers; Kim Moody, Mike Parker, and Martha Gruelle could easily have chosen a more lucrative genre. They conscientiously sacrificed a life of luxury for a life of conviction, dedication, and commitment to the ideals of the labor movement. They gave up easy street to fight the good fight. And we all know what an uphill battle that is. Kim Moody, Mike Parker, and Martha Gruelle deserve our support. Buy Workers In A Lean World and Democracy Is Power. Damnmit, buy two and give one to a friend. Buy all their books. You won't regret it.) The lean system is fragile. One supplier can create a lot of havoc, but to succeed we must wrest control of the strike strategy from the International which is dominated by compromised officials in the yellowdog Cooperative Caucus. We must build strong, independent locals and we must connect with each other outside the confining official parameters of the Cooperative Caucus. We need more meetings like this meeting here today. We can show the membership that the rank and file has more ideas and excitement and energy than anything the Cooperative Caucus has to offer.

Delphi will provide the crisis that will give us the opportunity to organize more democratic local unions. As Mike Parker and Martha Gruelle point out in their book, Democracy Is Power , the best way to organize is around shop floor issues. Fight the boss. Delphi will provide us with lots of floor fights because that's where the battle will be. As more workers are injured because of speedups and over loads; as seniority is disrespected; as work is reorganized in a manner that violates traditional union standards, disregards job ownership, classifications, and lines of demarcation; as our dignity as workers is snubbed uprisings will be incited among the rank and file. These are the types of issues that galvanize solidarity. These are the types of issues that a real union fights for. In the whirlwind rush to reorganize the workplace Delphi is trampling all over the sham cooperation schemes. As the partnership hoax is revealed we will have the opportunity to offer workers a real voice through union democracy rather than union bureaucracy.

Finally, the rapid expansion of Delphi into Mexico will give us the opportunity, actually create the imperative to cross the border and unite with our Brothers and Sisters in Mexico. We can no longer tolerate the limp wristed gestures of the Cooperative Caucus towards solidarity with Mexican autoworkers. We are in this battle together. They need our support and we need their support. Necessity is the Mother of Revolution.

In Solidarity,

UAW Local 2151