

Live Bait & Ammo #17

Union members at Delphi have been lied to, cheated, and betrayed. All our years of credited service with GM have been turned over to Delphi, a company that didn't even exist before last year. This information wasn't mentioned in the Highlights.

At the contract information meeting we were assured that our years of credited service at GM were secure and if we transferred back to GM within the next four years we would retire with a GM pension. Don't worry about it, we were told.

Now we're informed that Effective May 28,1999 all credited service becomes Delphi. In other words, if a union member at Delphi with 28 years of GM seniority on May 28, 1999 transferred back to GM May 28, 2000 and retired on May 28, 2001, he would receive 29/30ths of the pension from Delphi and 1/30th from GM. We never dreamed this was legal.

Our years of credited service were bartered away and we got nothing but empty promises in return. We were lied to, cheated, and betrayed. Does anyone believe that Yokich and Shoemaker didn't know this deal was in the cards long before negotiations began?

Yokich opened the Bargaining Convention by saying If we don't address things that face us honestly and up front, we have a real problem. You said it, President Doublespeak. When the leadership of our own union sets out to deceive union members and protect the corporation, we certainly do have a real problem. It's spelled company/union. It smells of corruption. It tells a tale of sellout. It's riddled with lies, prevarication, and complicity.

At the Bargaining Convention Yokich reiterated: I told GM they have to keep 51% of the stock. That way after the IPO they are still part of the GM system. We made him repeat it over and over. He said, You've heard my statements on Delphi. I believe GM should keep a majority of the stock at GM, and not completely sell Delphi. He said if they didn't, there'd be hell to pay. Now we, the union members, are paying.

On the last day of the Bargaining Convention, when I brought up the threat to our pensions once again, and the assembled delegates stood up and applauded in solidarity and support, he said, I guess you just haven't been listening to the leadership of this union. I just want to tell you, I don't know how many damn times you have to say it for people to believe you. If you think you're mad as hell, if you think Delphi is mad, you should have been with me when I got the phone call. Then you would know what mad as hell means, and I sure as hell didn't use the word hell. I'll bet he didn't. He probably said, 'Golly, gee whiz, what can I do to help, sir.'

At the Bargaining Convention Yokich took a tough stand against modular assembly. He said it was another word for outsourcing. He said we needed to make outsourcing a strikeable issue. He said we needed to find ways to restrict overtime without loss of pay. He claimed, A forty hour restriction would create 86,000 jobs in motor vehicle assembly alone. He rolled over on every single issue.

Now we stand to lose 86,000 jobs and Yokich has the gall to call that a social movement. If he talked to union members on the shop floor they'd tell him it looks more like a bowel movement.

At the Bargaining Convention I pointed out that the International had known about the intention to spin off Delphi since 1995 and had maneuvered to protect joint funding. GM/Delphi pump thousands of dollars into the pockets of UAW officials in the form of padded expense accounts and unreported salaries under the cover of joint funds.

Yokich and Shoemaker protected the cash cow, but failed to protect union members' pensions from a corporate jettison. I confronted Shoemaker in front of the assembled delegates: Tell us the truth now. End the silence. Give us the information we need to make the best decisions for ourselves and our families. Instead he chose to protect the interests of the corporation.

I know union members who had 28 or 29 years of GM seniority who now have zero GM seniority. I know GM gypsies who have transferred nine times, hop scotching from plant to plant across the country in a desperate attempt to maintain unbroken seniority and guarantee their pensions who now have no GM seniority at all. Does anyone believe these brothers and sisters would have voted for that contract if they had known the truth?

We were never told the truth, because Yokich and Shoemaker knew we would have voted the contract down, because there would have been a stampede at the National Placement Center, because it was not in the best interest of the corporation for so many workers to transfer, or to threaten a strike. The corporations will probably hire Yokich and Shoemaker as consultants after they retire. Then Yokich and his pinched faced coat holder, Shoemaker, will have the audacity to tell us, 'it's for your own good'.

Meanwhile Frank Joyce, the PR man at Sold Our Dignity House, will be promoting Yokich's image as a luminary in preparation for the ordination of the Stephen P. Yokich Golf Course at Black Lake. The president who rolled over on 441 unfair labor practice charges, abandoned 50 discharged union members, forgave back dues to scabs at Caterpillar, then called the debacle a victory; the president who pulled the rug on locked out workers in Henderson, Kentucky and literally busted their union; the president who treats union members at Saturn like Beck resisters; the president who negotiated the longest contracts in history for no better reason than he didn't want to be bothered; the president who rolled over on the wholesale outsourcing of Delphi and Visteon; the president who Cut the micrather than listen to elected convention delegates will be lauded as a hero in the pusillanimous pages of Solidarity magazine.

What does pusillanimous mean? Just let it roll off your tongue. It tastes just like it means.

Brother Yokich, while lap dogs and lackeys pamper your ego, know for certain, other union members use your name in quite another context; one more commonly associated with dogs, scoundrels, and punks.

This is just the beginning of revelations. Who knows what else we haven't been told? There are twenty-three Delphi facilities represented by the UAW. Inside sources informed me as of February, only a handful had ratified Local Agreements. Why was it so much easier to settle the national contract? Was the spin-off that simple? The Rollover Caucus thought so. It's not a coincidence that the national contract was settled and the Locals abandoned; it's a strategy, a calculated disregard for Local Union officials engineered by Delphi and underwritten by the Useless And Worthless International.

In 1970 340,000 united autoworkers shut down GM for eight weeks. Another 160,000 workers in the supplier industry were laid off. It was a national event. Everyone in the country knew the UAW would set the standard. The eyes of the nation were focused on the confrontation.

The UAW struck for COLA, 30-and-out, wage increases, and additional SUB pay. The strike fund was running out. Black Lake was in hock. Union members endorsed continuation of the strike without funds. After eight long weeks the National was settled. The UAW won. Everyone, union and management, was eager to get back to work, but the International refused to settle until all Local Union Agreements were signed. That is SOLIDARITY. That is the kind of unionism that wins. That is leadership with a conscience. That is commitment, strength, unbreakable resolution. That is exactly what Steve Yokich and the Rollover Caucus lack.

Yokich has teamed up with corporate honchos to break down resistance at the local level, and consolidate power at the top. The Rollover Caucus has consistently supported the competitive corporate agenda and endorsed job cuts. The Rollover Caucus has multiplied and enhanced appointed positions, ordained nepotism as the favored system of union promotion, and undermined elected union officials.

Yokich runs the union like a CEO. For all the claptrap about getting out the vote for labor friendly politicians when it comes to the UAW there is no democracy. The Board of Directors decide who will run the show and proxies rubber stamp the IEB's every whim.

I'm glad our Local Union Bargaining Committee didn't invite the International in to help with local negotiations. International porkchoppers are too far removed from life on the shop floor and too insulated from our cares and concerns. Hell, they've already sold the farm; they'd throw in the cattle for a donut and a T-shirt.

International Reps aren't worried about lines of demarcation, job overload, speed ups, or outsourcing. Their jobs are secure. Here in Coopersville the International settled an outsourcing grievance by Machine Repair in favor of the company. The MR's are pissed and rightly so, but voting no on the Local contract won't affect our Regional Rep. He couldn't care less. We can't touch him. He isn't accountable to the rank and file. Since we can't impact the International, we take our

dissatisfaction out on Local leaders whose effectiveness is hamstrung by corporate stooges in the Rollover Caucus. While Local leaders sweat the friction of democracy, porkchoppers drink lemonade in the shade.

Ponder this: the Durable Medical Equipment portion of the International's insurance policy covers External Vacuum Erection Device. In the commercial market the external vacuum erection device is more commonly known as the Suckatron Who needs it, you say, now they have Viagra? Think again: the Suckatron can be attached beneath a desk, a dashboard, or if you're flying to Las Vegas, the bottom of your laptop.

Joint Fund Joy: A Poem by Porkchop Boy

First Class Seats

On a Flight to Vegas

Bottle of Viagra

Double Martini

Laptop

Suckatron

What Outsourcing Grievance?

In the latest issue of Bruce Allen's "Perspectives", he points out that the CAW has a strategy to deal with modular assembly but the UAW does not. I respectfully beg to differ. The UAW does have a strategy. It's called cooperation It's called partnership. It's called the new UAW and it betrays our legacy.

The new UAW has betrayed the fundamental principles of unionism, namely: solidarity, democracy, and equality; respect for seniority, job classifications, and lines of demarcation; defense of equal rights and fair treatment; resistance against speed-ups, job overload, and favoritism; equal pay for new hires; and direct action against antisocial corporations.

Yokich has a cozy relationship at Ford so union members at Visteon got a better contract than Delphi. But for how long? Like Dave Yettaw said, The UAW is playing checkers while the corporations are playing chess. The corporations have a long term plan. The Big Three have already dismantled organized labor in the parts industry where union density has fallen from 75% to less than 15%.

Now they're focused on Delphi and Visteon. It's only a matter of time before we fall victim to what Tom Laney, the shop floor wordsmith of Nuts & Bolts, so aptly terms the Dog Eat Dog agenda.

Delphi and Visteon compete against non-union shops. At a meeting in Coopersville, I posed a question to Battenberg, CEO of Delphi. Since 1992 you have reduced the UAW represented workforce at Delphi by over 40%. Do you expect that trend to continue? He paused, thoughtful, bemused, then said, I don't know. The honeymoon is over, folks. The Batt's got our balls in a paper sack. No more union friendly overtures. No placating people's fears with promises. He said, We had to reduce labor intensive industries. Then the Batt added, We're getting beat by the UAW because they've organized shops on a second tier wage so we can't compete. What's this, I thought, a parity parody?

Only 20% of Delphi manufacturing facilities are in the U.S., they are not labor intensive industries, and not all of them are UAW. The UAW is a small player on the global stage, and our influence is waning faster than a wake up dream.

Battenberg assured us the pension plan was fully funded, but that belies the point. Contracts aren't renewed, they're renegotiated, and everything's on the table. As the UAW portion of Delphi shrinks so does our bargaining power. Without COLA on pensions we may never see another raise in our pension. Of course if we keep getting lean, leaner, leanest, we won't live that long anyway.

As a note of encouragement Battenberg added, It's hard to differentiate who's who in the [Delphi/UAW] leadership, and that, he said with a smile is a very good sign. By that he must mean they all have brown noses and baggy knees.

Brothers and Sisters, the Battman is so cool. You can see it in his composure, his slow thought, his gray deadpan eyes, his perfect haircut, his introspective grin. He's sitting on top of the world. Nobody is going to pop his bubble. He actually told us to Think outside the box. I pondered those words of wisdom all day, and when my foreman asked me why I didn't make rate, I looked him dead in the eye and said, Think outside the box, and walked away.

I felt smug as a rich man's son. So let's think outside the box of corporate containment and union cooperation. We know we can't trust the Rollover Caucus

to take care of us. So let's get the hell out of the box they've locked us in. Let's stop accepting the competitive corporate agenda and reject partnership.

Our only real security is in Solidarity. Union member to union member. Worker to worker. It's time to take our fate out of the hands of the Rollover Team. Let's put our faith in our union brothers and sisters.

On May 8, a coalition of union activists will demonstrate in front of Solidarity House in support of all union members' rights.

Our demands are:

1) Reinstate Strike Benefits of UAW Local 2036.
Make Solidarity Top Priority.

2) Confront Anti Worker Corporations.
Stand Up for Workers' Rights Everywhere and Always.

3) Respect the Dignity and Autonomy of Local Unions.

Be there.

In Solidarity,

UAW Local 2151