

Live Bait & Ammo #26

When Jac Nasser can't bring home a million bucks a day he feels the pinch and when Jac feels the pinch you-know-who pays the price. But who can begrudge the Prince? He works hard. Although what he calls work most of us would call golf, or lunch, or lounging, or shooting the breeze, or trimming our fingernails and picking our teeth.

FPS, Ford's version of whip the horses, seeks cost savings at the expense of workers' health, safety, and well being. Frère Jacques would deny the allegation. He just wants the horses in assembly to work up a lather so he can collect his daily sweepstake. A million a day worth of lather is a lot of sweat, but we have to be competitive.

We agree. We want to be competitive, and in a spirit of competitiveness we propose that Ford executives get paid the same as their German and Japanese counterparts. We could thereby save hundreds of millions in one fell swoop. Fair is fair. Also we will gladly agree to the Japanese team paradigm. We will wear uniforms, do jumping jacks together every morning, and sing the company song in smiling unison, if only our plant managers will emulate their Japanese counterparts and commit suicide when they fail. Let's go all the way.

Let's rise to the German standard and cut the work week to 35 hours with no loss of pay. Let's do like the Japanese and build a car you don't have to Fix Or Repair Daily. How about we build trucks that don't roll over, ignition switches that don't burst into flame, or gas tanks that don't explode? Imagine how competitive it would be to build the safest automobile as opposed to the cheapest stunt man vehicle.

How about we build a car that a person who cares about the environment could drive with pride? Do you think there might be a few million people in the world who fit that description? How competitive would that be? Lineworkers are already bare bones lean. Let's cut the real fat.

Economist David Gordon in his book *Fat and Mean* said, In the 1980s, by common measures, the proportion of managerial and administrative employment was more

than three times as high in the United States as in Germany and Japan. Despite all the lip sync about downsizing Gordon points out that the proportion of managers and supervisors in private nonfarm employment has grown during the 1990s, not shrunk. We have a higher percentage of supervisors than Germany, Japan, and Sweden combined. Why so many managers? Cause when you don't shake a carrot, you got to shake a lot of stick.

What sort of stick keeps employees motivated? The bust unions stick; the threaten job security stick; the outsource stick; the hire temp and part time workers stick; the speed-up-multi-task-just-in-time-rush-job stick; the continuous disapproval of your effort is never quite good enough stick.

FPS in a nutshell is fear. There's no ingenuity behind this whip-the-horses style management. Bereft of any credible thought process their only recourse is to bulk up with an army of managerial personnel to police a workforce with no more morale than prisoners of war. It's a low brow, low road, old fashion sweatshop dance step -- about as smart as a pig in a wig.

Twenty percent of the purchase price of every product made in the USA goes to supervisors and monitors, not including secretaries and assistants and bean counters. In other words, when you buy a \$20,000 vehicle, \$4,000 goes to pay for the burden of supervisors, managers, and executives whose sweatless efforts add no value to the product. Corps protect their burdensome midriff bulge as if it were a precious pregnancy.

Instead of cutting the fat to extract more profit, employers squeeze the lean workforce for another drop of sweat. They strangle the goose to pay for a boost in profits and executive bonuses. Next year they will have to find another sacrificial lamb.

Today it's your plant, next year it's mine. The Big Three grind one supplier after another into the ground. What's good for Management is death for workers. Ford whipsaws union members to the breaking point then tosses the injured onto the scrap heap like discards from a chop shop.

The Corps compare our wages with workers in third world nations, shrug and say, You can't compete. What can we do? But the bulk of our trade imbalance is with

Japan and Western Europe. As Gordon asserts in *Fat and Mean*, Apparently, economies where workers earn higher wages [in Japan 25% higher, and in Western Europe roughly 14% higher] can flatten us in international competition at least as effectively as those with lower waged workers.

We are getting our butt kicked in every corner of the globe because we go into the ring with a three hundred pound managerial gorilla on our backs.

UAW proponents of competitive cooperation schemes are invariably non value added slackers: reps, office rats, FPS hacks, fops with clipboards and thirty dollar haircuts. The type of people who believe we can only save jobs by eliminating jobs are the type of people who believe the planet is flat.

Evidence means absolutely nothing to them. It is an empirical fact that since the inception of competitive cooperation we have lost over 750,000 UAW members. But flat earth thinkers contend if we amputate another 100,000 members our jobs will be secure. You need a jolt of electroshock to follow their logic.

At the rate the UAW is losing autoworkers the only UAW members left in another decade will be nodding and smiling in harmony at the Stephen P. Yokich Solidarity House of Rest; manicuring the links at the Stephen P. Yokich Memorial Golf Course; bell hopping the Stephen P. Yokich Palm Springs Resort; slam banging baggage at the Stephen P. Yokich Pro Air Line; and hawking ads for the Stephen P. Yokich Radio Network.

The only UAW members who support FPS and other such versions of sweat are those who benefit from it -- appointees and reps who are paid twelve to sixteen hours a day seven days a week to promote, monitor, and enforce FPS.

Okay. We got it. There is too much fat. So let's pay Bargaining Committee members for hours they actually work rather than hours they roll over in bed. Let's put all the FPS appointees back on the line in jobs that will not only add value but prevent repetitive trauma injuries and improve first time quality. Wouldn't that be competitive?

Imagine an assembly line that produced first time quality, eliminated the lemon lot, and didn't injure workers. Let's put executive salaries in line with their German

and Japanese counterparts and raise hourly salaries to the German and Japanese competitive standard. Let's quit pussyfooting with traitors, liars, and thieves.

The Fascist Production System encourages us to attack fellow union members, double workloads, snitch, brown nose, and exile dissenters like Nancy Schillinger. There's only so much room at the top, they say, but the bottom is starting to quake and tremble. There's a rumble on the shop floor. We aren't going to take the stick anymore.

On Oct. 17 members of UAW Local 879 in St. Paul, Minn., will sign pledges of solidarity: a pledge not to compete with each other but rather work together in resistance to FPS and the threat of plant closings.

The Solidarity Committee is sending emissaries to other Locals throughout the country. They aren't slogging through official channels. It's a grassroots movement, and it's hummin' with momentum like a slow train comin'.

Get ready.

E-mail Sufferance@topica.com to get on board.

In Solidarity,

UAW Local 2151