

Live Bait & Ammo #8

At the last update Mr. DiEnno, our plant manager, introduced the new Personnel Director, but she wasn't there. At least she wasn't present at the C-shift update. It was a promising first impression. Then Mr. DiEnno began to promote Delphi stock despite the fact that it recently "tanked".

Not an "uncommon occurrence", he said, and then he waxed enthusiastic. He even suggested the Flounders Grant, a stock option for which we have seen no material evidence, may become an "annual" benefit. And I thought I was the only one casting bait around here. Oh well, I thought to myself as I looked about the room at all the graveyard shifters sleeping with their mouths open, it's a hard sell and a tough customer, I can hardly blame the poor stiff.

Salesmen are a peculiar breed of people. They believe in the power of appearances and admire the magical sleight of hand that alters the audience's perception. They believe "make believe" is convincing. They believe they could sell an Arab sand. They believe we're impressed with their presentation when all we really want is for them to go away. Above all they believe that to make the sale they must be liked. Salesmen are desperate to be liked.

Workers on the other hand pride themselves on their work, don't give a damn if anyone likes them or not, and have very little faith in fast talkers and the sketchy manipulation of appearances. Workers have more substance and intelligence than salesmen give them credit for. No matter how hard the schlock meisters spin the spin-off, we're not buying it.

Next Mr. D. proceeded to tell us what we all know, "GM has a poor relationship with the UAW", BUT, he said, "It's going to be different with Delphi." He may as well have added abracadabra. We see the same managers in the same suits mouthing the same words out of both sides of the same mouth. When the stock is redistributed, the very same people who own and control GM will own and control Delphi. There's no magic in this formula.

If Mr. DiEnno really wants an improved relationship he should start right here in Coopersville by not forcing people to work on holiday weekends. Last Thanksgiving some C-shifters were forced to work Saturday without adequate notice. We complained to Mr. DiEnno but apparently our words fell on deaf ears. Over the Easter holiday some workers were once again forced to work on Saturday.

Debbie Johnson drove back from Indiana so as not to lose her holiday pay. Delphine Frazier who should have an honorary seat on the Board of Directors just for name's sake, came in, did her job, and when she returned on Tuesday the work she did was still sitting there. And when she left in the morning the work was still sitting there. They didn't need to force her in. No one needed to be forced in. It was just another case of workers having to compensate for sloppy management.

On the previous weekend one shift didn't work because of "contractual overtime", one of the most moronic dictums we've ever heard. And during the week management didn't fill the scheduled vacancies with overtime because in their lean little minds they didn't need it, at least not until the middle of a four day holiday after we'd already made other plans with our extended families.

The only difference I see in this relationship is in the depth of the B.S. They want us to believe Delphi is going to be different than GM. They want to placate our doubts with false expectations. They act like we've never heard any of this crap before. They think we just need a little Special Ed.

Then Mr. DiEnno expounded on the intellectual wealth of Delphi. It seems that GM kindly dumped all their old patents on us. This is a favor? A generosity? GM will continue to benefit from this intellectual property but they won't be responsible for the liability. Who will be responsible for the warranties on Delphi's modular systems? Not Uncle GM.

Mr. D was very excited about some parts that Ford decided to buy from Delphi. It's hard to share the enthusiasm when we've just received notification that about 200 jobs will be outsourced to Nippondenso, Cooperative Work Groups have been unilaterally canceled, training classes abruptly halted, and every time DiEnno doesn't get his own way he takes his ball and goes home.

One of the questions I didn't have time to ask was: how many of those parts Ford intends to buy from Delphi are made in the US? What's your guess?

DiEnno didn't mention that Delphi just made another big acquisition in Mexico: 12.4 million for a forty percent share of Gabriel de Mexico, an auto parts company. Delphi has reduced its UAW work force 42% since 1992 and now has more Mexican workers than UAW workers. Merrill Lynch expects this trend to continue.

About halfway through the presentation Mr. D came up for air and asked if there were any questions. Someone asked an innocuous question about the possibility of a "straight eight." Mr. DiEnno got so shook up you'd have thought the brother made an inappropriate remark about his mother. Ed popped his cork. And that was the end of "striving to be a listening organization." We felt all warm and fuzzy about the new relationship after that bit of frivolous brinkmanship.

Straight eight is a lean concept because it eliminates the wasted down time of lunches. A half hour a day times 800 workers equals 400 hours of lost time. Not to mention the space in the cafeteria. But short fuse doesn't want to discuss it and we know who knows best.

Finally DiEnno wound down and asked if there were any questions or concerns. He was ready to listen. It was two minutes before seven. We walked out.

Auto analysts contend that Delphi needs a positive relationship with the UAW more than it needs wage concessions. Trouble is, workers aren't buying the sales pitch, they're studying the action, and digging in for a battle.

At the rate that Delphi is divesting itself of American workers cooperation wouldn't even buy us time. If Delphi was serious about fostering a new relationship with the UAW they wouldn't put old school GM leaders like Ed DiEnno in positions that required sophisticated interpersonal skills.

If Delphi was intent on forging a genuine partnership with the UAW they would readily lay on the table more pertinent information than that "required by law."

We are in an adversarial relationship defined not by our choice but by corporate strategies determined to eradicate our union.

There is no alternative. We will fight.

In Solidarity,

UAW Local 2151, Coopersville, Mi.