

Live Bait & Ammo # 54

If Delphi UAW members go on strike, they will play into Miller's hand. He will lock us out and shut us down with a chuckle and a grin. A lock out is as good as a quit. Besides, we can't trust the International. We have seen what happens to striking UAW members who get locked out. They lose their jobs, their strike pay, and their local unions.

Workers concerned about losing homes are anxious about income. It's unreasonable to ask Delphi members to go on strike. If GM-UAW members who voted on our contract want to strike, we welcome the support. But Delphi-UAW members need a radically different strategy.

We should Work to Rule. We need to stay inside to preserve income, save jobs, and fight back. If we follow every rule in the book, production will slow to a crawl. We can control the flow of parts by ensuring quality and following rules. It's perfectly legitimate.

Work to Rule creates overtime -- something workers faced with a pay cut and loss of pension and health care desperately want and need.

Work to Rule is safe. You can't be fired for following rules. I am not suggesting sabotage or anything illegal. Make no mistake, I am stating clearly and unambiguously, control the shop floor by following all the rules. Workers Rule when they Work to Rule.

Make Health & Safety Reps put their donuts down and do some real work for a change. Call out your committee person every day. Of course you have questions. It's only natural. Delphi is in turmoil. It's not our fault. We didn't break the contract. Delphi broke the contract. When there is no trust, there can be no peace.

Miller is the perpetrator here, not us. We aren't the ones who kicked the hornets' nest. Delphi-UAW members have everything to lose. If we roll over without a fight, no amount of concessions will be enough. Concessions only serve to cover closing costs and plump pillows for executives. Why should we pay for their bonuses?

There is no empirical evidence that Delphi will stay in the US. None. Court documents make no bones about Delphi's plans to exit the US.

Since a lock out is as good as a quit, the International may encourage strikes at Delphi to help GM out of its problems. A lock out would get rid of us. My statement isn't mere cynicism, it's a history lesson. For two decades the UAW has methodically sacrificed members in the auto parts sector to help the Big Three be competitive. Here's how it works.

The International goes along with outsourcing in exchange for organizing workers with the blessing of the new employer. It's called a "neutrality agreement". The process of organizing work formerly done by UAW members in the Big Three for lower wages at a new location is a sleight of hand wage cut -- less painful but no less insidious.

In 1997 Ford helped the UAW win a strike at a newly organized Johnson Controls plant. Ford refused to install seats it had ordered until JC settled with the UAW. The deal Ford made with the devil-in-disguise was cut out of the same cloth as UAW cooperation with outsourcing. Ford was complicit in organizing and the International was complicit in cutting wages for work outsourced from Ford.

Likewise a GM-Delphi plant in Grand Rapids, MI was sold to Lear in 1998. Their work was outsourced to newly organized Lear plants with lower wages. Despite concessions the old plant will close in December. The International was complicit in the scheme to cut wages in order to benefit General Motors. Neutrality agreements aren't free. Someone has to pay.

I believe the UAW PR Department has consistently failed to publicly defend Delphi members for a reason. The International is eager to help their cash cow (GM) by tacitly justifying the purge at Delphi. For example, when Miller says Delphi workers average \$130,000 per year, the UAW doesn't correct the record because they want the public to believe that we are overpaid. I'm not cynical, I'm knowledgeable.

IRS documents show that GM funnels millions of dollars to the International UAW through the conduit of Joint Funds which are controlled by the UAW-GM Center for Human Resources [CHR], an independent non profit corporation chaired by

union and management personnel including UAW VP Dick Shoemaker. The stated purpose of CHR is "to enable the employer to compete in a global marketplace." [UAW-GM Center for Human Resources By-Laws, Article II] How do they achieve competitiveness? By reducing jobs and cutting wages.

The GM-UAW Team planned a wage reduction at Delphi but hoped to control the process and manage the upheaval through attrition and transfer. The pop of the stock market bubble and concomitant fraud blew the cover. As the urge to dump legacy costs accelerated, the slow train of wage reduction jumped the tracks and ran smack into an immovable object -- the contract. The "Team" decided there was only one solution: the cremation of the National Agreement.

Now Miller has the chutzpah to tell us he will preserve pensions if we agree to wage cuts. Does he really imagine that anyone trusts him?

There is much uncertainty these days, but there are a three things we know for sure:

- 1.) No Delphi executive can be trusted. They are crooks.
- 2.) Miller is determined to hijack our pension fund, gut our benefits, and cut our wages.
- 3.) The UAW will present a concession agreement which they will claim wins "job security".

I am not making a prediction, I am reiterating history. Every time the International presents a concession contract they claim they won "job security". There is no historical evidence to support that spurious job saving claim but Shoemaker will act liked he saved us from the jaws of death. It's a lie. He wants us to make sacrifices so he can help his business partner, General Motors.

The concessions Shoemaker will try to sell us will further divide the UAW. There may be a deal to let some of us retire early rather than face wage cuts. Such deals cannot be trusted. They will pit member against member. (Once again, this is not conjecture, it's UAW history.) A contract that divides workers is anti union and destined to self-destruction. Retirees can't screw the people they leave behind and expect to live happily ever after.

The UAW was well aware of GM's long term plan to shuck pension liability and cut costs. They cooperated behind a curtain of job security clauses. The curtain caught fire and the guarantees went up in smoke. International office rats are negotiating for their own survival now, not ours.

The only thing that can move an inert object (UAW International) is an unstoppable force (rank and file militancy). To that end we should organize rank and file meetings at various locations around the country to demand answers and take action. We don't want lawyers. We want action.

We should hold numerous rank and file meetings so we can brainstorm how to fight back and win. I don't believe we will be able to live in peace if we shrug our collective shoulders and say, "There's nothing we can do about it."

The serenity of spiritual surrender is not achieved without struggle. Like an elderly woman said during the bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, "My feet hurt, but my soul is at rest." Peace of mind does not come from avoiding conflict, it comes from right action.

Perhaps the inertia of the International Union is immovable, but that doesn't mean the momentum of the rank and file is stoppable. We just may have to run them over.

Miller has backed us into a corner. He expects us to give up without a fight. He said, "No one will like it, but in the end they will do it, and they will do it the right way." He plays a good game, but for us this isn't a game, it's our life, and we must fight for all it's worth, or live in shame.

Realistically, I don't believe we can succeed alone. GM-UAW members and the International will probably not stand in solidarity with us. If in the end it comes to that, we may as well bring the house down with us. When the judge nullifies the contract, it's no holds barred. Welcome the wildcat and say hello to chaos. If we are forced to lose our life savings -- pension, health care, wages -- why should we heed Miller's advice? "The best thing they can do is stay on the job," he said. Screw that. We may as well go for broke.

Why should Miller and his band of thieves profit from our demise? Shut them down. Delphi wants out of the US? Get out now. GM wants our products but not our retirees? Cut them off cold. Solidarity House wants to be partners in the business and maintain jointness? Charge them with collusion. Miller wants a controlled bloodbath? Let it flow. There is no reason why the bloodbath should be restricted to Delphi workers and retirees. Bring the whole rotten edifice -- GM, Delphi, and the UAW -- down.

How's that for a legacy, Mr. Miller?

In Constant Solidarity,

UAW Local 2151

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