

Live Bait & Ammo # 59

In 2003 UAW members at GM and Delphi negotiated together and ratified the National Contract together as if they were one bargaining unit. The International Union justified the combined ratification by asserting that our contracts were "mirror agreements" and that our mutual interests were inextricably bound together. I appealed that decision to the Public Review Board. I argued that the companies were separate and independent and thus, we should have held separate ratifications.

I lost. The Public Review Board upheld the International Union's decision. Who am I to question the distinguished judgment of the Public Review Board? I humbly concur.

The UAW bargained with GM and Delphi as if they were one company in 2003. UAW members at GM and Delphi ratified the contracts together as if they were one and the same agreement. If that was a wise strategy in 2003, then striking GM and Delphi as one union should be the logical outcome of that strategy in 2005. As Walter Reuther said, "If you close one plant, we will close all the plants."

The contract we ratified together is under attack. The International Union can not in good conscience let Delphi UAW members get cut from the herd and led to the slaughter alone. If we were one union in 2003, then we damn well better act like one union now.

GM and Delphi are not separate independent companies. The machines in Delphi plants are tagged "Property of General Motors." GM didn't spin off the means of production, they simply spun off their responsibility to workers. If we allow GM-Delphi to get away with this fraud, we will lose more than our standard of living, we will lose our dignity as union members and human beings.

If GM breaks the union at Delphi, where will the reign of economic terror end? In retirement? Our retirement is only as secure as the members we leave behind. Real social security is solidarity. If we abandon our brothers and sisters, leave them to fight alone, or stick them with a disastrous wage cut, we are writing our own epitaph. Cut and run is not a union option.

In 1970 the UAW struck GM for 30-and-Out and COLA. We all benefited from that battle. Now, it is our generation's turn to engage in the struggle for economic justice. This is our historical moment. The course we set today will determine the future of the union.

GM set up Delphi to dump our pensions, cut our wages, and bust our union. It's not just about the money, it's about power and control -- power to dictate the conditions of our labor, and power to control production without restraint.

On top of the wage, benefit, and pension cuts, GM-Delphi demands the elimination of COLA, SUB Pay, Jobs Bank, and Guaranteed Income Stream. GM-Delphi demands the reduction of shift premiums, vacation, over time pay, and relocation allowance. Skilled Trades will be reduced to \$21.50 per hour. But that's just the beginning. GM-Delphi intends to strip workers of their dignity and humiliate the union.

The following are direct quotes from the Delphi Proposal submitted on November 15, 2005:

"The amount and nature of any overtime to be worked shall be determined at the sole discretion of the Corporation. Any and all provisions of the UAW-Delphi Agreements or local agreements that purport to require overtime, or limit management discretion to determine overtime requirements shall be deleted. All overtime provisions of the UAW-Delphi Agreements shall be eliminated."

"At its discretion, annually, the Corporation may designate the week in which the Independence Day holiday falls as a mandatory vacation period."

"The Corporation may implement a no-fault attendance policy under which all employees absences/tardiness are tracked including leaves of absence. After reaching defined thresholds, the employees will be subject to automatic, non-grievable corrective disciplinary action, ultimately leading to discharge."

"Full utilization of skilled trades will apply only to core activities which directly support production operations and/or the maintenance and repair of plant equipment, and which can be performed competitively and within the required

time frame. All other non-core skilled trades work will be outsourced or subcontracted, such as but not limited to....."

"Appendix L.....and all other provisions of the existing local and national agreements that restrict the Corporation's right to source work, shall be eliminated."

According to the dictates of this proposed contract, GM-Delphi will close or sell plants at will. Whoever buys a GM-Delphi plant will not be required to honor the existing contract. Delphi will hire large numbers of temps. Lines of demarcation will dissolve, as will Job Preference. Seniority will count for nothing. The only clause in the contract that GM-Delphi wants to preserve untouched is the "no strike clause."

Your Local Union Bargaining Committee has a full copy of this proposal and members have a right to see it. This proposal isn't just about the money, it's about union busting. And it's not going to stop at Delphi or Visteon. It's coming to the Big Three in 2007.

When sit down strikers in Flint won recognition for the UAW in 1937, they didn't win it by writing letters to the editor. They didn't win it by donating to V-CAP and voting Democrat. They won by taking power into their own hands. When we turn control over to politicians, or International Reps who claim to have a plan, but won't tell us what it is, we don't empower ourselves, we only reinforce the pattern of learned helplessness.

We have been indoctrinated with the policy of helplessness. It's a lie. We are not defenseless victims. We have power. We control production. We can bring General Motors to its knees. The sit downers won because they seized control of the shop floor. They won because they shut down GM. Our challenge is no less. As Marty Shawl from Local 699 said at the Rank & File Meeting in Flint, "We have three choices: Strike, Work to Rule, or Lie Down."

We must shut down General Motors or we will all -- GM, Delphi, Ford, Chrysler, Visteon, American Axle, Lear, Caterpillar -- lose everything we ever earned. GM is leading the assault on the working class. And the Rank & File is leading the Resistance because there is so little leadership coming out of Solidarity House.

Shoemaker reported from the UAW's corporate offices, the CHR, in Detroit on December 1, "the most we can expect is a soft landing." In other words, a crash landing is more likely. Shoemaker said it "might" be possible to get assistance from GM "through the end of this contract." What contract? The one UAW members from GM and Delphi voted on together? Or the one Judge Drain is about to flush?

Shoemaker claimed the UAW gave Delphi a two tier supplement in order to "help Delphi compete". That's not a bargaining strategy, it's collusion. Gross mismanagement and fraud, not workers, are responsible for GM-Delphi's failure.

The Concession Caucus [CC] has the same world view as the corporations, i.e., workers must sacrifice for the company and compete with other workers. Whereas Walter Reuther said, "We must take labor out of the competition," the Concession Caucus forces workers into competition. When the CC adopted the corporate view of the world they slashed our wrists and instructed us to work with our hands. The CC won't tell us what their plan is because the plan is to sacrifice Delphi workers for the benefit of GM. That is not speculation, it's their pattern, their M.O. The CC has consistently sold out members in the supply sector of the industry to prop up the Big Three. Why should Delphi or Visteon members expect anything different?

Shoemaker said we must "try to save jobs," presumably with concessions since that is all he knows how to do. Of course, the fact that concessions have never saved jobs doesn't faze Shoemaker any more than the national debt fazes George Bush. Shoemaker said "the best we will probably be able to do is to buy time for retirements and save some plants." In other words Shoemaker is waving the white flag before the fight begins. And why not? His retirement is not in jeopardy. He will walk away with a gold plated pension, free health care, and a face lift courtesy of the corporate media.

SOS members have been accused of dividing the union, but we aren't the ones who collaborate with management. We aren't the ones who enjoy the perks of partnership. We are the ones who, as Dave Yettaw said, "have dedicated the best part of their lives working on the relentless assembly line, day after day, to provide a dignified life and decent standard of living for their families."

To his credit Gettelfinger did announce at the November 2 meeting in Detroit that we should work to rule. But the Regional and Local leadership has failed to follow

through. There are only a few Locals that I know of where officials are actively instructing and guiding members in WTR. A committee person warned members at one Local that if management saw them wearing a Work to Rule button, supervisors would track their production rates and potentially walk them out. This is a perfect example of a union official doing the boss' bullying. What could be more anti union than that? WTR and/or wearing a WTR button is "protected concerted activity." If management or the union restricts your rights, "don't mess around, go down town" to the National Labor Relations Board and file charges.

If you have been harassed or intimidated by a union official for participating in Rank & File Meetings, or exercising rights guaranteed by the UAW Constitution, document the incident, call the Regional Office and let your Rep know that if the problem is not resolved promptly, your next call will be to the Department of Labor. [Patrick Hyde: 202-693-1226] I think it is fair to give the UAW Regional Office an opportunity to fulfill its duty, but if we have to call in the feds to clean up the UAW and give us one member/one vote like the Teamsters, we will not hesitate. Soldiers of Solidarity will not tolerate intimidation and harassment from union officials. Everything we advocate is open and above board and within the framework of the UAW Constitution and federal law.

At the Rank & File Meeting in Bay City attending members decided to call ourselves Soldiers of Solidarity [SOS]. At the Flint R&F meeting members concurred we are SOS. Rank & File Meetings are scheduled for Lockport, NY on January 8, and Milwaukee, WI on January 15. As usual those meetings are open, but on January 22, we will hold a meeting restricted to active Delphi workers in Troy, MI where SOS can get down to brass tacks. On January 23 we will go to Delphi headquarters and demand our legal right to examine the the annual pension audit. On January 8, SOS will picket the Auto Show at Cobo Hall in Detroit from 12 - 4pm. Thursdays have been designated Red Shirt Day. Wear a red shirt or bandana to signify revolt.

We are organizing, but as Patrick Henry said, "We have not yet begun to fight."

SOS,