

Live Bait & Ammo # 81

Last week I got two back to back disciplinary interviews in one sitting. It felt like Happy Hour.

First, the supervisor wanted to know why I missed two days of work. "Bereavement," I said.

"Bereavement?" He raised his compassionate eyebrows like a beagle anticipating a bone.

"Yes," I said "Bereavement. Steve Miller's wife passed away and I felt that the loss of such valuable 'human capital', as Steve would say, deserved a respectful period of mourning: at least 2 days."

In the second disciplinary interview he asked why I had taken a "long lunch."

The professed purpose of the disciplinary interview is "fact finding." As part of the fact finding process the accused is allowed to verbally defend him or herself and the supervisor is required to write down everything that the one who is guilty until proven innocent has to say in their own defense. Normally, I have a lot to say, and my circumlocution would typically revolve around that particular supervisor's outstanding personification of the peculiar American idiom, "Out to lunch."

Instead I said, "The war is over. Everyone lost. It's time to make amends and move on."

Everyone lost — hourly workers, salary workers, suppliers, the community — everyone except Miller and his band of vulture capitalists.

Steve Miller's brand of restructuring has caused more damage and wreaked more havoc than a long, bitter strike. A company can recover from a strike. Delphi as it was known in the US will never recover and GM will be critically damaged. The loss of "human capital" is irreparable.

Through the Special Attrition Program [SAP] and the exodus of transfers back to GM, the unions have effectively turned the Delphi plants over to management control, and management under the direction of Steve Miller is destroying the business. Vulture capitalists prefer corpses, not thriving companies.

In the end the vultures will rid themselves of all liability to American workers and then collect stock options and dividends from assets purchased outside the US with our legacy. In the end Judge Drain will reward criminal behavior and incompetence. Don't take my word for it, examine his record.

In 2003 and 2004 I wrote a series of shopfloor fliers entitled, It's the Scrap, Stupid. My contention was that it was not overpaid workers that impeded production and undermined the bottom line, it was scrap, it was waste, it was stupidity. Here are some excerpts.

--Delphi's success hinges on sale, closure, and downsizing. Battenberg is a serial killer of industrial magnitude.

--The guiding principle of Delphi management is simple: tell workers we are family, threaten them with financial ruin, then offer as the only solution, a human sacrifice.

--During audience participation at the Ed Northern Improvisational Comedy Hour, a union member complained about having to assemble parts that management knew were defective. Ed told him, deadpan, "We don't do that at Delphi." That got a good laugh. Then another union member asked if Delphi executives were going to take a pay cut since we weren't profitable last year. Ed said, "I don't understand the question." That got a real good laugh. The question was repeated, and Ed said, "I took a 60% pay cut last year." The audience roared. He was a great success. Then someone asked what Ed would say to an employee who was thinking about transferring. Ed said, "I'd tell them to go. The more the better. It's win-win. GM needs workers and we need to get rid of workers." We forgot to laugh.

--Battenberg's sole claim to fame is selling, closing, and downsizing former GM parts plants. His list of accomplishments reads like an Industrial Boothill. It's all he knows how to do. He doesn't win new business, he buys it bargain basement at every port of call.

--Last year Delphi's profits took a nose dive but Battenberg pocketed one and a half million dollars in salary not including stock options, expense accounts, and

other bounties. The right to manage doesn't seem to require integrity, responsibility, loyalty, or ethics. Remember what Ed Northern, the self professed Christian and patriot, told us? "I don't close plants. I build plants." He boasted he would "add social security numbers" in Coopersville. He just didn't tell us which list social security numbers would be added to, or where the plants would be built.

--Delphi Action Strategies: (1)Always say, "Yes, sir," because all information must flow from the top down and all feedback must confirm that the boss is right. (2)Regard workers as waste to be eliminated. Disregard scrap as the cost of doing business. (3)Keep employees in the dark. (4) People are the least important resource. Don't listen to them. (5)Ignore the obvious. (6)Keep a closed mind. (7)Screw them all.

--I reread the Time Study, again and again. Finally, I realized what was wrong. I was looking for something that wasn't there — an improvement, an innovation, a lightning bolt of ingenuity. I expected to learn the reason why an operator could be eliminated without sabotaging efficient production and quality control. There wasn't any reason. The Time Study wasn't based on reality. It was a figment of the Time Study Maven's.....and then it dawned on me!

What we have here is a case of F. B. E. — Faith Based Engineering.

"Facts" as John Adams said, "are stubborn things." But a Faith Based Engineer can outfox facts faster than a halfcocked cracker in a pissing match.

It's no wonder we don't pursue the elimination of scrap or the continuous improvement of mechanical processes. Like President Bush, Delphi management is guided by faith, not logic. Stubborn facts be damned. Delphi's not stuck in a quagmire. We're lean and mean and marching toward freedom. Before long we'll be throwing flowers at the plant manager and singing Happy Days Are Here Again.

Ah but facts are stubborn as scrap. Downtime and Continuous Containment are more common than car bombs in Iraq. When you have a president that doesn't read and a plant manager who hates the union you can't expect revelation before the world ends.

So here we are again, wondering why Delphi is more interested in reducing workers than reducing scrap and downtime. Our plant manager would rather outsource than solve problems. But don't underestimate him. He's not faith based. He has his reasons. Budget Brown isn't here to win new business. He's here to close the business. When you look at it from that point of view, everything falls into place. It's a pattern: make it fail, then blame the union.

From the beginning Delphi's plan for success was based on failure. All profit would derive from milking US operations, outsourcing, breaking union contracts, and dumping responsibility to retirees and their communities. Delphi was a top tier supplier with a low brow mentality. Rather than improve the process they preferred to sweat the horses and deceive investors. The unions could have challenged the corruption at its core. Instead the Concession Caucus cooperated with management.

If the unions had adopted tactics like CHAOS [Creating Havoc Around Our System] as Flight Attendants at Northwest Airlines have threatened, we could have halted the contrivance in its tracks and dealt with the challenge on our own terms instead of Drain's terms. We could have organized smart strikes —short, strategic, random disruptions of production— to demonstrate who is in control. We could have organized a one day, industry wide strike like a shot across the bow.

We could have challenged the social-economic-legal system that punishes honest labor and rewards incompetent, sociopathic management. Instead we got Mobilizing@Delphi, an organization that neither mobilized nor communicated with union members. (Mobilizing@Delphi is so virtual it doesn't have a web site or a telephone number. The sum of its activities could be described in parentheses.)

Miller is destroying the lives of thousands of workers and their communities for the benefit of a few hundred executives and his financier, J.P. Morgan. The porkchoppers who contrived Mobilizing@Delphi are aiding and abetting not challenging the crime.

The Buy Off, the SAP negotiated by Mobilizing@Delphi, is a cover up. The SAP lends credibility and support to a corrupt business operation. It's time to make amends, that is, change.

The rank & file can't rely on the likes of Mobilizing@Delphi to organize CHAOS and directly challenge the moral hazard posed by Miller and his band of vulture capitalists. We need to mobilize SOS into a broad based coalition of worker activists willing to create havoc at the point of production, the port of entry, the delivery depot, or any location where services are rendered, labor is swapped, and cost and profit collide.

If the lives of workers are disrupted and their families threatened, the status quo should collapse. Order should cease to exist until a just resolution — equality of sacrifice and reward — is reached.

Soldiers of Solidarity want a comprehensive collective bargaining solution for all workers, not a SAP that deprives new hires of equal rights, severs solidarity, and jeopardizes retirees.

The War on Workers didn't end at Delphi. It is actively being waged at Northwest Airlines and heading for Ford-Visteon, American Axle, Johnson Controls, GM, Chrysler, and ports unknown.

Delphi workers have been dispersed throughout the GM system. They have their hands on the levers of production and delivery. If Delphi stops payments to retirees or revokes the contract, we are well positioned and prepared to create havoc both within and without the GM-Delphi system.

Delphi retirees will have nothing to lose. Injunctions against an organization without walls are meaningless. CHAOS is our weapon. An unofficial rank & file apparatus is our shield. At some point business as usual must cease and the struggle for justice as opposed to profit will occupy center stage.

Today they are coming for Flight Attendants at Northwest Airlines. Tomorrow they are coming for you.

stay solid, shotwell

www.soldiersofsolidarity.com
www.toryrat.com

www.futureoftheunion.com

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