

Live Bait & Ammo #84: Work like a Screw Machine.

Gettelfinger stepped to the plate, pointed his bat at Miller and said, “No more concessions.”

The UAW-Delphi contract forbids plant closings or sales. The Delphi plant in Anderson is closing. The Delphi plant in Adrian is closing. The Delphi plant in Coopersville is closing. The Delphi plant in Flint is closing.....The Slugger took a look at a fast ball right down the middle. Strike one!

The UAW has a contract that covers all the work in each bargaining unit. Non union workers are moving the machines out of the Delphi Coopersville plant and into other UAW represented plants in Grand Rapids and Rochester The Slugger got caught with his bat on his shoulder. Strike two!

UAW contracts with Delphi and GM stipulate that a temp who works more than 120 days becomes permanent. But the rule was conceded without approval of the membership.....Strike three!

Slugger never took a swing — a classic case of hardball and soft bat.

We may as well state the obvious and horrible truth. Gettelfinger & Co like the old Chicago Black Sox are playing for the other team. Hard to believe? Don't be a sucker. Base your bets on the stats, not the pumped up promotional antics of hacks.

In November 2005 when Soldiers Of Solidarity started organizing rank & file meetings to challenge the Delphi bankruptcy, the Con Caucus responded by saying, “We have a plan. We just can't tell you what it is.” Now we know.

Gettelfinger is determined to turn the union into a Human Resource Center to help the companies downsize, outsource, and de-unionize. Look at Delphi, Visteon, American Axle, Ford, GM.....That's not a raccoon in the mask, Jack, it's a company/union rat.

Gettelfinger's emissaries in the Con Caucus go from Local to Local acting as go betweens in an extortion scheme to convince members to give work that belongs to the bargaining unit to non union companies as in — Toledo Jeep, Ford Rouge, GM Lansing.

Then for an encore the Con Caucus blows the company's trumpet on speedup. The old UAW cut its eye teeth fighting speedup and breaking down the line boss. But the Con Caucus turns solidarity inside out. Team leaders do supervisory work and supervisors do manual labor. There won't be a line to cross when the Con Caucus gets done smudging the rules that define who controls the shopfloor. The win-win jingo is a coverup.

Gettelfinger's tough talk is thin as Maybelline. He's done everything he said he wouldn't do (open up the contract), and nothing he said he would do (hold the line on health care). Workers have no choice but to fight the war on two fronts. Let's get specific. The Con Caucus promotes scab products.

UAW Local 364 in Elkhart, IN has been on strike against Vincent Bach a division of Steinway for seven months. The UAW International has not assisted the strikers by setting up a food bank or building community support or informing other UAW members of their struggle and requesting aid. But the uaw.org web site is advertising musical instruments made by scabs at Vincent Bach and recommending we buy them for Christmas. This isn't malicious behavior, it's simply negligent. They don't care.

The con goes on and on. Workers from Delphi are treated like illegal aliens at GM. Many are having trouble getting health insurance. UAW Benefits Reps say GM doesn't have any records on me because according to GM's books I started working for Delphi in 1979. Never mind Delphi didn't exist as a separate entity from GM until 1999.

We have a contract. We have a union. We should not have to fight for something we EARNED. In the past, if we had problems with insurance we took it to a UAW Benefits Rep and they handled it. Now the reps tell us to call "Fidelity" at 1-800-DONT-HOLD-YOUR-BREATH and when "Fidelity" doesn't take care of it, the Benefit Reps make excuses for them and blame us.

"Fidelity" demands social security cards, certificates of marriage, drivers licenses, copies of income tax statements.....your maternal grandfather's uncle's thumbprint..... They don't care if everything you own is in storage because you moved from Lockport, NY to Bowlinggreen, KY on a two week notice. Besides, giving "Fidelity" information is like pouring water through a sieve. Nothing sticks. Or they say in their phony phone voice, "You're in the process." which is office code for "Get off the line, schmuck."

"Fidelity" and their UAW Benefit Reps at GM claim Delphi didn't transfer any information on us. "Their computers don't talk to our computers." It's a lie. I have proof. First, I was questioned by a GM nurse about medical information relevant to my time at Delphi. I never signed a consent to release form. Secondly, I did not elect to purchase personal accident insurance through payroll deduction at GM, yet they made a deduction from my check for personal accident insurance— the exact same amount (.64 cents: not .32 or .96 but exactly .64) as was deducted from my check when I worked at Delphi.

How did they know exactly how much to deduct and when? How did they know about a work restriction I had six years ago? BECAUSE THEY HAVE THE RECORDS.

How many times did you have to call 1-800-DONT-HOLD-YOUR-BREATH to correct misinformation? No one could be that incompetent by accident. The con goes on and on.

The company/union likes to say that all accidents can be prevented. But many injuries are not accidental, they are built into the plan. Production workers are treated like machines and over time they break down just like a machine breaks down. Trouble is, body parts are not available in the crib. The career expectancy of a lineworker is growing shorter, not longer, precisely because of speedup and “management by stress”. [see Working Smart by Parker and Slaughter: www.labornotes.org]

Each job on the line is studied and measured like a machine’s cycle time. Each function is clocked to the tenth of a second. If you learn how to do it more adeptly and shave off a second here or there, it doesn’t provide more breathing space, it only enables the overseer to add more work to your load.

The team concept purports to “enhance job satisfaction” and “empower workers.” Instead of doing one stupid job, you can now do five stupid jobs, each one deskilled and reconfigured into the most convoluted combination of micromanaged contortions. Instead of simply wearing out a rotator cuff, you can now rotate your jobs and add on a screwed wrist, a torn ligament, a twisted knee, an inflamed tendon, a slipped disc, and a boot in the ass.

If you’re injured because of accumulated stress, GM will put you out on the street. If it’s not a slip, a trip, or a fall, it’s not an accident and you will have to fight

GM for Workers Comp. Count on a long legal battle because the UAW appointed ergonomic expert said there's nothing wrong with the job: you must have done it wrong. And/or GM will blame the injury on accumulated stress caused by repetitive work at Delphi, a self insured bankrupt company.

Work smart. Don't get hurt. The best way to work smart is stick together. Slow the pace of the work to a more humane level. Practice chain gang solidarity. If everyone works at the same slow methodical pace, no one will get in trouble for failing to keep up. If you do feel a burst of energy, a compulsion to speed up, remember what they did to you. Remember they stole your pension; closed your plant; forced you to move or endure a long commute; canceled your health insurance then denied they had records of your existence; treated you like an illegal alien; refused you the relocation allowance. Remember what you owe them.

GM dumped our pensions into Delphi and then drove the company into bankruptcy by forcing them to sell parts below cost while simultaneously resourcing to other suppliers. Do you think they are done? Do you believe the assault on workers is over?

Under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act [ERISA] and the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, Delphi should have paid a minimum of \$300 million to US pension plans on 10/13/06. But Chapter 11 permits Delphi to contribute only the amount attributed to post bankruptcy petition service —\$61 million. The bankruptcy wasn't an accident, it was part of a plan.

The unpaid portion of the minimum funding payments required by law is reduced to a claim against Delphi and will be determined in Delphi's reorganization plan with other claims. "Take a number and go to the back of the line" is not the result of a lack of organization, it's a plan.

If Delphi doesn't cancel pension payments until after October 2007, GM is off the hook because that is when the Benefit Guarantee expires. How often has the showdown been postponed? To what end? The con will go on until the jackpot is gone. You don't have to read Ann Rand to understand our economic system rewards predators, hustlers, and thieves, not those who stand in line..... waiting patiently for the wheels of justice to run over them.

Alan Dawes, former Chief Financial Officer at Delphi, settled with the SEC and agreed to pay \$687,000 in fines and restitution. So what? In March 2005 after news of malfeasance surfaced in the press, Dawes was one of six Delphi executives who split \$3.9 million in cash. Dawes was also given 63,225 shares of stock which he like Battenberg sold before the bankruptcy. Dawes didn't lose a dime and he won't do the time.

Do GM-UAW members who aren't caught in the Delphi web feel safe? Do they imagine GM will never spin off or sell Metal Fab? SPO? Powertrain? All GM wants to be is a nameplate and the UAW is positioning themselves to be the Human Resource Center that manages workers for the nameplate.

GM likes to say "Safety is Job One." So keep it safe and work like a human not a machine. Protect yourselves by sticking together and controlling the pace of the work. Give them what they deserve. Give it to them as slowly, conscientiously, and as precisely as a screw machine. And if GM doesn't agree to extend the Benefit Guarantee for all former Delphi employees in the next contract, countersink the screws.

(sos, gregg shotwell)

www.soldiersofsolidarity.com
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www.futureoftheunion.com

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