

Live Bait & Ammo # 57

The UAW is in the midst of its worst catastrophe since Caterpillar and the November issue of Solidarity Magazine features stories about Hurricane Katrina. Not one word about Delphi. Must have had reception at the Black Lake Country Club. No one on the mag seems to have noticed that Miller shot jointness right between the eyes.

On November 2, Gettelfinger saddled up and joined the fight back posse, too late and a bottle short, but laggards are always welcome at the Lost Cause Bar. At the UAW's corporate offices in Detroit [Center for Human Resources] Gettelfinger told Local Union leaders that it was time to "Work to Rule".

I am not sure if he knows what that means because the International hasn't followed up with an educational program or an organizational strategy, but the fish is in the barrel and we Michiganian red necks are always well armed and ready to shoot.

Shoemaker concurred with Gettelfinger that the UAW is on a collision course with Delphi. It appears a strike is inevitable, not because the International doesn't want concessions, but because Miller doesn't respect them enough to sleep with them.

For rank and file members the choice is clear: strike on the outside or strike on the inside. Frankly, I prefer the inside. Michigan is getting colder than a witch's tear.

Most of us saw the train crash coming a mile off, but then we have our ears to the rail every day. I hope the Shoe-Finger duet doesn't have the pasta syndrome (goes soft in hot water) because the temperature is only going up.

High ranking office rats are famous for going limp at high temps, but hot water tends to make the rank and file mean. Brother Ladwig, for example, took offense to a statement by Dean Braid in the last Live Bait & Ammo. Dean said, "Is it time to put the golf club down and grab hold of the picket sign yet?" Ladwig argued that he can carry both.

Scabs beware. Ladwig is wielding a nine iron.

In a very short time we will either be on strike or working without a contract at drastically reduced wages. When there is no contract there are no rules and members must rely solely on their solidarity, creativity, and collective action for protection. We can't beat the company at the legal game. They own the courts and the politicians. As Brother Wittek said, "The only thing the company fears is workers sticking together because they know we control production."

Working to rule is simple. The machine stops. The boss says, "What's wrong?" I say, "I don't know." He asks the job setter who replies, "I don't know." He asks another coworker who replies, "I don't know." Then we all look at the boss and he starts sweating because he really doesn't know.

Bosses like to boss so do them all a favor and give them lots of bossing to do. The boss will like you for it and everyone will be happy keeping labor costs down by outsourcing all decisions to the boss.

In a concerted effort to uphold lean inventories we should pay meticulous attention to details in the Process Control Instructions and concentrate on safe practices like Lock Out.

Working to rule is not complicated. Just follow orders, nothing more, nothing less. If you do what the boss says, you can't get in trouble, but rest assured, it will be something stupid. Don't question it, just do it. For example, if the boss says, "We need parts really bad." Give him what he asked for -- "really bad" parts.

I'm joking. Our customer is more important than the numbers. We don't want one of our brothers or sisters who buys a GM vehicle.....Oh, that's right, no one in our families will ever buy a GM vehicle again....Well, we don't want to hurt any poor schmuck who is foolish enough to buy a GM product. So please, maintain quality at all cost.

Furthermore, remind fellow union members at GM to inspect all Delphi components carefully and if they find any defects, send them back. Never forget, we want to "exceed our customers expectations."

And why not refuse voluntary overtime knowing full well that Delphi will have to make up for it? Delphi is geared to run over time all the time. Turn it down now, or strike for it later. The over time you work today will extend the picket line you walk tomorrow.

Now don't get me wrong. We all want to "Take the Money and Run" as Steve Miller sang while his cloven-footed cronies waddled up to the trough before claiming bankruptcy. But we must look at the proposition like reasonable businessmen. If we can't raise the price of our product, which is our labor, the only way we can make a profit is by reducing our cost. What is our cost? Our cost is the effort we put into our labor. So work smart. The less effort one expends the higher the profit margin. We should all follow Mr. Miller's ethic and reduce the cost of the product we sell in order to be more profitable. What capitalist can argue with that? We are on the same page of the same hymn book when we reduce costs in order to make bigger profits for ourselves.

Bolster the movement, member to member, and remind each other, over and over, you can't rush quality any more than you can make a fish bite a bare hook. And please, be kind to union officials, they need us more than we need them. Without the collective strength of members on the shop floor, officials have no power. If the rank and file walk out the door, it's a strike. But if the Bargaining Chair walks out the door alone, he's fired.

Having said that, I want to reiterate, I am not a union official, I am a wordsmith. I don't call the shots, I just fire them straight to the heart of the matter -- UAW International leaders are AWOL. They claim to have a plan but they don't want to tell anybody what it is. That's the same thing Yokich told Accuride workers from Local 2036 before the International threw in the towel and decertified the Local. Secrecy is no excuse for unpreparedness and inaction.

At Local 2151 we still have appointees lounging in the front office with management and sipping tea as if everything was cozy. Our local union vice president actually doubles in an appointed position called "Win the Business". We have another appointee taking "Suggestions", and one whose sole purpose is to promote "Teamwork".

The honeymoon is over, folks. We have an openly adversarial relationship with management and appointees are literally collaborating with the enemy. What's more, they accuse rank and file members of "dividing the union". They are so indoctrinated the irony escapes them.

When the bear comes for your lunch you don't have to unwrap it for him, heat it up, put it in a clean bowl, and spoon feed him with a smile. Pretending the rape is a date doesn't alter the cruelty of the assault. If you feed the bear he will be back for more tomorrow and every day thereafter. Don't feed the bear. Don't fraternize with the enemy. And don't expect office rats to fight for workers.

The UAW International, organized like a totem pole -- one empty wooden head on top of another -- recently banded together with five other totem poles [Mobilizing@Delphi] for a bureaucratic slowdown. They chewed each bite of their pork chop 25 times and the walls of CHR trembled like a bowl of Jell-o. (Bureaucrats often confuse hyperventilating with mobilizing.)

Did anyone imagine they would actually hurl their bodies onto the greasy gears of commerce? Heck no. They went out to eat. They binged and merged in an orgiastic confabulation to make themselves feel bigger. Too bad fatter doesn't equal stronger. Nevertheless we should take heart in the development. As Dean Braid said, "That's great. Now we'll get double lip service."

The rank and file have a plan and we don't mind telling everyone it is based on inflicting economic hardship on GM-Delphi until management understands that a fair contract is cheaper than industrial combat. We have no intention of sheepishly walking off the cliff of economic self destruction. We have no intention of being replaced. We have no intention of handing our union to Miller on a silver plate. Delphi's failure is the result of mismanagement and fraud. We refuse to bear the punishment for their crimes and incompetence.

Rank and file members are organizing horizontally at the make or break point of production where cost and profit punch it out. Miller can blow smoke up the stack until the sky turns black and analysts pass out from lack of oxygen. But when workers run production backwards cost exceeds profit and the consequences fit the criminals like handcuffs.

The next Rank & File Meetings are scheduled for December 4, 2:00-5:00pm in Bay City/Saginaw, Michigan, and December 11, 2:00-5:00pm in Flint, Michigan.