

Live Bait & Ammo #40

An arbitrator decided that Delphi Harrison Thermal Systems violated a job security agreement when it cut 550 jobs at two plants in Moraine and Kettering, Ohio.

In 1996 the International Union of Electronic & Communications Workers agreed to a two tier wage in exchange for a promise not to reduce employment below 1500. At the time 4500 union members worked at the two plants. The arbitrator said the agreement saved Delphi \$251 million. Delphi claims the job security promise was merely a nonbinding, "Memo of Understanding".

Two tier wage schemes don't save unions, they degrade unions.

UAW contracts are filled with similar promises and memos. For example, the next four year contract with Delphi will "mirror the GM agreement". Secure Employment Level, the proverbial contract highlight, is a memo worth less than a snitch's handshake. One of my favorite memos is: "UAW employees will not be laid off as a result of any productivity or jointly initiated improvements." Instead, management will give outmoded employees a "meaningful assignment."

We are surrounded by lies so pervasive the simple truth sounds revolutionary.

When President Bush isn't lying he's covering his tracks with horse shit. He tells us war is security; the sacrifice of civil liberties is safety; cutting funds for health care and education while giving tax breaks to the rich stimulates the economy; deficits are harmless; and donating billions of dollars to fair weather allies while reducing funds for police, fire fighters, and health care workers will protect us from terrorism.

Billy Robinson said, "I've got Homeland Security. It's called the Right to Bear Arms." That is, until Patriot Act II is pounded into law. It's a lot like expecting the UAW to protect our jobs with fig leaf "Memos of Understanding" and gleeful proclamations of partnership. Hang on to your guns, folks.

Do we need a union to negotiate for lower wages? Will inviting the Corps to employ new hires below union scale inspire renewed faith in unionism? Will

second class membership invigorate organizing? Is a Trojan Horse a toy, or a weapon of mass destruction?

We want to pass on the legacy of good union jobs to our children. We are tempted to believe that second class membership is better than no membership. But at some point we must acknowledge that a company that serves its owners at the expense of its workers doesn't deserve to exist. And a union that encourages competition and undermines superior contracts with concessions and false partnerships is a union of scabs.

Times are hard. We need to sacrifice. Let's do our part. Instead of sentencing our children to a second tier career, let's all agree to work for one dollar a year and20,000 shares of stock mailed to an offshore PO Box. Let's outsource the government's nuclear program to North Korea and send Bob King over there to make us partners in the business.

In Solidarity,

UAW Local 2151

Correction: In LB&A #33 I said that newly appointed Assistant 1-D Regional Director Mike Bieber had never been a committeeman. I was wrong. He served two terms as a committeeman and helped negotiate the first two contracts at Local 2151 which was chartered in 1981.