

Live Bait & Ammo #24

Surprise!

Yokich talked to the press. His picture appeared with the UAW logo hung like a halo round his head, but his voice whined and wheedled like a patsy caught in the wringer. "I think there wouldn't be a Chrysler today if there wasn't a Daimler with a fatter purse than we had here in Michigan with the Chrysler Corp."

Daimler ruins one of the most successful car companies in the world and Yokich finds a silver lining? For who?

Yokich said that despite severe job cuts, his relationship with top German executives was good. Yokich crooned into the mic like an imitation lounge singer on Karaoke night. You could almost hear the Daimler corpos wah wah wailing in the background as Yoyo man sang the company song. He praised DC's leadership for keeping the union "informed" on developments at the automaker. He said his seat on the board of directors at DC has proven "pivotal" in "protecting" our interests.

All the praises and prostrations in his song of songs may win him a permanent seat on that illustrious board of infamy, or at least a consultant position as an expert at falling in line and putting a shine on the dismemberment of the UAW.

Battenberg announced layoffs at Delphi as NASCAR engines revved in the background and Yoyo man ventriloquized, "This co-sponsorship with Delphi presents us with an excellent opportunity to showcase UAW-Delphi members' dedication to world class quality."

Then it was Shoeshiner's turn to read the tele-prompter, "We've enjoyed a constructive relationship with Delphi for many years. Our partnership with Delphi and Hendrick Motorsports will create a great team, dedicated to winning in NASCAR Winston Cup and bringing increased attention to the outstanding products that the men and women of UAW-Delphi build."

Makes you proud to be union when your leaders hug the boss' leg like that, though I'm sure that before the Shoe gets a seat on the board he'll get a boot on the seat, an open door, and a Rude Street wake-up.

But "The Finger" one upped them all. Ron organized a convoy of UAW members in Ford Explorers to support Ford CEO, Jacques Nasser at congressional hearings in Washington D.C. The Finger did nothing to support locked out members of Local 2036 in Kentucky. In fact, he took away their strike benefits.

As the ranks of the UAW trickle down a towering 180 million dollar monument to partnership [UAW-GM Center for Human Resources] ascends above the grimy scrim over Jefferson Ave., a brick and mortar symbol of the Golden Handshake, our reward for suffering quietly the bloodletting of our ranks. UAW membership sank again in 2000, it's lowest level ever.

But office rats at Sold Our Dignity House insist that under the shrewd stewardship of Pharaoh Stephen the UAW has emerged as one of the richest pyramids, I mean, unions on earth. The standard of measure in the UAW is no longer the size of the membership, it's the size of the bank roll. The work of the UAW is no longer organizing, it's "growing the business".

The UAW built a golf course at Black Lake and loaned Steve Yokich \$1.25 million to start a for profit company to manage the golf course. I presume Steve got a favorable rate of interest considering he's a union brother. A favor to one is a favor to all. Right? The UAW bought a radio station and is now being sued by former partners for driving it into bankruptcy. Former employees of the radio station are also suing the UAW for firing them after they attempted to start a union.

The UAW invested \$14 million in Pro Air which has since gone belly up. The UAW bid \$9.75 million on a resort in Palm Springs. Hey, maybe they'll loan me a million bucks to start a for profit company to manage the resort. Or better yet, my own Live Bait & Ammo Radio Show. What the hell, it's who you know.

Just ask Mexican Industries CEO, Pamela Aguirre. Mexican Industries in Detroit deducted dues from UAW members checks but didn't fork over to the UAW for five consecutive months, then declared bankruptcy. Our UAW Secretary-Treasurer, Ruben Burks, was floating the loan for the social movement's sake, that is, to help

the company. Incompetence or corruption? Either way the UAW is a real swinging social movement.

Industrious Brother Hawk Wright dug up the following notice from the "What's Coming Up" archives of the Detroit UnFree Press, March 2, 1999.

"Sweetheart Ball, 6:30 p.m. Saturday at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Dearborn. A benefit for the March of Dimes, this ball honors Mexican Industries CEO Pam Aguirre, International Union UAW secretary-treasurer Ruben Burks, NBD Banks president Walter Watkins and restaurateur John Ginopolis. Dinner, dancing and doing good. Tickets are \$175. Call (248) 359-1550."

The Rollover Caucus demands that each UAW Local in Michigan make an annual per capita donation to the International so they can hobnob in the Economic Alliance of Michigan. Why should we pick up the tab for porkchoppers to wine, dine, and rub noses with the bosses? Why haven't they requested donations to organize the unorganized? When are they going to walk the shop floor and ask us what we think? No time. They're too busy "...dancing and doing good."

Yokich blames the decline of the UAW on "loss of jobs in traditional core industries -- auto, aerospace, agricultural implements and heavy trucks." He also blames trade policies. But the US Bureau of Labor Statistics reported there were 20,000 more autoworker jobs in the US in 1999 than in 1979 when UAW membership peaked at one and a half million.

The jobs are here, they just aren't union. The UAW failed to organize the parts plants where union density has fallen from 75% to less than 15%. We have failed to organize foreign transplants as well. But hey, we're on a roll in Detroit casinos, the UAW might even buy one. Yokich blames the failure to organize on laws and uncooperative employers. The laws are not fair, he says. The employers aren't nice, he says. It's not easy, he says.

Was it easy when Walter Reuther got his head busted open at the Battle of the Overpass? Was it easy when he took a double barrel shotgun blast in the back? Was it easy when Victor Reuther was shot in the face and blinded in one eye? Was it easy when soldiers attacked strikers at Auto Lite with bayonets then fired into crowds killing two and injuring scores of others?

Was it easy to organize the occupation of a GM plant in Flint? Was it easy for John L. Lewis to tell the governor that if he sent in the National Guard to oust sitdown strikers "the militia will have the pleasure of shooting me too"?

It has never been easy. It has never been fair. Power respects power not punks. We can't expect the bosses to change the laws for us so we can more easily build a powerful labor movement. The laws will change when the Labor Movement takes the law into its own hands, and papers the walls with injunctions. The Labor Movement will grow when union members stop looking to office rats for leadership and seize control on their own terms. What are we waiting for, a sign from on high or a kick in the teeth?

Before we can effectively take on the corporations, we need to clean our own house. We can't expect anyone else to do it for us. We should put the office rats back on the line and a condemned sign around the neck of every two timing, fork tongued, double scooping, favor dealing porkchopper. We don't have to start in the attic at Sold Our Dignity House, we can start at the local level and work our way up.

In Solidarity,

UAW Local 2151