

Live Bait & Ammo #29

When the competition gets tough, the blowhards duck out, downsize, layoff, and deflate. Look at Herr Shrimp, Imperial Wizard of Daimler, less fizz than last night's keg after the Brouhaha. How about Mr. Competition himself, J.T. Battenberg?

Delphi's profits are down 81% in the second best year of car sales in history. How do they cook the books like that? Easy, spend all the cash on foreign acquisitions, just like Herr Shrimp did with all of Chryslers' cash reserves. But nobody beats W.C. (better known as Water Closet in Europe).

Ford spent billions buying yuppie foibles, Jaguar and Volvo, then W.C. dribbles frugal patrimony on the luckless wage slaves he calls family. As if social conscience was a sound bite and the Blue Oval logo stood for anything other than avarice and greed.

W.C.'s announcement that he would forego salary and settle for stock options rang hollow as the hounds of hell. Will the Ford family suffer? Will they go without health care? Lose their homes? Lose their pensions? W.C. has pinned his fortunes on the success of Ford Motor Co. and that success will be measured by how many jobs he can cut, not how much market share he can win.

Our performance bonus is dependent on how much we produce. His bonus is dependent on how many workers he can gut and dress. How's that for incentive? But don't take my word for it. Forget the rhetoric. Study history. Every time the corpos talk competitiveness, workers lose jobs.

The real competition is:

The Bossing Class

vs

The Working Class

And it's war all the time.

Daimler cuts 26,000 jobs in the US but we don't hear a peep from the UAW. Yokich has a seat on the Board of Directors at Daimler and he knows his place.

Ford announces 22,000 job cuts and Yokich says, "The UAW's history of using constructive relationships with employers to get through tough times has been proven many times over." Meaning: more union members will be sacrificed for the sake of constructive relationships. Then UAW leaders flew to Palm Springs to rub noses with the corpos.

What did we give up at the bargaining table so every Local Union president and bargaining chair could spend a week in Palm Springs playing footsie with the boss? Whose interest are they serving?

Last November Local Unions paid lost time and expenses to send selected presidents and bargaining chairs to a caucus meeting disguised as a UAW Leadership Conference. At the conference the leaders of the Rollover Caucus blew their own horns and then announced which caucus members would sit on the next International Executive Board.

Flattered to be invited and longing to be one of the Good Old Boys, local leaders nodded and smiled and applauded enthusiastically even though they had no say in the undemocratic selection process. They call that sycophantic sel-serving on our nickel Solidarity.

Ed Northern, Delphi's Master of Lean, promised to create jobs in America. Over and over in the Year of the Spin Off he bragged, I don't close plants. I build plants. Since 1992 Delphi hasn't built a single plant in the US or created one new job. Northern has opened more floor space than a cluster bomb though. Delphi is outsourcing and selling off product lines at fire sale prices.

At Delphi Flint East the Bargaining Chairman bragged to the Flint Journal about negotiating 17 new jobs at wages \$8 per hour below the going rate. The following week Battenberg announced that he would cut 1400 jobs out of Delphi Flint East. [Inside sources report: Shoemaker pursed his lips and pinched his nose when he heard that. He was so upset he almost sneezed!]

In the past thirty months Delphi Flint East has lost 2,000 jobs. Now they are about to take another hit. It looks like two tier wage is the future for Delphi. Eventually it will be one low tier wage. How do you think that will effect retirees dependent on

the bargaining power of active members? Retreat is not an option when you're up against the wall.

What's the sense of bargaining for lower wages? Do we need a union to do that? Is it any wonder the UAW can't win an organizing drive at a foreign transplant? Hell, workers don't want a company/union. They don't need the UAW's help to lower wages and speed up the line.

There are more autoworkers in the US today than there were in 1979 when the UAW was at its peak. I can't repeat that US Bureau of Labor statistic often enough. Just like the corporations the International loses market share and grows richer. It's the reward for partnership. International reps get the golden handshake as Yokich called it, and workers get jobs at reduced wages, or prevailing wage as Yokich likes to describe it.

I guess he thought the corpos needed a break from the living wage and the campaign for a shorter work week. Union workers were taking a cut of the profits and the perks of capitalism aren't for everybody. Someone has to lose.

The lazy rich always blame workers for being greedy and conniving. It's a tradition. Can't find good help these days, said King Tut, and the whine, intoned with superior nasal disdain, flows on through the centuries. They accuse us of stealing productive minutes and loafing on company time while they produce nothing, not even false hope.

After 9/11 corpos wrapped the flag around their wigs and trumpeted their Sell America campaign. Now the Bushites want to give them retroactive tax breaks, as if CEOs were suffering Post Traumatic Stress from all the delays on the golf course. Corporations that haven't created a job in the US in twenty years will be rewarded millions of dollars forwhat?

Closing factories? Workers lose wages, health insurance, pensions, and get nothing from the Bushites but polite meaningless words: par for the course.

Unionists say the pledge of allegiance at union meetings but the Board of Directors at multinationals honor no state. They buy, sell, and bankrupt states. The government serves the lazy rich. Everyone who has walked a picketline knows who

the police protect. Politicians sing the praises of free market economies while the old saw cranks The Rich get Richer and the Poor get Poorer faster than a Tennessee fiddle at a turkey chase.

It's time for workers to adopt the American business ethic and apply it to our own lives. When the lazy rich can't raise prices, they increase profits by cutting costs, which usually means workers' jobs, pay, and benefits. Likewise in hard times when we can't bargain for better wages to increase our profit margin, we need to apply the same philosophy and cut our costs. What are our costs?

Our cost, the product we sell, is labor. So the less labor we expend in a day, the more we increase our profit. It's simple, irrefutable logic. In a tight market you have to reduce the cost of doing business. Bosses can't argue with it, it's the law they live by. It's apple pie, Chevrolet, and the American Way.

Get lazy as the rich and you will be successful, happy, and free. Let's celebrate the American way, every day. It's easy, just cut your cost, slow down. Workers rule when they work to rule.

Solidarity Now,

UAW Local 2151