

Live Bait & Ammo #15

Now we know why the International ramrodded the ratification down our throats. They didn't want us to know what was in the cards at Ford/Visteon. While Union members at Visteon will remain Ford employees for life able to retire with a Ford pension, Delphi Union members will be forced to relocate their families in order to secure a GM pension, or take their chances with a Delphi contract that permits a two tier wage structure for new products and allows the corporation to downsize the Union by 20%.

Cuts may be even deeper considering the job security language has more loopholes than a hammock. Such as, SEL Benchmark Minimums will not be established for a facility determined to be closing. You can bet your sweet signing bonus we won't be informed of who's on the doodoo list.

Now we know why they didn't give us time to tally the long term costs of shortsighted concessions. Chaw this bit before you spit: an employee protected from layoff by the SEL may be laid off for any of the following reasons: (spit now before you choke) the sale of a part of the Corporation's operations as an ongoing part of the business. Now we know, we have enough non-legally binding Letters of Understanding to replace the old Sears Catalog in the outhouse. Now we know, we didn't get a job security agreement, we got a prepaid funeral arrangement.

The company can sell anything they want to without permission from the Union, said Dale Brickner, a professor at MSU. Sean McAlinden, a labor analyst at U of M concurred that the freeze on plant closings, sales, or spin offs allows for special exclusions. You don't need a PHD to read the writing on the wall. We've heard all this crap before. The most devastating scenario is that market driven volume related declines will not apply to SEL.

If GM decides to cancel a contract with Delphi, it is no longer outsourcing and the resultant layoffs will be volume related. GM now has the power to selectively cut the throat of any Delphi Local Union that doesn't cooperate with the competitive agenda as sponsored and endorsed by their partners in the Ad. Caucus, henceforth known as the Rollover Caucus.

Some analysts predict that selected factories will lose 24% of their workforce in the next four years, but they don't understand how far the Rollover YoYo's can bend over. Hold your nose before you read this next quote from the gentleman's agreement.

Efforts of Local parties to improve operational effectiveness will be encouraged and supported by the national parties including, as may be appropriate, approval of requests to waive, modify, or change the National Agreement. Examples of appropriate include: #2 the establishment of a ... pay-for-knowledge wage structure. (A real Union calls that FAVORITISM) #7 a realignment in skilled classifications to a number of appropriate basic trades to support the needs of the operation or location. (Better known as downsizing.) #11 the establishment of work standards on operations that fully utilize employees. (Read overload, speed-up, multi-tasking.)

This language endorses whipsawing competition between locals, and throws the gates wide open for another downsizing scheme, Modular Assembly. With this contractual language Yokich literally thumbs his nose at our UAW Constitution by effectively undermining the intent and spirit of Article 19 Section 6: The International Executive Board shall protect all Local Unions who have succeeded in establishing higher wages and favorable conditions and have superior agreements, so that no infringements by Local Unions that have inferior agreements in workplaces doing similar work may be committed against the Local Union with advanced agreements.

Yokich won't acknowledge any discussion of the rapid progression of modular assembly and the inevitable collision of Locals competing for the weakest contract in their quest for new products. Claire McClinton, a UAW member from the GM Metal Fab Plant in Flint, pointed out at the UAW Coalition for a Strong Contract meeting, New products don't mean more jobs. New designs, new technology, and reorganization translate into fewer jobs. If assembly workers feel mollified by Yokich's mums the word strategy on Modular, let me warn you that's the same ploy he used with the Delphi spin off four years ago.

The new contract traded good paying Union jobs in the future for wage gains in the present. The corporations gladly paid up front for contractual guarantees to cut Union jobs. Money was the soft issue. The Corps are bloated with cash. On the hard issues the Rollover Caucus folded. If we had COLA on pensions we could rest secure with the knowledge that our pensions would rise with the cost of living.

As it now stands, we are dependent on an ever diminishing, divided, and beleaguered membership to negotiate pension increases perhaps at the expense of their own wages. Our retirement security is at the mercy of an untrustworthy International whose only strategy is cooperation with the corporation. I'd put more faith in a court appointed lawyer than Dick Shoemaker.

To add insult to injury Visteon Union members will receive a bonus when they are spun off. One auto analyst said Visteon workers deserved it because they had so much equity built up at Ford. We didn't? Here's another stick in the eye; new hires at Visteon for the next twelve years will remain Ford employees ensuring solidarity in the ranks while Delphi new hires will fall prey to concessions that permit Locals to negotiate a second tier wage for new hires, a strategy that a delegate from Local 1237 said at the Bargaining Convention is tearing our Local apart. That's the idea.

Wage gains came easy in a booming auto market. Sean McAlinden, an automotive labor economist predicted last July GM would pay 5% (a year) if they could avoid employment guarantees. But the hard issues like job security, outsourcing, and modular assembly were conceded at the expense of future UAW members. At the Bargaining Convention Yokich stated he would seek limits on overtime. There are no limits on overtime. Yokich said he would make outsourcing a strikeable issue but with the spin off of Delphi and Visteon outsourcing will accelerate without brakes like a runaway truck down a mountainside.

The purpose of the spin offs isn't to grow the business, it's to enable Ford and GM to buy from non Union shops and reduce wages for component workers. Ward's AutoWorld reported in the July issue the real gains will come at the local level. While under the GM pattern, Delphi still could cut its hourly wages if it can hammer out local deals for a second-tier pay scale. A 'new product' provision in the contract allows automakers to set a lower hourly wage for people hired in for new work. That concession wasn't revealed in the Highlights and may explain why Delphi has been dragging its feet in local negotiations.

The most devastating concession was Yokich's refusal to negotiate on Modular Assembly. Modular Assembly will escalate outsourcing to an unprecedented level. Auto analyst Jim Harbour estimates 74,000 jobs will be eliminated. The final assembly workforce will be sharply reduced and stamping plants will be hit hard. Automotive Industries announced in the Sept. issue that modular mania is about to hit the powertrain arena in a big way, and that Ford's Powertrain Modularity Strategy... also involves engine supply.

Joe Khanuja, a Ford engineer, warned, Our suppliers need to be aware of the new strategy. So do Union negotiators. If we implement a pay-for-knowledge wage structure for International reps we could pay them what they're really worth. What the hell, if it's good enough for shop rats, it's good enough for International porkchoppers.

Buzz Hargrove, president of CAW, took the stand that work outsourced to suppliers will remain part of the bargaining unit it originated from even though the employer has changed, and the jobs will be covered by the Master Agreement defining wages and benefits. Now that's a line in the sand.

On this side of the border Yokich wrestled from The Big Three a gentleman's agreement not to interfere in organizing drives. Might as well shake hands with a fish. In the new UAW organizing relies on the kindness of owners because the Rollover Caucus is too far removed from the grass roots. International reps are more comfortable in the greener pastures of the corporate fairway.

International reps have job security, fat salaries, padded expense accounts, sweet pensions (with COLA), quiet cozy workplaces uninterrupted by reorganization, speed up, overload, and multi-tasking. They won't develop hypersensitivity pneumonitis or cancer from breathing machining fluid mist. They don't have to wait for a relief person to take a leak. Their break times have more overlaps than their bellies. And you can bet your PAA's they don't need a doctor's excuse when they miss a day of work. It's no wonder that Arv Mueller, a GM executive vice president, said after leaving the final round of negotiations, You can't tell who is UAW and who is Management.... No comment.

At my Local half the members didn't vote on the ratification. Apathy is too pat an explanation. I believe that workers care about working conditions, economic security, the future of the next generation, and an honest and democratic Union representation. But the company dominated Rollover Caucus has dis-enfranchised Union members on the shop floor.

Union members don't feel their voice matters anymore. The boss is more interested in what we think. In a Union with a top down autocratic dictatorial style, and more appointees than elected representatives, the people voted not to participate in a sham.

The ratification rush job was disrespectful to the membership. We distrusted the hustle. We smelled a rat but couldn't see it in the highlights. Information meetings were poorly attended because Union members disdained the condescending charade.

Everyone asked why, since Delphi has a separate agreement, we voted with GM. But we knew the answer. The Rollover Caucus wanted to make sure Delphi didn't vote the contract down. If we had known the whole truth we certainly would have voted down the worst contract since Owen Beiber gave up concessions that translated into fat bonuses for GM executives. This contract is a giant step backward for social movement Unionism.

UAW members aren't the only ones who will lose ground under the new gentleman's agreement. The domino effect will tumble future wage gains and job opportunities across the board. Aida Alvarez, a member of Clinton's cabinet and the head of the Small Business Administration, is working energetically to bring more work to suppliers in Mexico. In Chihuahua News Ms. Alvarez boasted that thanks to her efforts the Big Three committed \$3 billion over a three-year period specifically to enhance opportunities for small business suppliers in Mexico.

With the aid of the Rollover Caucus the corporations have accelerated the pace of the competitive agenda's fast track toward Third World standards for all the workers of the world.

Now we know why Yokich refused to share his strategy with delegates at the Bargaining Convention. Now we know, he had already abandoned us. Now we know, the deal was done. Some Union members make excuses for him. They say it was different because Ford hadn't yet spun off Visteon. But GM publicly announced their intention to spin off Delphi before the '96 agreement and no such provisions were made for us. Besides we were still under the GM agreement at the time of the spin off and we deserve the same guarantees as Union members at Visteon. At the Bargaining Convention Yokich was full of bullish bravado toward GM/Delphi, but at the bargaining table he made less impact than a toad fart in a mud flat. He did nothing substantial to defend our interests.

Now we know why, when delegates at the Bargaining Convention stood up together and applauded in a demonstration of solidarity with Delphi Union members, the International Executive Board and their lackey appointees remained seated.

Now we know, they had already sold us out. After I asked the delegates to rise in Solidarity, and they responded like true Brothers and Sisters, Yokich yelled at me, Apparently you just aren't listening to the leadership of this Union. Apparently, Brother Cut-the-Mic, you didn't listen to the elected delegates of the UAW, and 46,000 Delphi Union members are mad as hell.

But why should he, or Shoemaker, or any of their cohorts in the Rollover Caucus care? Now we know, they are not accountable to us. We didn't elect them. None of them will ever visit our plant and you can bet your Union dues if we marched on Solidarity House, they'd call the police.

In Solidarity,

UAW Local 2151

Check out these web sites:

<http://uawdu.ohiocoast.com>

<http://users.aol.com/newdem>

<http://www.uniondemocracy.com>

<http://uaw551.homepage.com/main.html>

<http://www.uawlocal1686.click2site.com>

<http://members.aol.com/Praxis1871/AutoCriticalAnalysis.html>

President Yokich, we Delphi Union members deserve some answers.

1. Why did you rush the ratification vote before we had time to examine and discuss the contract?
2. Why did GM & Delphi vote together since we have separate agreements?
3. Why is our agreement so inferior to Visteon's?

Status - Retiree Active (circle one)

Name

SS/last 4

Address

Local

President Steven Yokich
International Union, UAW
Solidarity House
8000 East Jefferson Ave.
Detroit, MI. 48214

.33 cent stamp