

Live Bait & Ammo #5

I lost. I'll never write another line. I lost the election to a woman who handed out suckers. Dum-dums no less. What does this mean? I don't know. But it sure takes the lead out of a fella's pencil.

Seriously, I couldn't have lost to a better person. I'm sure Janet Edwards will do a fine job and you can all rest assured no member in distress will receive dead flowers in the mail.

I enjoyed the campaign, especially the humor of my coworkers. My skin is now thicker than an aardvark's.

As a point of information I'd like to say once and for all I am not responsible for every post-it-note that hits the floor.

I sign what I write and I am very careful to distribute my diatribes in non work areas during non work times. I recommend that other authors follow suit.

I was particularly impressed with a flyer that described me as a "left wing radical" and a "termite" with two testicles, small and hard as bb's which I am unwilling to give up. It was a diabolically ingenious masterpiece and I would gladly reprint the article in its entirety except that I am loathe to infringe upon the author's copyright.

I am now in the market for a genuine UAW belt buckle to replace the union bug that holds up my little pants. The author, known only by the pen name Ima Concerned, has enlightened me to the importance of the genuine article and the insignificance of the union bug when one has access to the company copier.

The rumor that I applied for a position as per diem is true but I never got an interview. I don't know why. I thought Delphi was an equal opportunity employer. I would accuse management of discrimination against short people but I think I have a half inch on Fast Eddy though the slim edge may only be the result of my hairstyle. Let me warn you about short guys. If we survived the brutal American playground, we did so with wit and finesse.

A man as successful as Mr. DiEnno has plenty of both and is surely a shrewd and skillful leader. He will draw the membership away from the union like a pied piper if we aren't careful.

Bereft of the opportunity for an interview for per diem I proffer my questions herewith:

1. What are the perks?
2. Can I sign passes?

3. Will I get a password into the computer system?
4. Can I still call my committeeman if I get into trouble?
5. Do I have to relinquish any body parts?

* * * * *

Most of the feedback to Live B&A has been positive, but some people question how I can claim loyalty to the Union when I criticize the Union.

In response I paraphrase Mark Twain: loyalty to the people always, loyalty to union leaders when they deserve it. Every one of us who pays dues has a right to speak their mind. If solidarity means silence and blind obedience, we're all headed over the cliff. Especially when you consider the Ad. Caucus' only strategy is cooperation with management.

The Ad. Caucus exerts so much power and influence within the UAW that we have come to believe they are bosses. Union leaders are not bosses. We pay them. The trouble is, a crafty servant controls the master like an addiction. We have been serviced into blissful stupidity and we have relinquished the power to govern ourselves and to demand accountability from our elected leaders.

I don't agree with everything the Ad. Caucus says. I don't agree with everything New Directions says. I don't agree with everything I say after I think about it sometimes.

The point is: we must support free speech, free press, and the free exchange of ideas if we are to have any integrity as a democratic institution. The Corporation does not permit dissent. The Labor Movement was built on dissent and the UAW was founded by a bunch of outspoken troublemakers.

Some people have suggested that I should fear retaliation from the union, the company, or both. I am not that cynical. (Yet) I still believe the UAW is a reputable union. On the other hand I do not trust GM at all. Historically the UAW has defended the rights of Labor. Historically the Corporation has threatened, attacked, and undermined the health, safety, and economic security of working people.

Throughout all the talk of partnership there rings a hollow sound, cold and ominous as the barrel of a gun. Despite all the props and promotional blitzkrieg, management does not speak from a platform of credibility. Experience confirms our disbelief. Too many of us have been laid off, shut down, and sold.

Capital expects a return on investment. So does Labor. We have a right to expect a just return on the investment of our time and labor. We have a right to expect a fair pension. As yet we Delphites have received no solid assurance that our pension expectations will be met.

On November 22, Ed Northern gave us a little homily about The Four Bones. Naturally the homily ended with us on our knee bones praying to keep the dogs of poverty at bay and the gods of prosperity smiling down on our lean little factory in the sticks.

Well I've got the backbone, the wishbone, the funny bone, the kneebone, and one other bone, the bone of contention. The talk was upbeat, congenial, humorous, and full of enthusiasm, but the walk is something else and we have good reason to be wary.

In dept. 952 there is an information board that forecasts 172 machines will be disposed of by the end of 1999. How many jobs will be lost? 300? 400? 500? Management may call it lean, but it looks like gut and dress. And whether it's ramp up or ramp out is anybody's guess.

We all chuckled over the pompous fanfare for the announcement of new business from Holly, but we can't deny the significance of the first new business we have seen in many years. Maybe we can win the North Star business back from Bosch. They really took the food off our table.

I was at the old Diesel plant when GM sold the diesel and after market business to Penske. GM isn't capable of managing low volume production profitably. GM is too bloated with no-value-added middle management waste.

There's money to be made in the after market. I'm glad to see that Mr. DiEnno is willing to go after every square inch of that market.

Fraternally,
Gregg Shotwell
GreggShotwell@aol.com
UAW Local 2151