

Why we need solidarity on the floor:

## Is it Management Stupidity or a Strategy?

Here are some recent examples:

- Management cuts the float on standard prox switches so PM is not possible. Lines go down for more than an hour while supervisors hunt for replacements. Frequently prox switches, vital for quality or for preventing damage to equipment, are jumped out.
- Management reduces PM on conveyors resulting in massive downtime.
- Management brings in some 35 new skilled trades, and tells them to work with only minimum tools by denying them tool boxes for three months.
- There is at least one such story for every area in the plant every week.

While they all seem like stupidity, taken together they are really part of the Toyota technique that management is trying to copy. In principle it works like this. The higher levels put the squeeze on the lower levels by simply cutting budgets while raising targets. Force people to cope—sometimes with greater efficiency but also with overwork, loss of morale, and stress-related illness. Then back off only where you must. I call this MBS—Management-by-Stress.

Why is it important to understand this? Because management will also try this with staffing levels as they plan for the reduction in line speed. Yes, despite the fact that the market appears to be shifting, they are actually planning to spend millions to reduce plant capability to lay off some people. The alternative—maintain the plant physical and human capability,

save costs on line-speed retooling, and adjust to the market with temporary layoffs—would make great sense except it doesn't show up good on the Harbour numbers.

So they will go ahead with their plan, try to cut deep, and then try to fix problems with overtime or by bringing a few people back. They may be convinced to lessen the hostility by an inverse seniority layoff. But be clear that that they are still cutting jobs.

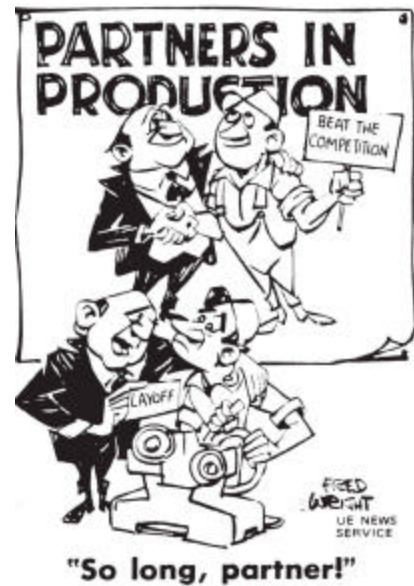
Layoffs in the trades will hit a few areas very hard. It will be a long time before uptime and quality will return to present levels. On the other hand there is so much that can be fixed that could improve quality—the real issue in the market place. In the mean time management is destroying any incentive for people to take care of their areas or make improvements.

## Mike Parker

for  
Executive Board  
Member-at-Large  
(Skilled Trades)

*Executive Board Member-at-Large is not a union rep who bargains with the company. But indirectly it can be very important to the future of our jobs, our trades, and our union. The bottom line in bargaining is how prepared and unified the membership is. The upcoming planned cuts will be only one of many tests we as a union have to face. I propose to use this position to see that you are better informed and have more opportunity to get your own voice heard.*

*PS. If I am elected the name of the position will NOT be changed to "executive board member-at-small"*



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You would think that with all their degrees they would learn that you can't ask people to help you solve problems when they see you use their help to cut their jobs.

Again, it seems like gross stupidity, but it is really apart of this Management-by-Stress approach. Cut into the bone, see who can cope, and back off only where necessary.

The corporate practitioners of this MBS technique do not respond to rational planning or explanations but only to resistance and production numbers. In the case of the tool boxes, management finally moves when people start talking about keeping their tools at home and not imposing on others for space. In the case of prox switches, somebody finally saw how much production time they were losing. And the same will be true when it comes to cutting jobs.

To face this period we need a new level of unity and solidarity within the trades. That takes a lot. But we have to start with good information shared quickly.

—MP