

# Meatballs

# 16

July 2007

*Meatballs* is put out in the belief that a strong union at SHAP depends on an informed and involved membership. *Meatballs* welcomes different points of view. Contact Mike Parker, electrician second shift, body shop, or you can email [meatballs@rts-tech.com](mailto:meatballs@rts-tech.com). Publication labor is volunteer and views are those of the writers. For back issues go to [www.rts-tech.com/meatballs](http://www.rts-tech.com/meatballs)

## Lessons from Delphi Contract

- **Two-Tier = Low-Tier.** It took Delphi only a couple of years to reduce almost everybody to the low tier. And that is just for the tiny number of workers in the few plants that remain at Delphi. Not only does a two-tier contract end with few jobs at the lower wage and fewer benefits, but union solidarity is destroyed in the process. The one Delphi plant which has not yet been flooded with lower-tier workers, Lockport, voted overwhelmingly against the contract.
- **Outsourcing is their weapon.** Delphi has outsourced most of its work to even lower-wage suppliers here and abroad. Now that labor costs in the parts sector are greatly reduced and heading down, you can bet that Chrysler will be looking even harder at anything it can outsource.
- **Beware Signing Bonuses and “Buy-Downs.”** You can be sure you are giving up a lot more than the up-front cash.
- **Demand time to study the contract.** Even the newspapers commented that it was unseemly to take one-and-a-half years to negotiate the contract and then give workers the “highlights” and one to three days to read and discuss it.
- **For skilled trades the battle is in the local contracts.** Those who have jobs in the remaining plants can look forward to the new Competitive Operating Agreements. The Delphi “Framework” for these includes this actual language in the contract:
  - ◆ “Elimination of uncompetitive activities...Outsource/subcontract as required”
  - ◆ “No restrictions on combination of jobs.” “Reduce [trades] to Electrical, Mechanical”

- ◆ Trades “operate production equipment as required”
- ◆ Utilizing production workers to do maintenance
- ◆ “Reduce employee movement”
- ◆ “Resolve uncompetitive skilled trades Full Utilization restrictions”

## What do we need?

As a union we will only keep decent wages and benefits if we organize the rest of the auto industry. Until recently UAW organized plants set the standard that the nonunion transplants had to nearly match. Toyota and Hyundai have announced that they are looking to set their wages according to the much lower levels in their communities. The race to the bottom will heat up.

To organize the rest of the auto industry we need three things:

### 1. Members committed to organizing.

**2. Contracts we can be proud of.** Making concessions to our Big 3 partners in the hopes of making them competitive only weakens the organizing efforts at the nonunion plants. Instead of rolling over, we need to do everything we can to win good contracts this fall.

**3. A union we can be proud of.** A union that members feel they own attracts new members and organizers. Among other things it means a union where members see the contract before they vote on it, where members elect their officers, and where negotiations and union procedures are transparent and not cloaked in secrecy.

-MP

## Some Thoughts on Safety

George Sharon’s accident in the Framer should be a wake-up call.

Happily George seems to be recovering nicely. He can move around on a walker but it will be weeks before he can try to put weight on his second leg. His spirits are good, and he is well cared for thanks to his family and to provisions in our union contract. “It could have been a lot worse,” George says. He wants everybody at SHAP to know how appreciative and thankful he is for all the prayers, well-wishes, and contributions he has received.

His accident should make all of us pause to think about safety.

Our jobs will always be dangerous. Sometimes we make mistakes. Even if we don’t, others may, and machines can fail in

unexpected ways. **We have to take responsibility for our own safety over and above whatever general procedures are in place.**

Part of being safety conscious means thinking of ways that our jobs can be made safer. Here are some thoughts, gathered from several people talking about George’s accident:

Most everybody jaywalks. Take a tedious process and add the pressure of making production, people will develop shortcuts. Occasional shortcuts under special circumstances lead to widespread use. The key is to recognize these situations and create safe shortcuts. When the path to the other side of the line seems unreasonable for regular use, let’s find a safer way to cross a line and stop pretending that everybody always walks the two flights and 1/8 mile.

Cells are supposed to have a three-second warning buzzer over

when going into automatic. But in many cells this buzzer can not be heard. Are three seconds long enough?

In most cases the warning is not distinct. the same buzzer is used for operator over-cycles, faults etc. Instead of a warning it is just adds to background noise.

For some purposes it is desirable to be able to start multi-cell operations from a single location. But the system should be set up so that if a safety interlock, (gate-plug, C-stop, or E-stop) is tripped in a particular cell, that cell should not be put into automatic without a reset at the PanelView/Pendent that can see the cell. (Even when properly following lockout procedures, there are often occasions when work is not completed, you need to leave by one gate, and walk around to a different one. Removing the lock and C-stop at one gate should not allow the cell to go into operation because of remote operations.)

Ignorant safety rules discredit important safety rules. The safety harness is a good example. Requiring one at 6 feet above the ground just increases the difficulty of work--therefore making it more dangerous--while providing absolutely no protection in a fall. Measure it yourself. At greater heights the harness might be useful but the emphasis is all wrong. I know of no instance where a person has fallen from a lift. But we all know of cases where people have been injured or killed by being caught or crushed by a lift operation. We know of near misses when items have fallen from a lift. So the emphasis should be on the requirement of a ground person with the key in the ground control at all times.

Let's deal with the simple dangerous things. Slippery floors in cells are dangerous. We do not have enough GSOs to keep them clean on a regular basis. Working alone is dangerous. It encourages you to take more chances. There is no one to help if an accident does happen.

Let's take care of safety problems which we have experienced. We have lots of rules, training and equipment to deal with arc flash which we have not had in this plant. But we have had unfortunate experience with shock from certain servo motors. The fix is simple but for some reason corporate does not want it and has quietly swept the issue under the rug.

—MP

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## R E S P E C T

A management that disrespects its workers usually gets what it expects—workers who do the minimum and wait for management to tell them what to do. (And there are managers who want it that way.) A phony gold coin and management talk about the “team” cannot disguise the disrespect for our lives, our needs, and our plans. Management's real attitude comes through in dealing with scheduling, overtime, job assignments, and special problems. With management's current drive for flexibility it will only get worse.

Here is an example that affects a small number of production and trades workers who put in for the recent buy-out or retirement incentive. I am one.

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SHAP production workers got a raw deal when Corporate and the International decided not to allocate production VTEP based on regional seniority (and filling replacements from the job bank) but chose the easy route for management and offered the buyout to workers in those plants which currently have a surplus. The special exceptions and decision reversals made the outcome especially bitter for those SHAP workers who signed up.

The programs *did* apply for the trades at SHAP. The sign-up documents said the tentative target date was April 30.

Retirement is a big deal for most us. It involves moving on with life and many unknowns. The more items that are nailed down the less stress and the more we can focus on the other issues.

### ***Fantasy #1 The respectful letter:***

#### **What good management would have written in April**

*Congratulations. Corporate has accepted your application for the Incentive Retirement Program.*

*We are sure you would like to start making your plans to get on with the new phase of your life. In the next few days supervision will meet with you to discuss a mutually beneficial retirement date that will meet your needs as well as the plant's needs. If possible we want to arrange for you to pass on your valuable knowledge and experience to others.*

### ***Fantasy #2 The honest letter:***

#### **What SHAP management would write if they said how they really feel:**

*Corporate has put you on the list. Frankly management is divided. Some of us in HR want to be rid of you immediately because that will improve our Harbour numbers. However others are concerned that it might affect our production numbers and want to keep you until we get around to sending replacements to school and giving them the proper attitude. HR is committed to the lean production system that depends on having standardized work instructions and a supervision directing the work force. We certainly don't need you to pass on non-approved methods and information. But, since we don't want to hire enough people to cover normal illness and vacation absences we may keep you around.*

*In any event the only thing that matters is our convenience and schedule. Your needs or plans are irrelevant.*

*Consider yourself lucky. If you were unrepresented salary we would wait until the last day to tell you and then have security walk you to the gate so you can't take a company paper clip with you. Unfortunately you are union represented so we can't get away with that. But I can assure we will give you as little notice about our decision as possible.*

### ***Reality:***

#### **What they actually wrote:**

Nothing for almost three months.

Then finally a brief notice of acceptance: “*anticipated retirement date is September 30, or sooner.*” (emphasis added.)

—Mike Parker