

# **S.O.S. BULLETIN**

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Issue No. 4

March 10, 2010

## **Workers Block Ford's Attempt at Alternative Work Schedules**

In accordance with guidelines in the concession contracts, management at the Ford Rouge Plant in Dearborn, Michigan, proposed an "alternative work schedule". But rank & file workers beat it back.

Workers in one building were on four 10-hour shifts, days and afternoons. Management wanted to make afternoons into a split shift "C-crew." The C-crew would still work four 10-hour days. But two of the split shifts would be on days Friday and Saturday (when regular day shift does not work). The C-crew would also work afternoons Sunday and Monday – all without overtime pay.

For afternoon shift production workers, this would mean losing Saturday and Sunday with their families. Workers protested: "We don't want a split shift. We want to keep our steady afternoon shift." They gathered between shifts. They refused to volunteer for the new crew. So management threatened to force low-seniority afternoon workers onto the split shift. Workers rallied against this too. Some threatened to abandon their classifications and bump to days. This action would force management to train replacements and cause turmoil. Union officers gave some support, but it was the rank and file who hit the target with live rounds of ammunition – direct action that disrupted management's plan.

Management gave in. They dropped the split shift plan and moved to five 8-hour shifts, days and afternoons. Most afternoon workers prefer that to a split shift as it is family friendly. Workers declared victory for winning weekends off and stonewalling management's threats. One line leader said, "The workers started fighting back. That drew the union into the battle."

## **FIGHTING SPEED UP AND DANGEROUS JOBS**

In the Tire and Wheel department, management eliminated the stemmer job. They added that work to the job lifting the wheel onto the line. But the worker resisted the added work. Management threatened to give him the balance of the shift off. Some workers used a hoist to lift the wheel. Management pressured them to work faster by manually lifting the wheels. Some temporarily fell for this. They gained a few seconds rest between jobs. But management then tried to use that "extra" time to add more work. So activists convinced their co-workers to use the hoist on every job. They demanded a time study. They pressured the time-study engineer into trying the job. She admitted that even with the hoist the job was not ergonomically safe. The struggle over this job continues but the mood in Ford plants has changed since last October's national No vote.

Ford workers didn't just say NO in October. They said YES to rank & file power. The No Concession Vote was a springboard for fights to improve life on the shop floor. As more workers are injured because of speedups and over loads, as work is reorganized in a way that violates job preference, classifications, lines of demarcation, and seniority, uprisings will be incited among the rank and file. Soldiers of Solidarity encourages workers to lead the union through direct action at the point of production. We can fight and we can win.

### **Practice Workplace Control**

Nothing happens on its own. There are ways to get work place justice but you must make them do it.

Remember Corporations have a responsibility to the share holders not the workers. Workers have to make change happen by strikes, by Work to Rule, by organizing a gang and practicing "protected concerted activities." Some of these practices make workers uncomfortable at first. Thanks to years of concessions we are rusty at fighting back. But the more you practice the better you get.

It is the worker who creates the wealth on the job and controls production. If you want workplace justice and some dignity then MAKE THEM DO IT!

### **A Fine Example**

"I operated a Bodine, a highly complex, automated machine with 52 fixtures and 30 different synchronized stations functioning simultaneously. On a good day it's like watching an industrial ballet.

During a slow down my boss was literally hanging on my shoulder. No problem.

When I turned to press the Reset Button on the Control Panel, I stepped on the boss' foot, tripped, and accidentally hit the Emergency Stop Button. All electrical and pneumatic power to the Bodine was immediately cut off. Every station had to be re-mastered. It took two operators, one job setter, and an electrician two hours to put Humpty back together again.

I called out my committee person and blamed the boss. I was furious."

### **Another Fine Example**

"Last night at work when I got to my line and started the night's work, I did my checks and paper work as required, as usual. Now mind you, I am extremely adept at jury rigging and operating machinery, having done so most of my life, and do all sorts of little things to make the machines more productive, as our tradesmen who fix the things that go wrong or break are so overworked it's very hard to keep them in one spot long enough to actually get something fixed properly.

Well last night I decided not to do those things anymore, knowing full well that the poor machines could hardly run production without the stuff I alone do to them, and whatever was wrong with them I wrote them up. (We have a computer we enter problems into and then the trades get to us as they can.)

Now most of the experienced tradesmen we had have either quit or have taken buyouts a while back as they are the highest paid employees in the company, and most of the ones we have left do not know the machinery all that well. So it generally takes them a little longer to get machines up and running without assistance from the operator.

My line spent the night mostly idle while several tradesmen were frantically trying to make things work like they should.

This is how I began "pushing back". The stuff I do to make things work are not a part of my job description.

Now just imagine if I can get even one or two more union members to join in and push back. I believe we could collectively bring the company to their knees in a matter of days!"

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More on-line resources: [warriorsoflabor.com](http://warriorsoflabor.com), [uawtalk.com](http://uawtalk.com), [blueovalforums.com/forums/fordemployeeforum](http://blueovalforums.com/forums/fordemployeeforum).

This bulletin is put out in the interests of informing workers and renewing the fighting power of organized labor.

Please send your comments and your on-the-job, on-scene reports to:  
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Solidarity!  
S.O.S.