Delphi workers take to the streets in Reynosa to protest union leader and management

Frustrated by the corruption of their CTM union leader and by Delphi’s connivance with him, dozens of Delphi workers have taken the streets of Reynosa at least three times in the last two months.

Headline in local newspaper reads: “Wages will be reduced in Delphi maquiladora”

Workers wore red and black clothing in the shop

In addition, last April a significant number of workers decided to show up to work one day wearing red and black clothing. Even some of the supervisors dressed that way. The management ordered those salaried employees to go home to change clothes and come back to work. Another protest disrupted production for a short time in one plant last March. On May 1st the workers marched independently to protest and celebrate Labor Day.

No solution for a string of problems

The workers have been questioning management’s changes of working conditions for months, as well as protesting the concessions made by their union leader that have caused reductions in workers’ benefits and wages. The following are some of the many problems the workers have been raising. These issues have been communicated to the local management, the local authorities, and to Delphi’s shareholders and executives in the United States.

Work I.D. numbers

180 third-shift workers were told since January 2004 that their work I.D. numbers were going to be changed for new ones. When asked, managers gave the workers three different versions: that there was duplicity in the previous numbers; that the 180 people were chosen in a draw; and that the computer “couldn’t capture more than 5 digits.”

The workers did not believe those arguments because they found out that many of the 180 have a seniority of 10 years or more. The workers fear the company is changing their employment status, with the new number implying a new-hire status and the consequent losing of their seniority rights.

At first, a number of workers refused to accept the new I.D. badges, but eventually felt forced to accept them after getting written notification to do so. The company failed to deposit the wages for a Saturday and all extra hours worked by one of women who still refuse the new identification. A correction was promised to be made by the end of the first week of April 2004. The workers want assurances that changes in their I.D. numbers will not affect their seniority rights.

Change in giving out of bonus impacted real wages and installments to INFONAVIT

A weekly bonus consisting in a series of paper certificates valid to exchange for staples was provided as part of the benefit package. Delphi changed the giving out of that bonus and now it is included as a taxable cash item. With the increase of their taxable income, the workers suffered a net reduction of that benefit, and in addition to that they ended up with higher deductions for their INFONAVIT installments. The workers are asking to get the certificates or coupons back. Besides, there are reports that around 20 managers/employees are in fact receiving the coupons.

Workers’ vacation time is allotted to fit temporary lay offs
Management has purposely coincided workers' vacation time with the two periods of temporary suspension of production in July and December. The workers say the new measure allows Delphi to avoid paying them the vacation time (60% of wages). For having accepted that compelled measure, each worker will receive two cash bonuses, one for $100 pesos in March 2004 and another for $200 at the beginning of 2005. Management and the CTM union agreed on these new provisions during the contract negotiations ending Feb. 25, 2004. The union did not consult the workers during the negotiation nor was mandated by the rank-and-file to negotiate that provision. That undemocratic decision was a major source of restlessness among the workers, primarily with the union.

**Extraordinary item (cash bonus for transfers), late wage increase, and ISPT tax affect deductions for INFONAVIT**

The extraordinary item consisting in giving a one-time incentive bonus of $10,000 pesos to each worker who agrees to be transferred to a different shift is creating some problems. The bonus is taxable and therefore taken into account to calculate the INFONAVIT deduction. A number of workers have consequently been deducted for the eight or nine weeks following that payment with outrageous deductions higher that the 25% required by law. The workers urge Delphi to make an adjustment for the workers not to end up taking home as low as $15 pesos (US$1.36) or even $0.60 Mexican cents for a workweek!

That one-time payment was accompanied by an item called “ISPT subsidy” of about $3,000 pesos which was deducted for the same amount in the same paycheck. That amount also contributed to the increase in the deduction to be taken for INFONAVIT.

Something similar happened with the customary annual wage increase. This year Delphi made it effective last March 8, retroactive to Jan. 1st, 2004 through March 7. The workers received in one week a retroactive of $324 pesos which added to the deductible income.

**Obstruction to freedom of association and interference on union affairs**

Delphi has interfered in the union internal affairs intimidating the workers who are protesting their union leadership. As a direct result of the undemocratic contractual negotiations, approximately 100 workers marched to the Reynosa city building on Saturday, March 20. The following Monday, eight workers from plant #6 who signed a letter to the city mayor were called to the plant office to let them know they were fired. Their co-workers protested the threat inside the plant. A manager, Mr. Mario Serrano, facing a brief disruption of production, did promise not to fire the eight workers. However, they were fired the next day.

On Friday, April 2 a group of 60 workers staged another peaceful protest outside the city building to denounce their union leader and to ask the city mayor for support. Delphi, the workers claim, has protected the union leaders by sending company guards to follow the workers in vehicles to their demonstrations and to meeting places far away from the factory premises. The workers considered this corporate behavior as totally unacceptable.

Another worker, a woman called Mónica Reséndiz, was also dismissed in early April. The argument was that she had three absences, but Ms. Reséndiz challenged the charge. She thinks her dismissal was because she was part of the movement protesting the union leader. Other workers have been told they have been blacklisted by Delphi and the CTM union.

**Doctor appointments at Seguro Social**

It has been required that the workers make their appointments in advance. Otherwise they will not be received by the doctors at the Seguro Social’s health clinics. The workers say they can’t predict when they are going to be sick or have an injury.