

Reduced production schedules and strike preparation

By Tom Spears, Local 3000 President

I hope everyone has enjoyed their summer vacations; the corporate scheduled shutdowns are completed and we are back to the grind.

It appears we will be experiencing additional time off at several of our units in the future as production orders have declined. We had a supplier problem at AAI in July and had a down week. That affected a number of our units as they also supply parts to AutoAlliance. The units that are involved are Lenawee Stamping, Logistics and Penstone. These facilities functioned at a reduced schedule. Fortunately, Lenawee and Penstone have other customers so they're not totally dependant on AutoAlliance for production parts. This enabled some members to continue to work. In addition, Johnson Controls-Taylor has also had some reduced schedules due to customer demand.

The future of our Big Three auto companies remains bleak. We continue to have reduction of membership as the companies restructure to remain competitive with the onslaught of non-union, foreign automakers in America. The advantages these companies have over our established auto companies, such as low, if any, retiree numbers and unlimited use of temporary workers, is well documented. These advantages equate to an unfair cost of product that is reflected in the consumer market.

It is during these difficult times that we have to negotiate a contract. At the local level, AAI is concerned with the National Ford contract. We are aware of Ford's financial problems that are clearly a byproduct of mismanagement, but a reality just the same. However, the UAW membership has indeed addressed this problem on all fronts. Our overall quality has improved, and almost all, if not all, of the remaining plants have faced the economic crisis with altered attendance programs and Competitive Operating Agreements. At AAI we addressed the company's needs but kept the impact to the membership to a minimum with our Job Security Agreement. We as a total membership have responded! This is a direct result of the workers involvement, not management efforts. Ford Motor Company gave Alan Mulally his, the workers deserve rewards for their efforts as well.

We have been contacted by the UAW International Ford Department to conduct a strike vote the week of August 27th in accordance to our practices. This action does not necessarily mean we will be striking, but a strong positive vote empowers our national negotiators at the bargaining table.

It has been 30 years since the last strike at Ford, hopefully that string will continue. The business climate has changed. Pattern bargaining was altered with the 3% insurance concession last year at Ford and GM. Chrysler is now owned by a Wall Street entity. All Big Three auto have suffered lost membership. It is only prudent we prepare for the possibility of a strike.

The International and Region 1A have conducted strike assistance training. Sandra Reno, the Community Service Committee chair, Ed Schroeder, and I attended a training session at Local 892. We will be taking some suggested steps to educate the membership for responsibilities and the benefits we will receive if a strike is inevitable.

On the local level, our standing committees are continuing their excellent work. The Community Services and Education committees are conducting a fund raiser at Michigan International Speedway to benefit Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation at the race August 19, 2007. The Women's Committee is constructing a float for the Labor Day Parade; our Union Label Committee is planning a poker run with the help of AAI plant chairman Dave DeBoodt; our Recreation Committee is facilitating a local softball tournament, and the Veterans Committee is scheduling a golf outing in September.

There are certainly a lot of different activities for our members to participate. See you at the Labor Day Parade!

In Solidarity there is strength. Let's keep moving Local 3000 forward.

8/2007