

Auto workers threatened with job cuts at Ohio plant

Jim Lawrence
19 September 2000

Officials at the Delphi Harrison Thermal plant in Moraine, Ohio have informed the International Union of Electronic Workers (IUE) that up to 1,200 jobs may be cut at the plant because General Motors is unhappy with chronic quality problems with the air conditioning compressors manufactured there. IUE Local 801 represents the plant's 3,100 production workers. Another 325 salaried workers are also employed at the former GM plant, located just south of Dayton.

Delphi spokesman Lindsey Williams declined to discuss the cuts, but said the plant managers had been challenged to make improvements. "There is an overall problem shipping quality products and being competitive," said Williams.

Workers at the plant say they have filed numerous grievances about defective parts. They also say the compressors are failing due to a part that is not manufactured at their plant, but was outsourced to another location. Workers say Delphi is not providing the type of equipment needed to detect the flaw before the compressors are shipped.

Moreover, as recent revelations about Ford and Firestone show, the auto industry is plagued by defective products. Some analysts point to the record levels of overtime in the auto plants—used by the auto companies to avoid hiring almost 90,000 workers over the last five years to meet increased demand—and the lack of downtime for the repair and maintenance of machinery, as a major cause of these problems.

The union, IUE Local 801, has not waged a serious fight against the outsourcing of work from the plant. Delphi management spokeswoman Michelle Oshinski said she could not comment on the specifics of the situation except to say, "sourcing decisions are based on cost and numerous other factors".

The compressors in question are to be used on GM's

next-generation sport utility vehicles, which will be produced in early 2001 at the Moraine Truck & Bus plant. The new SUV's are expected to bring in huge profits for the number one automaker, and management wants to prevent delays or expensive recalls after they are launched.

Several union members interviewed by the WSWS say the compressor problems are being used as a pretext to threaten layoffs and force younger workers to back down on demands for wage parity with older workers. Under the present contract negotiated by the IUE wages for younger workers are only \$10 to \$15 an hour, while higher seniority workers earn \$20 to \$25 for doing the same work. It takes new hires 12 years to reach top pay. At the same time workers say Delphi wants to split the plant into two separate parts in order to maintain the multi-tiered wage rates.

IUE District Council 7 President Mike Bindas defended the role of the union, which has repeatedly enforced management's demands for cost-cutting and speed-up. Instead he blamed engineers for being slow to develop the right compressors needed by the auto companies.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact