

WORK TO RULE

At the November 2, 2005 meeting in Detroit with Local Union officials President Gettelfinger said it was “Time to Work to Rule.”

Yes, the honeymoon is over. Miller shot jointness right between the eyes. We have an openly adversarial relationship with management at Delphi.

Work to rule is an in-plant strategy, a method of influencing negotiations without going on strike. Workers follow the boss’s orders but do nothing on their own initiative. They keep their knowledge and experience to themselves, defer all decisions to the straw boss, and let the pieces fall where they may.

Since bosses like to boss give them lots of bossing to do. The boss will like you for it and everyone will be happy keeping labor costs down by Outsourcing all Decisions to the Boss. Just follow orders, nothing more, nothing less. If you do what the boss says, you won’t get in trouble, but rest assured, it will be something stupid. Don’t question it, just do it. For example, if the boss says, “We need parts really bad.” Give him what he asked for — “really bad” parts.

All kidding aside, the stated objective of Work to Rule is to Maintain Quality at All Cost.

Never forget, we want to “Exceed our Customers Expectations.”

Work to Rule means strict adherence to Process Control Instructions and Safe Work Methods in order to meet the stated goals of High Quality, Lean Inventory, Just In Time Delivery, and “Cooperation” from the boss.

Work to Rule is prudent. In times of uncertainty and stress it is wise to exert caution and encourage diligence. Workers are not only anxious, they feel threatened. It is normal and just for people to feel angry when they are threatened.

The threat is real. Delphi has expressed the intent to permanently and drastically undermine the financial security of our families.

Naturally workers are experiencing righteous anger and responsible leaders should help them contain and direct that energy in a safe and effective manner.

SOS advocates Work to Rule as effective anger management. SOS discourages workers from acts of violence or sabotage. We do not want to harm the quality of the product we manufacture, nor the tools and machines we care for. Destructive behavior is harmful to a worker’s sense of dignity.

Work to Rule is a modified strike. In other words it is a civilized method of withholding one’s labor in order to promote negotiation. In the case of Work to Rule however, the worker doesn’t withhold his or her labor, they withhold their knowledge. All decision making is left to the knowledge workers, i.e., the bosses. The “lawn mowers” just follow orders, or Process Control Instructions and Safe Work Methods, to the letter.

Work to Rule is less threatening to both the company and the union. It encourages workers to concentrate on working safely, methodically, and conscientiously. Of course, that is not the Delphi Manufacturing System as we know it, but it is certainly a more therapeutic reaction to the threats Delphi is directing at its workforce than all out war.

A button that says “Work to Rule” or “No Concessions” is not a curse or a threat, it is a boundary, a line in the sand.

Boundaries are essential to good mental health and constructive relationships.

When the wolf comes for your lunch you don’t have to unwrap it for him, heat it up, put it in a clean bowl, and spoon feed him with a smile. Pretending the rape is a date doesn’t alter the cruelty of the assault. If you feed the wolf (concessions) he will be back for more tomorrow and every day thereafter. Don’t feed the wolf.

WORKERS RULE WHEN THEY WORK TO RULE

