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Labor Woes at Toyota Outlined

(<http://elsmar.com/Forums/showthread.php?t=22201>)

wmarhel	12th June 2007 08:43 AM
Labor Woes at Toyota Outlined	
From the Cincinnati Post :	
Labor Woes at Toyota Outlined June 11th, 2007	
<p>GEORGETOWN - Current and former workers at Toyota's Kentucky plant shared stories Sunday about low wages and poor working conditions - rallying points many in the assembly line are hoping will ultimately lead to unionization.</p> <p>A crowd of about 200 people - many of them workers at the Georgetown plant that produces the Camry - attended the meeting of the Kentucky Workers' Rights Board, a panel of religious and civic leaders pushing for better labor conditions.</p> <p>Like foreign-owned auto companies across the South, Toyota's plants are nonunion. Many contend that should change.</p> <p>The leaders on the board sympathize with the workers. "We are people of community, and part of our community has said to us that things are not exactly the way they need to be in the work situation at Toyota," said the Rev. John Rausch, coordinator of peace and justice at the Catholic Diocese in Lexington.</p> <p>"We are not trying to tear Toyota down. We are trying to make it better and have a better partner in the community."</p> <p>Two current employees and two fired ones described what they said were extraordinary steps taken by the company to prevent union organization.</p> <p>The Workers' Rights Board, which includes Democratic state Reps. Reginald Meeks of Louisville and Jim Glenn of Owensboro, has no</p>	



influence over policy or personnel matters at Toyota. However, after the hearing, it issued several recommendations - including changes in the peer review process and a 90-day probation period for temporary workers, who would become permanent after that time.

Nan Banks, manager of corporate communications for Toyota at Georgetown, said she has not seen the recommendations and would not comment on them without seeing them.

A major focus of the hearing, which lasted more than two hours, was the company's use of temporary workers, who some of the employees said were doing the same amount of work as the full-timers for half the pay.

"They're trying to get a job there," said Cornelia James, who has worked at Toyota for 19 years. "Full-time employment is dangled in front of them like a carrot, and they're told, 'Any missteps and you're out.' "

Noel Riddell, who was fired this year after a decade of service at the plant, said he was disciplined after discussing with co-workers a document he found detailing a plan for wages. He was fired despite being backed by a peer-review process, Riddell said.

"What was my crime? Knowledge," he said. "I will not go quietly."

Others discussed alleged incidents of sexual harassment and workers being discharged after on-the-job injuries.

"Today, U.S. autoworkers are analogous to professional athletes," said William Maloney of the University of Kentucky's Center for Labor Education and Research. "You're trading your body for a paycheck, and it's not right."

The United Auto Workers has launched a new push to organize workers at Toyota's 1,300-acre Georgetown plant. It is the latest effort over more than 20 years to organize the Georgetown plant and its 7,000 workers.

Toyota's only U.S. unionized plant is its New United Motor Manufacturing facility in Fremont, Calif., a venture with General Motors. Out of 20,351 U.S. Toyota employees, only 5,402 are unionized.

"The decision to unionize is entirely up to the employees," said Banks. "We've been here for 20 years.

"I don't think there's a tremendous increase in (unionization) activity," she said. "For 20 years they've chosen not to unionize."

She said the typical Toyota production worker earns close to \$75,000 a year in combined wages and benefits which include health care, pension, 401-K, and on-site day care, pharmacy and exercise facilities.

The last major union push in Georgetown was about two years ago when the UAW distributed pledge cards that indicated at least 40 percent of the employees favored an election that would determine if the plant would become the first wholly owned Toyota plant in the U.S. to unionize.

The pledge card drive, conducted during 2004 and 2005, followed an October 2003 ruling by the federal National Labor Relations Board that required Toyota to post notices throughout that plant that spelled out a long list of rights that employees have if they want to form a union.

But the labor board ruling apparently had a negligible impact on the drive, which never progressed to a point where employees were asked to vote for or against union representation.

Helmut Jilling

12th June 2007 12:20 PM

Re: Labor Woes at Toyota Outlined

The unions have done a fine job of bringing the Big 3 to their knees. I can't see any benefit to why Toyota should be unionized. Unless, the unions want to make everyone equally weak and unproductive.

100 years ago there was a definite need for unions. In the last 40 years, however, they contribute little but suck much of the life out. I remember in the 70's, the American Communist Party was passing out leaflets at our plant, under the auspices of our local union. And, it was protected under union laws. What was wrong with that picture?

If the workers at Toyota don't like the jobs, work rules, or pay, they did not have to take the jobs. I suspect there are few who would want to give them up.

If they take a deal, then try to unionize afterward, that is legalized extortion. Any company that would try to do that would be busted. The laws are very unbalanced and outdated. How many more of our industries will be ruined before we wake up?

Apparently, some of my personal biases are showing in this response.

Jennifer Kirley

12th June 2007 01:13 PM

Re: Labor Woes at Toyota Outlined

Quote:

*In Reply to Parent Post by hjilling (Post 199558)
Apparently, some of my personal biases are showing in this response.*

I suppose, but management of unions is subject to the same human vices as management of most anything else.

I didn't catch just what and how working conditions were bad.

I posted reference to an article about Boeing's union sometime this past year, talking about big gains they made when they redesigned their own work.

So I wonder how much of the problem is union only, and how much of the problem is an end product of many years of adversarial conditions between unions and management.

Helmut Jilling

12th June 2007 01:16 PM

Re: Labor Woes at Toyota Outlined

Quote:

In Reply to Parent Post by Jennifer Kirley (Post 199570)

*...So I wonder how much of the problem is union only, and how much of the **problem is an end product of many years of adversarial conditions between unions and management.***

Yes, I believe that is the bulk of it. However, there is an inherent evil in the union management and history. It manifests in the unwieldy work rules and anti-progress.

However, I have posted many, many swipes at management's lack of leadership. They certainly are equally responsible.

duecesevenOS - 2009

12th June 2007 03:00 PM

Re: Labor Woes at Toyota Outlined

Quote:

She said the typical Toyota production worker earns close to \$75,000 a year in combined wages and benefits which include health care, pension, 401-K, and on-site day care, pharmacy and exercise facilities.

They make this in Kentucky. All a union can do for these workers is take a couple hundred bucks out of their paychecks every 2 weeks....Oh and protect the laziest employees on plant from getting fired. Thus making their jobs harder.

AndyN

12th June 2007 03:08 PM

Re: Labor Woes at Toyota Outlined

So their working conditions are poor and they have low wages? And things are different at Ford? GM? DCX? I've been in the domestic plants and Toyota - I know where I'd rather work! And for a company with a future.....

Methinks this was a story sparked not by the workers, but the people who'd organize the workers and any quotes were merely having someone (and there's always *someone*) mouth off about the conditions they work in.....

roland_lu

12th June 2007 03:20 PM

Re: Labor Woes at Toyota Outlined

I am absolutely not for union. I could see how the big 3 and their big suppliers went into troubles, and unions played a big part in it.

However, have you noticed that the non-unionized companies have employed more and more temps? I knew some people who worked as temp for over 1 year in the same company doing the same jobs could not turn permanent. how and who could stop the management from doing that? :bonk:

AndyN

12th June 2007 03:34 PM

Re: Labor Woes at Toyota Outlined

Quote:

In Reply to Parent Post by roland_lu (Post 199592)

However, have you noticed that the non-unionized companies have employed more and more temps? I knew some people who worked as temp for over 1 year in the same company doing the same jobs could not turn permanent. how and who could stop the management from doing that? :bonk:

Roland - this is not new. Back in the 80's I had a number of temporary/contract staff who had been with the company for years. You can't stop it. In times of financial uncertainty, organizations feel safer that they can 'unload' these people without paying benefits.....

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