



UAW GETS SUPPORT FROM AN UNLIKELY ALLY

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Contact: Susan Dauphinais
860.589.2386 ext 857

Yarde Metals a Non Union Corporation Gives Financial Support to Striking Union Corporation.

"If companies would learn how to treat their employees with some decency and respect and pay a fair day's wage for for a fair day's work," the union representative said, "they'd put us out of business." - Quote from Joe Calvo, a United Auto Workers representative of the 93 striking employees

The following is from the Bristol Herald Press by Jackie Majerus on October 10, 2000 regarding details of the strike and Yarde Metals unique management style, "Corporate Leveling." Corporate Leveling is a model for building a successful business while treating employees with equality, dignity and respect.

October 10, 2000

By JACKIE MAJERUS

The Bristol Press

BRISTOL Declaring "compassion for the little guy," Craig Yarde said Tuesday that his company had donated \$1,000 to help striking workers at Cerro Fabricated Products.

Yarde, who is president and part-owner of Yarde Metals, said he saw familiar faces when he drove by the picket lines at Cerro.

"It had a big impact on me," Yarde said. "It's really a big issue when you see it in your own backyard."

Yarde, whose company is nonunion, said Cerro is "a great customer of Yarde Metals." He said he is not taking sides in the dispute. But he said a recent article in The Bristol Press that addressed the financial hardships facing striking union workers prompted him to make the donation.

"I don't know how you can survive on \$175 a week in strike benefits," said Yarde, who has participated in disaster relief efforts and other compassionate charity efforts.

Joe Calvo, a United Auto Workers representative of the 93 striking Cerro



employees, said the donation was "very much appreciated" and shows a "concern for the working people of Bristol."

If Cerro had the same kind of progressive, worker friendly attitude as Yarde Metals, said Calvo, the company wouldn't be in the position it is in now.

"If companies would learn how to treat their employees with some decency and respect and pay a fair day's wage for a fair day's work," the union representative said, "they'd put us out of business."

Calvo said the money would help, especially with colder weather hitting and the holidays approaching.

Union workers at the Pine Street factory walked off the job August 28 after voting to strike. They say their primary concern is job security, not money.

After several weeks of not talking, company and union officials have again started to meet and more negotiations are scheduled for Thursday and Friday.

In a memo to workers, Yarde explained the corporate donation to the striking Cerro workers.

"I know some of you might think this is a bit unusual for a nonunion company to help a union strike," Yarde wrote. "Our compassion is for the little guy and the \$1000 is a small contribution to show we care."

It doesn't make sense for any company to have internal fighting, according to Yarde.

"We're competing with Third World countries. We have to have productivity," said Yarde. "We can't afford to be fighting with each other."

Yarde said the problem of lack of communication between workers, managers and owners is rampant throughout the United States. Anytime a company is not sharing information, he said, there will be differences.

"We're not antiunion. We're more pro corporate leveling," said Yarde. "People just need to start talking."

In his memo, Yarde called his employees "our best customer" and said that taking care of them "contributes to higher efficiency and greater profit."

Unhappy workers who feel they are treated poorly will end up doing small things that sabotage the company, according to Yarde.

"You can't even measure those," he said, "And the company will never understand it. They'll never figure it out."



Some of it is as simple as how an employee views the company and what they say to outsiders about it, he said.

Rather than cling to the old model of management controlling every aspect of a business, Yarde advocates opening up, sharing both profits and ideas to move the company forward.

"There's something to the bottom driving the top," said Yarde. He said when ordinary workers get motivated, "they fire up the rest of the company."

Calvo said if Cerro would share corporate information, "We'd be a lot better off. We'd be in there with a sense of belonging and a sense of security, which is sorely lacking now."

Yarde said he thinks the whole country could be more powerful, more efficient and happier if more companies adopted his approach.

At Yarde Metals, the company shares as a team, with everyone getting an equal percentage of the profits.

Four years ago, Yarde Metals opened its financial books to employees. The company began the process it calls "leveling," and distributes about 40 percent of its profits to the entire workforce.

In his memo to employees, Yarde described leveling as "a feeling within where everyone treats each other with respect, dignity, equality and compassion."

The profit sharing at Yarde Metals works like this. The company takes the first 2 percent of the after tax gross profits. Of the balance assuming there is any remaining the company uses some to pay down its debt.

"Then we share the balance," said Yarde. "It's divided up as a percent of pay."

Twice a year, everyone gets a bonus that reflects the company's profits. In June, Yarde said, the bonuses ranged from about \$3,000 for the lowest paid workers, who earn a starting wage of about \$11 to \$12 an hour to the highest paid workers who received bonuses of \$15,000.

In contrast, Yarde said, a public company would distribute that money to stockholders while owners of most private ones would keep it themselves.

"It mostly never trickles down," said Yarde.

Opening the financial books, said Yarde, creates an element of trust that builds bridges between owners, managers and workers.



"Then you really have a company that can make things happen," Yarde said.

While other companies are merely "treading water" and trying to figure out how to survive, said Yarde, his 450 workers are "rowing the boat in the same direction," brainstorming how to make the company better.

When the first bonus checks appeared, Yarde said, "That really made believers out of a lot of people."



Contact Information

Susan Dauphinais

Yarde Metals

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