



# 'ANGUS BARKS'

By Jeff Francis  
AEG Executive Board

## *2007*

Around January, many of you plan important family functions, or travel, or vacations for later in the year. Also in January, most of us are digging out from under holiday bills. Each of us has different financial pressures and obligations, but all of us should remember that 2007 is a contract year.

That means you need to plan how to survive financially in the event of a strike in July. Think twice about big purchases in the next 6 months – check what funds you have eligible for REDILOAN – keep the door open for that second job. If you think the Company is not currently making their own contingency plans, you are naïve.

At risk in these negotiations is retiree medical, and new-hire benefit plans. At the same table, we will have a golden opportunity to make significant pension gains. You owe it to yourself to walk into the voting booth in July with the freedom to decide whether the contract offer is good or bad. If instead, you have no plan and walk into that booth with a financial gun to your head, then the Company already has you beat.

## *Dragster*

Last year, Plant I starved the shop floor for material and manpower in the first six months, then scrambled to add heads and resources, went all out in the last quarter, but didn't have enough hours to make up for the first six months. Plant II was not as bad, but had to maximize every hour available in the last quarter.

Riverworks production runs like a finely tuned dragster. We idle at the start line for 6 months, burn rubber for 3 months, then scream down the track. The parachute opens Dec 31<sup>st</sup>, and we're back to idling in January.

It's a white-knuckle, adrenalin ride for management and hourly. Any bump in the track can cause disaster. Corporate bean-counters must love getting maximum output of profits from this Plant, in the minimum turn-around time. Many of our members don't mind pocketing huge overtime paychecks during the last quarter.

But this drag race is not healthy for the Plant. The proof is – we ended 2006 with fewer jobs than we started with, despite all the hours and work available. Necessary farm-in projects were often overwhelmed by urgent production crises.

Riverworks production would run better like a Nascar race. 500 steady laps would even out the year, and a successful drive would still require great skill and technology. Our members could then depend on regular monthly earnings, and management could build up the necessary resources, instead of burning them out.

## *Tuesday Jan. 23rd*

When the Union and Company negotiate changes to our medical and pension benefits at contract time, those changes alter wording in the Plan documents that apply to **all** GE employees. Management employees and non-union employees have no vote on those changes. **But you do.** Because you are a union member. You have a vote, and you have input, and you have elected representatives at that table. You can put yourself into this big picture by coming down to Tuesday's union meeting.

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