

Blacks Say VW Offered 'Crumbs'

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PRESS

member said.

JA 15 '83

An affirmative action plan signed by two ex-Volkswagen, New Stanton, executives, and offers of promotions and back pay to half the members of the Black Caucus were advanced by the company a day after nine blacks filed a racial discrimination suit against the automaker.

The offers, which former Black Caucus spokesman William B. Brock called "crumbs" in a letter he left before his death, were made in a meeting Jan. 5, according to Ronald B. Saunders and another caucus member, who requested anonymity.

Saunders saw the offers of money as an attempt to divide the caucus and the affirmative action plan as a trick to appease the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Personnel Director David Frueauf, Attorney Dennis Wilt and William Lytle of corporate personnel presented an affirmative action "framework" developed in 1980 and signed in 1981 by company President James McClernon and Vice President James Schorr, Saunders said.

"We found the (affirmative action) proposal absurd and insulting," said Saunders, a production supervisor and a party to the suit. "It contained no timetables, no goals, no specifics, no outreach, no internships, or a plan to help veterans or the handicapped."

The company also offered five salaried members of the 10-member caucus promotions, compensation and back pay, Saunders said, adding that at least one of those approached was a party to the suit.

"It was an open admission of discrimination," Saunders said.

"Yes, I can confirm that because I was one of the people approached" the anonymous caucus

Brock's letter, which was found after he shot himself on Jan. 7, said the company had "offered crumbs (promotion, back pay and training improvements). We were after major organizational improvements which would make work a better place for all employees, including blacks."

Neither Brock nor Saunders received promotion or pay offers, sources said.

VW spokesman Chet Bahn said he could not comment on any of the allegations.

Blacks have complained of racial discrimination and harassment at the plant since it opened in 1977.

Meanwhile, at least two black caucus members say they have received hate literature since the lawsuit was filed Jan. 4.