

UAW president denounces “outside groups” for defeat of Fiat Chrysler deal

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In a statement posted on the United Auto Workers International Union Facebook page Monday morning, UAW President Dennis Williams warned about “outside groups” that “like to stir people up.” The comment comes as Williams tries to overcome the opposition of Fiat Chrysler workers who overwhelmingly rejected the sellout deal last week.

Williams’ comments were widely cited by the news media, including by the industry publication *Automotive News*, which headlined its article, “UAW’s Williams calls out outside agitators, says more info coming on FCA talks.”

While he does not name the “outside groups,” Williams is clearly referring to the WSWWS *Autoworker Newsletter*, which has won a following among thousands of workers who posted and reposted its exposures and comments.

After denouncing “outside groups” Williams writes, “You, our members need to make decisions based on what’s best for you and your families. No one else has to pay the price of a strike. No one else will lose a paycheck or a home.”

These comments are coupled with a pledge that the UAW has “heard” what the workers have to say and has now decided that it will “tell the whole story.”

Williams statement is a fraud from beginning to end. It is an expression both of the deep fear within the UAW apparatus that it is beginning to lose its stranglehold over workers, and a limitless contempt for the workers that it claims to represent.

First, in denouncing “outside agitators,” Williams is using the same methods once employed by the auto bosses, right-wing politicians and the gutter press to witch-hunt and prepare violence against the socialists and left-wing militants who built the UAW and other unions in the 1930s and 1940s.

In 1936-37, GM executives denounced the UAW sit-downers in Flint as “outside agitators” in service of a “vast conspiracy to destroy all for which life is worth living.” They said the socialist-minded workers who led the sit-down strike had struck a blow “at the very heart of the right of the possession of private property.”

Another GM stooge, Anderson, Indiana Mayor Harry Baldwin, who put his town under martial law in 1937 and had police escort UAW organizers from Flint and Detroit back to the state line to prevent the unionization of 11,000 GM workers, declared, “Anderson workers did not want outside agitators and organizers to interfere with them.”

Southern segregationists leveled the same charge against Martin Luther King Jr. and other opponents of Jim Crow racism. In 1963, Alabama Governor George Wallace sent a telegram to his state’s congressional delegation complaining that Birmingham had been “set upon by outside agitators who have done everything within their power to create internal strife and turmoil.”

The attempt to blame social unrest on the “outside” is always aimed at delegitimizing opposition and justifying repression.

Williams and the aspiring investment managers in the UAW officialdom don’t think workers are intelligent enough to recognize a sellout when they see one. According to the police minds of the UAW bureaucrats, workers are ignorant dupes who can be easily manipulated, and who otherwise have nothing to be “stirred up” about.

In reality, the *Autoworker Newsletter* has given voice and political direction to a growing movement of autoworkers and the working class as a whole, which has been fueled by falling real wages and the enormous growth of social inequality. Such a movement can find no expression through the UAW, a thoroughly

undemocratic organization that boasts of its “partnership” with the very same corporations that are ruthlessly attacking workers.

Second, Williams’ declaration that “No one else will lose a paycheck or a home” in the event of a strike is aimed at suggesting that somehow it is the “outside groups” that are indifferent to the conditions facing autoworkers.

In fact, if workers face such economic desperation that the loss of a paycheck could mean losing their homes, the responsibility for this lies squarely with the UAW. Over nearly four decades, the UAW has colluded with the auto bosses to drive autoworkers, once the highest paid industrial workforce in the US, if not the world, into the ranks of the working poor. The deal worked out with Fiat Chrysler would only worsen this situation.

When Williams says, “No one else has to pay the price of a strike” what he really means is that the UAW has no intention of paying for a strike and would leave workers on the picket lines to fend for themselves. The UAW has long used the hundreds of millions of dollars from workers’ dues in the strike fund, not for strikes, which it does not call, but as a slush fund for the UAW bureaucracy.

If there is any concern where the money would come from to sustain a national strike, we have some suggestions. First would be trimming the bloated staff of the UAW International and firing the hundreds of international service reps and others who make six-digit salaries to enforce the demands of the corporations. Second, Williams, Norwood Jewell, James Settles, Cindy Estrada and the rest of the negotiating team should forgo their six-digit salaries and live on strike pay. Third would be to selloff the Black Lake Center and golf course, and the myriad of joint labor-management properties, including the UAW-GM Center for Human Resources on the Detroit riverfront, valued at an estimated \$100 million.

Williams’ declaration that the UAW has now “heard” autoworkers and will respond to their demands is a transparent lie. The UAW has absolutely no intention of presenting workers with a better offer. Instead, it is working on developing a better marketing campaign—which may include limited strike action—to push a rotten agreement through.

After the stunning defeat for the UAW, Williams

faced sharp criticism from the corporate media for “losing control of its people” and failing to counter the dissemination of information by autoworkers on Facebook, which was key to rallying opposition to the contract. The ability of the UAW to restrict workers’ access to information, something it would have enforced in the past by sending its goons to silence opponents, has been complicated by social media.

The UAW hoped they could ram through a contract without giving workers any information except for a bogus “highlights” brochure. This effort failed, however. Workers were able to use Facebook and other forms of social media to communicate, spread information and coordinate opposition.

The WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* played a critical role in this process. While the UAW business executives certainly have a hidden agenda, the *Autoworker Newsletter* does not. We are not beholden to the corporations or either one of the big business parties. We urge workers to build new, democratically elected factory committees to demand an end to the secret negotiations and to take the conduct of the struggle out of the hands of the UAW company agents.

At the same time, we urge workers to adopt a socialist and internationalist perspective because the social rights of workers cannot be won without a powerful political movement of the working class to break the dictatorship of the corporate and financial elite and end social inequality. This can only be done if workers take political power and reorganize the economy to meet the needs of the working people who produce society’s wealth.



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