

Video shows UAW officials grabbing cell phone, forcibly ejecting WSWS reporters from press conference

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On Wednesday morning, United Auto Workers officials from Local 600 in Dearborn, Michigan physically ejected two WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* reporters from a press conference and forcibly took a cell phone being used to record the incident. A video recording was automatically uploaded.

The press conference that WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* editor Jerry White and another reporter were prevented from attending was addressed by UAW Vice President Jimmy Settles. It was called in response to growing opposition to the UAW-Ford tentative contract. On Tuesday, workers in Louisville, Kentucky delivered a stunning blow to the contract, voting overwhelmingly against the agreement.

Settles was joined by Bernie Ricke, president of Local 600, which covers the Dearborn Truck plant, Dearborn Stamping and several other smaller facilities. It is one of the last and largest union locals to vote on the contract and could determine whether the agreement is ratified or rejected.

Upon entering the union hall, the *World Socialist Web Site* reporters were stopped by a UAW official who demanded they identify themselves. After learning they were with the WSWS, the official told them they would not be allowed to attend the press conference.

What followed is recorded in the accompanying video. After White protested the anti-democratic action, more than a half-dozen UAW operatives surrounded the reporters. One official grabbed the cell phone and manhandled White and the other reporter out the front door of the union hall. The UAW officials refused a request to return the stolen cell phone.

The forcible removal of the WSWS from the event exposes not only the UAW's opposition to the

Autoworker Newsletter, but its fear and hostility to the workers the UAW claims to represent. The WSWS has attracted a broad readership among auto workers because it has articulated the widespread opposition to the UAW's efforts to push through sellout contracts at Fiat Chrysler, GM and Ford.

The UAW is terrified of the truth. It called the press conference to present a false picture of the pro-company deal, intimidate the rank-and-file and blackmail workers into voting "yes." Settles and Ricke insisted that no better deal was possible. They made it clear that if workers voted against the contract, the UAW would oppose any attempt to obtain a better agreement.

Under pressure from their superiors at Ford to ram through the contract, the international and local union officials were desperate to prevent any questions being posed at the press conference that would expose their conspiracy to impose contracts permanently establishing wage scales and benefits far below those won by previous generations of autoworkers.

The UAW welcomed without question the representatives of publications that openly side with the auto companies, including the *Detroit News*, the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Wall Street Journal*. These newspapers have systematically promoted the lies and threats of the UAW and the companies, telling workers that if they fight for better wages and conditions they will lose their jobs.

The *Free Press* recently praised the UAW's decision to hire a PR firm, BerlinRosen, to sell its agreements with the auto companies. The union, it noted approvingly, "is devoting resources to providing more details and controlling the message this time—before

someone else does.”

Settles and Ricke knew that they would get nothing but softball questions from these publications in a stage-managed event aimed at helping the UAW ram the agreement down the throats of Ford workers.

The physical ejection of WSWS reporters from Local 600 follows a number of incidents in which UAW officials threatened WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* supporters. In September, UAW officials summoned Detroit police to prevent the distribution of the *Autoworker Newsletter* to workers at the Fiat Chrysler Sterling Heights Assembly Plant.

The UAW’s policy of barring the WSWS from its events reflects the anti-working class character of the organization. It is entirely beholden to the auto companies, which supply it with cash and cushy positions on joint committees. It is a corporate-labor syndicate and industrial police force for suppressing the workers and imposing the demands of the companies.



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