

Celebrating the sellout: UAW sends negotiators on paid vacation at exclusive Miami resort

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On November 20, the UAW announced that the last of the three contracts between autoworkers and the Big Three automakers had passed at Ford. The deals mark a new milestone on the attack on autoworkers' living standards: rarely has so much been taken from those who already had so little.

Under the terms of the contracts, workers will labor under conditions like those faced by their great grandfathers in the years before the strikes that built the UAW. The contracts expand the two-tier wage and benefit system, creating conditions for a permanent lowering of labor costs for automakers as they push out higher-paid workers. Health care benefits are subject to a massive overhaul, there is no cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA), the Alternative Work Schedule was retained, the corporations have the right to move production and cut jobs as they see fit, and retirees were given chump change. As one third-generation Ford worker told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*, "I don't ever remember things being this bad."

Things aren't so bad for the UAW, which Ford CEO Mark Fields praised for working with the corporation "together as one team" to steal from the workers. No, the UAW couldn't even wait 24 hours from the end of voting to secretly announce that it was rewarding its bargaining team with a weeklong, all-expenses-paid romp at the four-star, beachside Eden Roc Resort in South Beach, Miami.

According to a leaked memo circulated on Facebook and sent by workers to the *Autoworker Newsletter*, the UAW announced on November 21 that the paid vacation was held (from December 7 to December 11) under the auspices of a "staff training" for negotiators at the UAW's National Ford Department.

"The hotel will direct bill UAW for room and tax ONLY," the internal memo reads. "DO NOT INCLUDE ON YOUR EXPENSE REPORT."

Workers don't need to see the expense reports to know how the UAW is spending their dues money. While they are slogging it out on the assembly line this week under the arduous terms of their new contract, the UAW negotiators who forced the contract down their throats were throwing the workers' money away amidst the gilt and glam of the South Beach strip.

According to its website, the Eden Roc Miami Beach resort is an "ultra-now" facility which is "at once timeless and groundbreaking."

While at the "training," UAW bureaucrats would be able to swim in the resort's "four distinctive pools" and visit its state-of-the-art Spa with its seven-page spa menu. An "ultimate glow exfoliation treatment" would cost Jimmy Settles \$160. If he wants a full "superfacial" with a "pure oxygen face enhancement," that'll run him \$265. It'll cost an extra 10 bucks to have a masseuse throw some rocks on his back.

After finishing up at the spa, the bureaucrats can walk over to the Nobu Restaurant, where lobster will cost \$57. After dinner, the UAW negotiators can order a glass of Hennessy Paradis for \$65 and watch the sun set across the tropical Florida horizon.

Evidently the real purpose of last year's 25 percent dues hike wasn't to build the strike fund that is never used for strikes, it was to ensure against possible price increases in lobster and cognac!

Meanwhile, the temperature is dropping into the 30s at night in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, where Kohler workers are lighting up the burn barrels on their picket lines. They're feeding their families on \$200 a week in

strike pay—about one-third the cost of a one-night room at the Eden Roc resort. And while the UAW negotiators were relaxing on the beach Tuesday, management hit a pregnant striker on a Nexteer picket line in Saginaw, Michigan.

There is something to be said about the social types that staff the UAW bureaucracy. These people trade away the livelihoods of tens of thousands of workers for the chance to spend one week in the carefree luxury that their aristocratic masters live their entire lives. No doubt even the auto executives look with disdain upon the UAW errand boys who do their bidding on the cheap.

But the conduct of the bureaucrats is the product of an objective process: the UAW has been transformed into a pro-corporate organization whose interests are opposed to those of the workers. The UAW is now a business organization whose role is to increase the companies' ability to exploit the workforce. It owns shares in major auto companies and staffs UAW-corporate "joint ventures" and "program centers" like the one which organized the week-long UAW beach party in Florida. It is only natural that such a business would be composed of little executives who seek to mimic the lifestyles of their partners in the corporate aristocracy.

The juxtaposition of the lifestyles of the bureaucrats in South Beach and the living conditions of autoworkers and their families is stark. In its numerous campaigns at auto plants across the US, the WSWS met autoworkers who are homeless and living in motels, who are being foreclosed on, who feed their young children Kraft macaroni and cheese every night, who can't afford lifesaving medical treatment, and who work full-time on their days off from the plant to make ends meet. These conditions are the direct product of decades of betrayals and concessions by UAW, Inc. They are the product of the for-profit capitalist system.

But the contract fight at the Big Three and the developing struggles at Nexteer and Kohler prove that the working class is looking for a way to wage a fight against the UAW-corporate alliance.

In order to be successful, workers must build rank-and-file organizations that are controlled by the workers themselves. Meetings must be organized without UAW officials present so that workers can democratically discuss what must be done to open lines

of communication between the workers at different plants and in different industries. These meetings will serve as the foundation for the building of a mass working class movement that will sweep away the corrupt UAW in the interest of advancing the fight for social equality. *The UAW did not respond to a WSWS request for an official comment on the Miami training.*



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