

“Everyone high up in the UAW must have known what was going on”

US autoworkers react to new UAW corruption indictments

A WSWWS reporting team
25 August 2017

US autoworkers contacted by the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* expressed disgust and anger over the results of a federal investigation into allegations of bribery of top United Auto Workers (UAW) officials by Fiat Chrysler (FCA) executives.

“I don’t support those people [the UAW]. They don’t support me,” a worker with many years’ seniority at Ford Michigan Assembly in Wayne, Michigan, west of Detroit said. “The UAW hides behind a logo. I don’t trust them, and I don’t talk to them.”

According to the indictments, FCA funneled some \$4.5 million to top UAW executives to encourage them to “take company-friendly positions.” Those indicted include UAW Associate Director Virdell King, a top official in the UAW Chrysler department, and Monica Morgan, the widow of General Holiefield, the former vice president in charge of UAW negotiations with FCA. Also named was FCA Vice President for Employee Development Alphons Iacobelli, who allegedly made the illegal payments to the UAW officials via funds from the UAW-Chrysler National Training Center (NTC).

The revelations follow a revolt by FCA workers, who in 2015 voted down a sellout agreement accepted by the UAW that maintained the two-tier wage system and alternative work schedule (AWS), and expanded the number of temporary and part-time workers. While UAW President Dennis Williams claims he had no knowledge of the scandal, court documents show that former UAW President Bob King confronted Holiefield and Iacobelli in 2011 over payments to Morgan’s fake

charity.

A young FCA Warren Truck worker told the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* that she was outraged to hear of the indictments. “Nobody likes the AWS,” she said. “It keeps us away from our families. There were a lot of other things they took away from us, like COLA [cost-of-living allowance]. That was part of the bribery.”

Following the 2015 contract, Fiat Chrysler had placed thousands of workers on temporary layoff at the Sterling Heights Assembly Plant (SHAP) outside of Detroit and at the Toledo Jeep complex. She said that the layoffs had created a great deal of concern and uncertainty among workers and that the UAW had facilitated the extended closures, offering no opposition.

“Now Warren Truck is about to go through it too,” she said, noting that the UAW was giving workers no information.

The revelations related to the direct bribery of UAW further demonstrate the role of the UAW as a tool of management. The NTC was just one of many arrangements between the UAW and the auto companies set up in previous decades to transfer money from the auto companies into the coffers of the UAW. In return, the UAW collaborates in imposing the dictates of management on the backs of autoworkers. The arrangements amount to the establishment of a company union, something supposedly banned under US labor law.

A veteran worker at the General Motors Delta Township plant near Lansing, Michigan, also spoke to

the WSWS. “Everyone high up in the UAW must have known what was going on. There were more palms being greased.

“If Holiefield, who was a UAW VP, was in on it, I am sure [former UAW President Ron] Gettelfinger was in on it. I am sure he was aware what was going on.

“Now that the UAW owns stock through the VEBA [retiree health care trust fund], everything needs to be put to rest.

“They raised our union dues saying we had to prepare to strike, but there was no strike. But our union dues did not go down. Every time we get a bonus, they take a chunk out of that. What do we gain?”

He expressed especial disgust with the two-tier wage imposed with the assistance of the UAW. “Two people are doing the same job, but one is receiving half the pay and half the benefits. That is unheard of!”

The WSWS explained that workers need to form rank-and-file committees independent of the UAW to provide genuine shop floor representation for workers. “Union officials should not be making any more than a worker,” he said. “This shows how badly they need to be monitored.”

WSWS reporters also recently spoke to workers at Ford about the UAW corruption case. In 2015, there were many allegations that the UAW resorted to ballot-stuffing at the Ford River Rouge plant to ensure the narrow passage of the sellout national agreement.

A tier-two Ford worker who recently hired into the Rouge Plant in Dearborn, Michigan, west of Detroit, at a fraction of standard pay, said, “I always thought it was corrupt. It just goes to show you that there was something illegal going on, something corrupt.”

A veteran worker at Ford Rouge added, “I’m sure they are all taking the money, taking luxury vacations and having fun on us. They’re going to court, but they’ll get a lawyer and get off. It’s always the poor folks who go to jail, the innocent who serve time because they have no money.”

The Ford Michigan Assembly worker added, “They gave themselves a 7.2% raise and froze our wages. They are lining their own pockets. And they are supposed to be fighting for my rights? That’s ridiculous.

“We have known about corruption in the union for a long time. The UAW is part of the company. There is no negotiating the contract. Ford dictated the terms of

it. We all know the contract was fixed.”



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact