

US autoworkers express outrage over latest revelations of UAW bribery

A WSWS reporting team
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The admission by former Fiat Chrysler chief negotiator Alphons Iacobelli that he paid \$1.5 million to United Auto Workers officials between 2009 and 2015 to sway contract negotiations has confirmed what many autoworkers have felt for a long time, the UAW is in the pockets of management. Among wide layers of workers there is a feeling that all the contracts negotiated by the UAW are illegitimate and should be invalidated.

Workers are angrily rejecting the claim by UAW President Dennis Williams, published on the UAW website Friday, that the bribes had no impact in shaping contracts. Hundreds posted responses on the UAW Facebook page, the vast majority of them highly critical of the UAW.

Mike Hall, a Ford worker from Ohio, wrote, “The UAW no longer represents the membership. It is its own business. Every bit as corrupt as the government and only looking to profit off of the backs of the membership! Happy to have my job, but embarrassed that these are the people representing the membership. No wonder so many have a negative opinion of unions!”

Frank Marriott, a welder from General Motors, wrote, “Hey Dennis, you want Transparency right!?! Who are the names of UAW-3, UAW-4 and UAW-5 that were unnamed and paid off in the court documents?”

“And how do we believe anything from the UAW at this point? What about the two-tier system? What about the loss of pensions? What about the members involved in the Delphi deal in ‘07 that had their lives destroyed, wages cut 44 percent, pension stolen, loss of COLA, benefits cut and Corporate time start over when transferring? I’m sure all these things mentioned were padding all the pockets of top UAW leadership.”

Jennifer New, from Youngstown, Ohio, wrote: “For everything they have taken from the workers in the past 10 years they can never repay. For all the workers who have uprooted and left everyone they love and everything

they have to relocate to keep their job, they can never undo. For all the workers who have lost EVERYTHING from being tricked or forced to lose their jobs they can never give it back. But I’m sure they are justifying themselves while they own their 2 or 3 houses, their boats, all the vacations they take, and the family they never had to leave behind. What they have done to the people goes way beyond a little here and a little there. It’s been devastating for many, many workers.”

Workers contacted by the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* over the weekend expressed determination to fight to reclaim lost concessions. Many cited in particular the abusive conditions imposed on temporary part-time workers (TPTs), who must pay dues to the UAW but have few if any benefits or rights.

Reporters for the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* spoke to Fiat Chrysler workers at shift change Saturday at the Jeep complex in Toledo. Workers were highly suspicious of the actions of UAW officials at both the local and national level.

“By them taking bribes to introduce the tier system, that is the first thing that should be reversed. They took away pensions. What’s next? The rest of our benefits? Now they work the TPTs like dogs. It’s sad. It’s pathetic.

“Just give back everything that we have lost since 1990. When they took away the cost of living it was worth \$4,500. Give that back for starters.”

Another worker, Drew, said, “I have a lot of questions about all the contracts. What about the jobs we lost in the paint shop?” he said referring to a lawsuit by former Jeep complex workers who lost their jobs as a result of a sweetheart deal signed by the UAW. “Who negotiated those deals? And who benefitted? That’s what I want to know. Who agreed to all of those cuts?”

Mee Sanders said she had brought a lawsuit against both the union and the company for sexual harassment and continuing intimidation. She told the WSWS, “We are

living under constant harassment. They are even involved in our personal lives. It is like dealing with the Mafia.”

Responding to the call by the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* for the creation of workers committees independent of the UAW she, added, “We need to reorganize the working class.”

Another Jeep worker, Chris, said, “I think all the contracts should be renegotiated. There is no way that [UAW Vice President] Holiefield was the only one they bought,” he continued. “They had to have paid off that whole negotiating committee.

“Chrysler has no cap on TPTs. We could have 99 percent TPTs in there and get rid of regular workers altogether. That is what they want.

“That bankruptcy under Obama gave them the green light to do whatever they want. They want to eliminate our rights, and the union is helping them do it.”

“It’s ridiculous they take money out of paychecks,” said a Jeep worker with four years’ experience. “What am I paying for?”

“Williams doesn’t know some of us are college educated,” said one worker, referring to the UAW president’s open letter, which claims the contracts were unaffected by company payoffs. “The UAW has created a hostile work environment, turning second-tier workers against first tier. TPTs have no rights. Now the UAW is blaming everything on a dead guy and his wife so they can keep this going.”

A newly hired worker said, “It’s crazy, the UAW was selling jobs. There is no future here for young workers and I’m already looking for a Plan B if this falls through. They’ve got workers at war with each other so they can take advantage of all of us.”

Another worker who formerly worked in the steel industry said, “It’s the same with the steelworkers union. We know what the unions were and what they’ve become. The companies and the unions work against us. They turn full-time and part-time against each other but we all have bills to pay.”

The *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* also spoke to several long-time readers. A tier-one worker at the Jefferson North Assembly plant in Detroit said, “These contracts are bogus. They should never have been agreed on let alone voted on. They are signing away all our opportunities.”

She responded to the claim by Dennis Williams that the bribes paid by Fiat Chrysler had no impact on negotiations. “It is a lie. It is like saying you are not going to get any money back. We are going to keep everything

the same. They made false promises to the members to get these contracts through.”

She said the younger workers, particularly TPTs, were the ones hardest impacted. “They will work them for a week, then they won’t work them for a week. It is very precarious for them.”

Tony, a veteran worker at Sterling Heights Assembly, told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*, “Dennis Williams said it had no effect. Hell no! Any cause has an effect.

“It isn’t just the UAW. It’s the Teamsters, the operating engineers, all of them. It has never been about the people first. They give them backroom deals. The government has played a big role in facilitating this. They knew all along what was going on between these corporations and the union.

“They are saying ‘let’s move on.’ But the scars are still there. The contracts should be rescinded. You have an attendance policy now where you practically have to have a heart attack to get time off. They are trying to get rid of the senior workers who have pensions and other ‘legacy costs.’ Instead, they are hiring TPTs and contract workers who have no benefits and who they can work like that for years.

“The question is where do you go from here? How do you reverse the damages? The corporations are paying money to these politicians and judges.”

The *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* explained that the answer was not through the courts but through the independent mobilization of workers through the building of workers committees.

“There has to be a major outcry,” he replied. “I believe people are now ready to listen.”

A worker close to retirement at Allison Transmission in Indianapolis, Indiana told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* the UAW had been “passing bad contracts that took concessions from the workers while the companies made tons of money in profits, even during the recession.”

He continued, “We were getting bad contracts year after year, the money was going somewhere, to the upper management of the corporations. Now they have the two tiers, and that is not fair.”



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