

Workers demand nullification of contracts

Anger mounts as UAW VP for Fiat Chrysler is implicated in corruption scandal

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1 February 2018

Anger is growing in auto factories over the expanding corruption scandal involving direct payments from Fiat Chrysler (FCA) to United Auto Workers executives in exchange for pushing through pro-company contracts. Many workers are demanding that the contracts be declared null and void.

Among those implicated in the widening scandal is former UAW Vice President for FCA Norwood Jewell, who is particularly hated by FCA workers for his role during the 2015 contract vote.

The UAW has thus far remained silent over the naming of Jewell's charity, Making Our Children Smile Foundation, as one of the nonprofits receiving "prohibited payments" siphoned through the UAW-Chrysler National Training Center. The charity was also named in the plea deal entered last week by former Fiat Chrysler lead negotiator Alphons Iacobelli, who admitted to paying out \$1.5 million in bribes to UAW officials to influence contract negotiations.

The plea deal also specified salary reimbursements along with "a fraudulent 7 percent administrative fee" as "political gifts" to the heads of the UAW Fiat Chrysler department.

Jewell headed the UAW's Chrysler department during the negotiation of the 2015 contract, which was imposed on autoworkers only by suppressing massive opposition, including a "no" vote at FCA for the first contract proposed by the UAW. He had taken over the post after the retirement of former UAW Vice President General Holiefield in 2014. Holiefield, who died a year later, along with his widow, Monica Morgan, had been named by Iacobelli as the recipient of hundreds of thousands in illegal payouts. Morgan is expected to enter a plea deal on February 6.

The implication of Jewell as the recipient of company bribes further undermines the claim by UAW President Dennis Williams that the corrupt payments had no influence on contract negotiations.

Federal investigators are also reportedly looking into joint programs operated by the UAW at Ford and General Motors. They say they are interested in Joe Ashton, former head of the UAW GM department, and Cindy Estrada, the current head. In December, Ashton resigned from his position on the GM board of directors. Both operated charities. The Cindy Estrada Charity Fund received \$139,032 from the UAW alone according to a report in the *Detroit News*.

Tonya, a worker at the Ford Kansas City Assembly plant, told the WSWs, "I was a TPT [Temporary Part Time] worker, and when me and other TPT workers were hired on, we were told we would be permanent workers by June. We were treated like crap. We didn't get any of the benefits, but we were held up to the same standards. I started April 1, 2016 and was laid off December 21, 2016.

"I got unemployment, but I didn't receive any Christmas bonus, no profit sharing, no anything. They made us turn our badges in and that was it.

"We got called back in May, and of course didn't receive any benefits. No holiday pay, nothing. Last year, I made \$16,000 at Ford from May to December, it was horrible. I loved the job and I always wanted to work there, but I feel absolutely betrayed by the corruption of the UAW leadership. They did this to us.

"We deserve new contracts!"

A young TPT worker at the Fiat Chrysler Sterling Stamping plant north of Detroit said, "We pretty much figured something like that was going on. The way it is

set up, everything is to save money for the company by taking money from us.”

Asked what he thought about claims that the bribes did not affect contract negotiations, he said, “We don’t believe Dennis Williams. They played us out of a lot of money. There should be a lawsuit put in for us.”

He described the conditions facing TPTs at his plant, imposed with the backing of the UAW.

“There are about 160 of us all in the same condition. I have been a TPT for three years and I have never seen a profit sharing check. We don’t get paid vacation days, paid absence days, no overtime. We have no 401(k) plan and no health benefits. Since we don’t have any seniority, we always get the hardest jobs.

“I make \$21 an hour, but they told us when they roll us over to become regular employees they will drop us down to \$17 an hour. I have been here three years and they want to cut my pay \$4 an hour! That’s what we were told by management and the union.”

He said that he had been shocked by the apparent suicide of young TPT worker Jacoby Hennings last year. At the time of his death, Hennings had been holding down jobs at both Ford and Fiat Chrysler plants.

He said he understood the pressure Jacoby faced. “I knew Jacoby personally through friends, I met him. We are working for nothing, and we are treated horribly. We work more than the full-time workers. We have no rights and no representation from the UAW. They make promises, but we don’t believe them anymore.”

A senior worker at Sterling Stamping expressed her concern over the terrible conditions facing TPTs as a result of the pro-company deals signed by the UAW. “The young people are really disappointed that they work the way they do and aren’t able to make any plans. They work hard and are basically ignored. We are all doing the same work, but they get so much less. They are not represented. Why pay union dues?”

A young worker at the Ford Chicago Assembly Plant said, “I think the UAW is in cahoots with the administration of all the auto companies. There are TPTs that have been there for 2 and 3 years, and they are still TPTs. They cut them back on hours per week, and holiday pay. How long does someone have to work now to get benefits? It’s not fair.

“The new contracts are bogus. I didn’t vote. They have part-time employees working and they will never

have to employ them full-time now. They have extended the grow-in to eight years for a tier-two worker to be a legacy employee.

“I was three months from becoming a legacy employee. Now I have to wait eight years. I don’t think that was fair. The union sold us out.”

Workers at the Jeep complex (part of FCA) in Toledo are up in arms over sweetheart deals signed behind their backs by Jewell and Holiefield that have led to the elimination of jobs. Seventy-two workers at the Jeep Wrangler Paint Shop have filed a lawsuit against the UAW and management alleging that bribes led to the UAW agreeing to their firing in 2012.

Meanwhile, 88 drivers at the Jeep truck terminal may lose their jobs, apparently as the result of a similar corrupt deal. A truck driver whose job is threatened with elimination said, “Everything is hush-hush right now because they want to keep us at work. I feel the union is lying to its members, and I think the local is involved.

“It was said that Holiefield was taking \$1,000 payments to get workers jobs in the plant. I think every member of the UAW should get his dues back from the time it happened. It is not supposed to be a business, but that is what it has become.”

Another Jeep worker said, “I’ve talked to a few people this weekend. They want to boycott the International, they want to strike. Everyone is getting sick of them.

“They told us the 2015 contract was the best deal they could come up with. It was the best deal for them. One guy couldn’t do it alone. It was all of them.

“Chrysler was the lead company in the 2015 negotiations. It was fishy. Something was going on.”



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