

“We all know they are lying!”

Workers furious as UAW stonewalls contract discussion with GM, Ford, and Chrysler

Tom Hall
7 September 2019

On September 12 at 7:00 pm Eastern, the WSWS Autoworkers Newsletter is hosting an online meeting to discuss the strategy and perspective needed to organize this struggle. To participate, visit wsws.org/autocall

With only one week to go until the expiration of the current contract, the United Auto Workers continues to conduct its talks with the Detroit automakers behind a veil of silence. It has given autoworkers no updates on talks or even informed them of the substance of the discussions taking place.

A senior worker at GM's Wentzville plant near St. Louis told the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter*, “For months coming up to these negotiations the union reps have consistently said they don't know anything. Even the reps that are known to have loose lips have not been talking. We all know they are lying.

“Most folks *know* they are hiding something; they just don't know what. The feeling is that the membership should be included and kept informed on what is going on. Of course, we have a right. This is about our future.

“There is no integrity within our local, and now we have been shown there is no integrity within the UAW overall.”

“There is no trust or faith in this local or the UAW,” she concluded. “That is the atmosphere at this plant.”

A retiree commented, “What is the union asking for the retired? We need a raise. They took money from us and never gave us a raise.”

In a letter sent to local union officials, UAW-GM Vice President Terry Dittes made clear that UAW members would not be given any advance notice of the content of any new agreement. The letter informed GM local brass of a UAW-GM National Council Meeting

called in Detroit on the morning of September 15, the day after the official expiration of the contract.

“We will not know the agenda until hours before the meeting,” Dittes writes. “It may be to vote on a Tentative Agreement, or the Company's current offer on the table, or other necessary actions.”

In other words, the UAW will not inform the rank-and-file of the outcome of the talks until after the eleventh hour has already passed. The timing of this meeting makes clear that the UAW intends to keep workers on the job without a new contract, with the possible exception of “Hollywood strikes” at one or two locations to allow workers to blow off steam, despite an overwhelming vote by the membership to strike last month.

A worker at GM's Fairfax Assembly Plant in Kansas City told the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter*, “This is out this morning, and we all read [Dittes' letter]. You can't believe anything they say, they could be telling us anything.”

The total media blackout demonstrates that what is taking place are not “negotiations” in any genuine sense of the word, but strategy sessions between the companies and their UAW agents over how to force concessions on an increasingly restive workforce.

Given the scale of the corruption scandal, which has implicated three-quarters of the bargaining team from the last Fiat-Chrysler contract, workers are skeptical about every statement from the union, including the punctuation marks.

The fear with which the UAW views its own membership was indicated in an open letter circulated Wednesday from UAW-Ford VP Rory Gamble. The letter, which purported to contain “an update on

negotiations and where we are in that process,” contained no information whatsoever.

Instead, Gamble attempted to warn off workers from communicating and distributing information among themselves, above all information from the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter*, obliquely referred to as an “entity” that is “attempting to skew perception.”

In a statement published Tuesday, the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* wrote, “The people who are ostensibly in charge of negotiations on behalf of the autoworkers, from UAW President Gary Jones on down, have had their houses raided or face the prospect of criminal charges. If they are negotiating anything, it is their plea bargains. If they are holding discussions, it is with their lawyers over what they can do to stay out of jail.”

Indeed, according to the *Detroit News*, Jones has recently retained the services of New York attorney J. Bruce Maffeo, who has served as counsel for the International Brotherhood of Teamsters during its government oversight which began three decades ago to settle the federal racketeering case under the RICO Act.

Under these conditions, workers have no choice but to repudiate the authority of the UAW. The WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* urges autoworkers to form rank-and-file factory committees, democratically controlled by workers themselves and independent of the company agents in the UAW.

In every factory and workplace, workers should elect their own representatives and formulate their own demands. Rank-and-file committees will provide workers with real information about what is happening, unify all sections of auto workers, and protect workers from victimization.

The establishment of such a network of committees will lay the framework for a national conference of rank-and-file committees to coordinate a struggle against the auto companies.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact