

UAW to autoworkers: We won't tell you anything, but don't read the *World Socialist Web Site*

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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 just less than a week before the expiration of contracts at Ford, GM and Fiat Chrysler, the UAW is terrified that opposition among autoworkers will erupt outside of its control.

Even as the UAW tells workers nothing about the supposed “negotiations,” it has issued a plea that they do not look to other sources of information, above all the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter*. This is the essential content of a letter sent to Ford workers from UAW-Ford Vice President Rory Gamble on Thursday.

The letter begins by stating that its purpose is to “provide you—and especially our newer members for whom the bargaining process may be unfamiliar—an update on negotiations and where we are in that process.”

In fact, the letter contains no “update.” It states that “numerous subcommittees have been negotiating” and “most have reached tentative agreements,” but “larger economic issues remain.”

What these “numerous” subcommittees have agreed to, even what these “numerous” subcommittee men and women were talking about, is not explained. As for the “larger economic issues” that “remain,” workers are left guessing as to what they might be.

After submitting this “update” to the autoworkers, Gamble goes on to the main task at hand. “Many entities against us are attempting to skew perception,” he writes. “I ask that you be cautious of the sources from which you receive your information and the material you choose to share. It is imperative that we

are not misguided about these negotiations by rumors, misinformation of outside influences.”

Gamble is too shy to name names, but he is clearly referring to the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter*. In 2015, when the WSWS was at the center of rank-and-file opposition among autoworkers, UAW President Dennis Williams—whose home was recently raided by the FBI—denounced “outside groups” who “like to stir people up,” while top AFL-CIO lawyer Bruce Miller attacked the WSWS as “vultures on the left dressed in red garb.”

Let us consider Gamble’s warning. Workers, he writes, should be wary of entities trying to “skew perception” and to “be cautious of the sources from which you receive your information.”

Solid advice, no doubt. It should be applied first and foremost to the UAW itself. After all, the organization has been exposed as a criminal syndicate that has stolen money from autoworkers and accepted bribes from the companies in exchange for pushing through pro-company contracts.

Gamble himself has not been named or implicated (yet) in the federal investigation. He only joined the top leadership of the UAW at the organization’s convention in June 2018, replacing the outgoing VP at Ford, Jimmy Settles.

Gamble, however, previously headed UAW Region 1, which includes the Detroit Area. In that position, he worked closely with Settles in the notorious 2015 vote at Ford, which led to widespread allegations of vote rigging and ballot stuffing. Settles orchestrated a last-minute postponement of the vote at Local 600 (which covers Ford operations in Dearborn) as the contract was headed for defeat. The final vote at Local 600 ended up

being just enough for the UAW to claim a 51 percent ratification for the national contract.

In the above-mentioned statement in 2015, AFL-CIO lawyer Miller attacked the WSWS for “accusing the UAW of selling out its members with the contract settlement.” The fact that the UAW sold out its members—literally—has been amply proven. Everything the WSWS said about the contracts in 2015, and about the UAW, was correct.

Four years later, the UAW is entering these contract “negotiations” under truly extraordinary circumstances. Top executives and officials have been charged or implicated in an expanding corruption scandal, and the current head of the organization, Gary Jones, has had his house raided.

The most recent acknowledgement of guilt has come from Michael Grimes, a former top aide to Cindy Estrada, the current UAW Vice President at Fiat Chrysler. In 2015, Estrada was UAW VP for General Motors. Grimes pleaded guilty this past week to taking more than \$1.5 million in bribes and kickbacks over 12 years, while he served on the board of the UAW-GM Center for Human Resources.

It is not only the UAW that is terrified of what will come out of this. The *Detroit News*’ Daniel Howes, in a column published on Thursday, notes that “the legal quagmire ensnaring current and past leadership, and the political context enveloping *a process turbocharged by social media*, pose enormous challenges for the UAW and all three automakers trying to sell a prospective (and clean) deal to their hourly workforces.” (emphasis added)

The fear of “social media” is the fear that workers will be able to communicate and organize independently of the UAW. The unions and the corporate elite have the experience not only of the 2015 auto contracts, but also the teachers’ strikes last year, which developed largely outside of the control of the teachers’ unions.

The *New York Times* noted in an article at the time that West Virginia teachers “found ways to organize and act outside the usual parameters of traditional unionism,” including through “an enormous Facebook group.”

Whatever Gamble and the UAW may hope, autoworkers will not heed their advice. Workers are and will continue to share information online and

organize opposition. The call of the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* for the formation of independent, rank-and-file committees is winning a powerful response.

A battle is looming, pitting autoworkers against the companies and their bought-and-paid-for lackeys in the UAW. We urge all workers to sign up for the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* as the essential source of news and perspective for the coming struggle.



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