

UAW prepares to sell out GM strike, as new corruption revelations emerge

Marcus Day
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The WSWS Autoworker Newsletter is fighting to provide workers with the information and perspective needed to win this struggle. Our next online forum is tonight, Thursday, October 3, at 7 p.m. EDT. Find out more and register at wsws.org/autocall.

The United Auto Workers is conspiring with General Motors to shut down the strike by 48,000 autoworkers, meeting with the company behind closed doors to put the finishing touches on how they will sell their concessions deal.

However, explosive new revelations in the UAW corruption scandal threaten to disrupt these plans. According to a report in the *Detroit News* Wednesday night, UAW Secretary/Treasurer Gary Casteel and Danny Trull, former deputy to UAW President Gary Jones, are cooperating with federal investigators, providing information on over \$1 million allegedly spent on luxuries for UAW officials.

The article cites six unnamed sources and a federal court affidavit by Labor Department Special Agent Andrew Donohue.

The allegations directly implicate UAW President Jones. Trull told investigators that he witnessed Jones spend UAW dues on golf clothing in Palm Springs, and that money was also spent on high-end retreats, cigars and liquor, among other luxuries. Trull, who also served on the board of Jones' charity, 5 Game Changers Charity Fund, was allegedly ordered to hide the expenses.

The corruption investigation is not being pursued by state authorities out of concern for workers. On the contrary, it is being used to keep a short leash on UAW executives, and, if the Trump administration deems it necessary, create the conditions to directly intervene to settle the strike on the companies' terms.

The UAW is feeling the pressure to get a concessions deal concluded and is seeking to prepare the ground for it. On Tuesday, UAW-GM Vice President Terry Dittes claimed in a calculated and dishonest letter that UAW negotiators had rejected a company proposal the night before and had offered a counterproposal.

"This proposal that the Company provided to us on day 15 of the strike did not satisfy your contract demands or needs," the letter stated. "There were many areas that came up short like

health care, wages, temporary employees, skilled trades and job security to name a few. "Additionally, concessionary proposals still remain in the company's proposals as of late last night.

"We have responded today with a counterproposal and are awaiting GM's next proposal to the Union."

While blithely noting that GM is demanding givebacks in every area—with the intention of lowering workers' expectations—Dittes and the UAW offered no details on what the alleged proposal and counterproposal contained. In fact, throughout the entire fraudulent contract "negotiations," the UAW has deprived workers of the most basic information about what it supposedly has been demanding on their behalf.

In reality, GM has already set the financial parameters of any deal and has told the UAW to figure out how to sell it to its members. Industry analysts say that the cuts to health care, expansion of temporary labor and continuation of the freeze in real wages would save the company \$5 an hour, or \$500 million every year.

The UAW "is not explaining to us what their proposal is," a worker at GM's Chicago Parts Distribution Center told the *Autoworker Newsletter* Tuesday. "Are they asking for what we're asking for?"

There is no legitimate reason why the UAW has kept workers in the dark. To claim that the public release of information would tip their hand to the company and that UAW negotiators must keep their cards close to their vests is a fraud. Both the corporations and the UAW know exactly what is being discussed. The only ones who don't know are the workers themselves. That is because if workers knew what the UAW has already agreed to give away, they would revolt.

After the bitter experiences of the last 40 years, with endless UAW-imposed concessions, many workers now understand that what is taking place is not a contract negotiation, but a UAW-company conspiracy to defraud workers of their basic rights.

The UAW is terrified of a repeat of its initial debacle in the 2015 contract negotiations. At that time, workers took to Facebook and social media, seeking to break through the UAW-media blackout and fight to win back prior concessions. Workers shared information and articles by the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter*, which became the center of opposition

to the company's attacks. As a result, the UAW's first sellout deal was voted down by a two-to-one margin.

With this scenario in mind—and knowing that workers widely believe that the UAW has already agreed to the company's demands—Dittes wrote in his letter Monday, “Regardless of what is publicized in print or social media, etc., there are still many important issues that remain unresolved.”

In other words, don't believe anything that you read, particularly from the WSWS, even though we won't tell you anything.

The UAW, along with its colleagues at GM and in the business press, are seeking to create a false narrative: that the UAW and the company are adversaries, and that they are engaged in anything other than a sordid backroom scheme.

On Wednesday, the *Detroit Free Press* published a “behind-the-scenes look” at the negotiations, “What it's really like behind doors of GM, UAW contract talks.” The article, with about as much truth in it as scripted reality television, contained carefully crafted and vetted information, designed to provide the UAW-company conspiracy with a cover of fake transparency.

“Two people close to the talks said Dittes has all the elected bargainers from the UAW's GM locals also in the room. That's at least two dozen or more people just on the union side.”

But this was a cover for the UAW's real intentions, the *Free Press*'s source admitted. “‘They're at the table because the UAW doesn't want it to look like a few people in a back room make these decisions. It's out in the open,’ said a person familiar with the union's thinking who insisted on anonymity.”

In a significant understatement of the immense hostility by workers to the UAW's pro-company maneuvers in 2015, the article continued, “Union members complained during the 2015 negotiations, which the UAW negotiated with FCA before it bargained with GM and Ford, that it was a backroom deal of sorts.”

This round of negotiations is supposedly not a “backroom deal” because...a larger number of UAW executives are participating. Meanwhile, workers still have no idea what is taking place.

The UAW is working with a timeworn strategy to break workers' resistance to the company's attacks. In addition to withholding information and outright lying, it is starving GM workers on the picket lines on just \$250 a week in strike pay.

Meanwhile, corrupt UAW executives such as President Gary Jones (whose home was raided in August by the FBI, who found a “pile of cash”) continue to pull in their salaries and other perks, with Jones receiving at least \$5,000 a week.

At the same time, the UAW is deliberately isolating the strike to just GM, forcing its 100,000-plus members at Ford and Fiat Chrysler to stay on the job, despite growing calls by workers at plants around the country for an industrywide strike.

There are growing concerns that the longer the strike goes on,

the more difficult it will be for the UAW to shut it down.

Over the weekend, industry publication *Automotive News* published a warning, “A lengthy strike adds to ratification challenges,” writing, “The longer the strike has dragged on, the more expectations have grown... Workers will have to vote for a deal while also considering whether the time on the picket lines was worth it, or if they should keep fighting for more.”

The strike can be won, but workers cannot afford a wait-and-see attitude towards what the UAW will bring back. There can be no doubt that it is preparing another vicious sellout.

As long as the strike is under the control of the bribed company agents who comprise the UAW, it remains in imminent danger of defeat.

Everything depends on workers taking the initiative, through the formation of rank-and-file factory committees. Meetings must be held outside the view of the UAW and the company to formulate the demands of workers and organize a strategy to win the strike.

These committees must assert the will of workers over the contract negotiations, mobilizing the necessary resources and support. Strike pay must be raised to \$750 a week, the walkout must be expanded to include workers at Ford and Fiat Chrysler, and an urgent appeal must be issued for the support of workers in other industries and other countries.

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