Sons of convicted UAW bribe taker Norwood Jewell were co-signers of GM sellout deal

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Among those signing the sellout deal negotiated by the United Auto Workers and General Motors are two names familiar to most autoworkers.

Derik and Justin Jewell, sons of former UAW Vice President for Fiat Chrysler Norwood Jewell, gave their ok to the agreement with GM that sanctions the closure of the historic Lordstown Assembly Plant and three other facilities in Warren, Michigan, Baltimore, Maryland and Fontana, California, and lifts any cap on the use of temporary workers.

Norwood Jewell pleaded guilty earlier this year to taking $40,000-$95,000 in illegal payments for travel, lodging and other perks from Fiat Chrysler officials between 2014-2016, including luxury stays at a Palm Spring, California resort. Jewell was the lead negotiator in the 2015 sellout contract between the UAW and Fiat Chrysler that maintained the hated two-tier wage structure and expanded the use of temporary part-time workers.

At a September 19, 2015 meeting of Fiat Chrysler Jeep workers in Toledo, Ohio, Jewell denounced workers for opposing the pro-company contract he oversaw, declaring, “I’m telling you there is not one of us up here—and shame on you for suggesting otherwise—that has anything but the best interest of our membership in mind.”

To add insult to injury, the UAW covered $213,000 in Jewell’s legal fees last year and his two sons continue to be employed by the UAW International at its misnamed Solidarity House headquarters in Detroit, making over $120,000 each annually. After Norwood Jewell resigned from his post in 2016 the UAW still paid him a full year’s salary of over $200,000 in 2017 and 2018.

To date, six of the top negotiators for the 2015 Fiat Chrysler sellout have been convicted or implicated of taking bribes by Chrysler executives to keep them “fat, dumb and happy” or misusing union funds for their personal benefits.

The attorneys for Norwood Jewell included 29 pages of character witness letters from friends and family, including his sons Derik and Justin. “I often wonder how much different the world would be if everyone had a Dad like mine,” Derik wrote.

Another UAW official, David Shoemaker, who added his signature to the GM sellout, may be familiar to veterans of the former Pontiac truck manufacturing complex. David Shoemaker is the son of former UAW Vice President Richard Shoemaker. The younger Shoemaker first got his cushy, annual $139,000-plus position on the International UAW staff in the wake of the 87-day strike in 1997 at the Pontiac truck manufacturing complex.

In 2006, a federal jury found two UAW officials, including Don Douglas, the former Local 594 president who was kicked upstairs to an UAW International position, guilty of prolonging the strike in order to obtain jobs at the plant for friends and family members for skilled trades jobs. Their hiring led to a lawsuit by rank-and-file workers because the men were clearly not qualified for their positions under terms of the UAW contract. Workers later learned that the men pocketed tens of thousands of dollars in questionable overtime payments, leading to another lawsuit. The strike cost workers an average of $10,000-$20,000 apiece in lost wages.

Relatives of other high-ranking UAW officials also got jobs at the end of the strike, including David Shoemaker. After one year, the younger Shoemaker was promoted to a job with the UAW International in a position that required one year’s plant experience.

These facts demonstrate once again that the UAW

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corruption scandal, far from involving a few “bad actors,” reveals an organization rife with nepotism, self-serving and favoritism. It underscores the necessity for workers to organize independently in order to assert their control through the building of rank-and-file committees, the rejection of this rotten contract and the expansion of the strike to Ford and Fiat Chrysler.

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