

Breaking: UAW President Gary Jones takes paid leave as feds move closer to indictment

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United Auto Workers President Gary Jones is stepping aside, the UAW announced Saturday morning. The move comes only two days after corruption charges were filed against yet another of his former aides, making an indictment of Jones himself virtually inevitable.

Jones is not resigning from his position. Instead, he is going on paid leave and will continue to draw a bloated salary of \$5,000 per week. Jones continued to “earn” this amount while the UAW forced General Motors strikers to subsist on \$250 per week in strike pay.

Jones will reportedly have to pay back his salary in the event that he is convicted.

The announcement came only two days after the indictment of Edward Robinson, a former top official at UAW Region 5, where Jones was director until 2018. Robinson allegedly embezzled \$1.5 million since 2010, with the most recent charges stemming from September, the month the strike began at General Motors.

According to the indictment, Robinson conspired with a “UAW Official A,” who has been confirmed by press sources to be Jones.

“The UAW is fighting tooth and nail to ensure our members have a brighter future,” Jones wrote in a statement posted on the UAW website. “I do not want anything to distract from the mission. I want to do what’s best for the members of this great union.”

Rory Gamble, UAW Vice President for Ford, will take over as interim president in Jones’ absence.

This shabby maneuver is an insult to the intelligence of autoworkers. It comes only after Jones oversaw the shutdown of the strike at GM and the enforcement by the union, over widespread opposition, of a sellout contract that paves the way for the unlimited use of temps and sanctions the closure of four plants.

Moreover, it has now been over two months since the arrest of Vance Pearson, Jones’ top lieutenant when he was Region 5 Director, and the FBI raid on Jones’ house that uncovered tens of thousands of dollars in cash. Pearson himself continued to participate in contract talks with GM for weeks, even though he was already under indictment.

It also comes less than 24 hours after the UAW rubber-stamped the tentative agreement at Ford, which like the GM contract provides for the expansion of temps and plant closures. Jones himself praised the deal yesterday in a statement, declaring, “UAW Ford members have created an environment for growth in products and jobs, and a serious commitment by Ford Motor Company to grow their footprint right here in the US.”

There is no reason to expect that Gamble is any more “clean” than Jones. The UAW has put “another member of the Jones’ gang at the helm,” University of Michigan professor Erik Gordon told the *Detroit News*. “I think they’re stuck. It makes you wonder if there’s anyone capable of stepping in who is clean of Jones’ taint.”

Gamble is a bureaucrat of long standing, having served in various positions in the bureaucracy since 1975. Before becoming vice president for Ford in 2018, he spent three terms as Region 1A director. Region 1A played a key role in ramming through the national Ford contract in 2015. At Local 600, which covers Ford Dearborn Truck Plant, autoworkers accuse the UAW of rigging the contract vote.

The stepping aside of Jones demonstrates the illegitimacy of the entire “collective bargaining” process. As in 2015, when the UAW beat back a rank-and-file rebellion to force through concessions, the 2019 contract is being overseen and negotiated by

people who are known to have defrauded the workers they claim to represent.

Moreover, they have accepted hundreds of thousands of dollars in company bribes, either directly as in the case of UAW-FCA officials in 2015, or indirectly, through the money laundering operations known as the joint training centers.

From a legal standpoint, the contracts agreed to by the UAW should be considered by autoworkers to be null and void.

When Jones was installed as president in 2018, the federal probe into UAW corruption was already well underway and had produced indictments at Fiat Chrysler. Jones was hailed by the union and the press as a “reform” president who would “strengthen your trust in your union,” in Jones’ own words.

In reality, Jones was one of the chief facilitators of the gravy train for the bureaucracy. Under his tenure at Region 5, Jones hosted lavish conferences at Palm Springs with endless rounds of golf, expensive meals and “ultra premium” liquor. After the official end of the conferences, top officials from Solidarity House would winter in expensive private villas, with rent paid for by UAW members’ dues.

The rise and fall of Gary Jones demonstrates that the United Auto Workers is not a workers’ organization, but a criminal syndicate no less hostile to the interests of autoworkers than the auto companies themselves.

To fight for their interests, workers need new organizations completely independent of the UAW. The *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* urges workers to elect factory committees to mobilize all autoworkers to oppose the current contracts and overturn the decades of UAW-backed concessions.



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