

Acting UAW chief unveils bogus “anti-corruption” reforms

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Rory Gamble, acting president of the United Auto Workers (UAW) union, announced a series of ethics reforms in a statement released Wednesday.

The measures, assuming they are ever even implemented, will do nothing to change the corrupt integration of the UAW with corporate management. Rather, their explicit aim, Gamble admitted to *Bloomberg*, is to preempt a takeover of the union by the federal government, as occurred with the Teamsters in the 1980s.

The bogus reforms have been unveiled while the UAW is forcing through massive, unpopular concessions at Ford. According to autoworkers, the UAW is intimidating workers into voting for the contract by threatening to repeat its performance at General Motors where it called a month-long strike, isolated the GM workers, put them on starvation level strike pay and rammed through the company’s demands.

Gamble took over as interim president two weeks ago, after his predecessor Gary Jones stepped aside when fresh indictments of his former subordinates made charges against him virtually inevitable. However, Jones has not officially resigned, and is still receiving his \$5000 per week pay—enough to fund the strike pay for 20 autoworkers during the GM strike.

The measures include the hiring of an Ethics Ombudsman, a UAW Ethics Officer and a “hotline” for workers to report malfeasance. The “cottage” built at union expense for former president Dennis Williams at the UAW’s Black Lake retreat—in reality, a luxury villa—will be sold off.

This amounts to window dressing. Everything will be implemented by the unindicted members of the same criminal gang that has either participated directly in or benefited from the embezzlement of millions of dollars

in members’ dues, supplemented by millions more in bribes from the company. Moreover, the six-figure salaries of the bureaucrats will remain untouched.

Workers have seen this stunt before. In 2017, when the first indictments at Fiat Chrysler were being handed down, then-president Dennis Williams declared: “We will never tolerate this type of misconduct. Based on the information we have we believe several former UAW officials acted in a clear violation of UAW policy. This is not acceptable, and the actions of a few individuals should not be held against the entire union and its membership.”

In 2018, Gary Jones was appointed by the UAW convention as a “reform” president, supposedly free from the taint of corruption. In March of this year, he announced a “clean slate” agenda before the union’s special bargaining convention, in which he declared: “I am deeply saddened and irritated that some leaders in this union and some leaders at the auto companies exploited their positions to benefit themselves. It is my responsibility from this day forward to strengthen your trust in your union.”

These self-declared “reformers” have now been exposed as captains of the gravy train. The latest indictment implicates them as unnamed co-conspirators (their identities were confirmed separately to the press by sources close to the case) in schemes to embezzle millions of dollars in members’ dues.

Echoing Williams and Jones’ “shock” at the gangsterism of “some union leaders,” Gamble declared in a recent statement: “I know recent events concerning members of our leadership have disappointed and angered many of you. I am angry as well, but I am not here to prejudge anyone. I am here to take this union forward.”

While Gamble pretends otherwise, there is no reason

to doubt that Gamble had, at the very least, an intimate knowledge of the activities of his predecessors. He is a long-time bureaucrat who served as Region 1A director in southeast Michigan before ascending to the UAW-Ford vice presidency in 2018.

Indeed, University of Michigan professor and labor analyst Erik Gordon expressed misgivings to the *Detroit News* that the UAW had put “another member of the Jones’ gang at the helm.” He added: “I think they’re stuck. It makes you wonder if there’s anyone capable of stepping in who is clean of Jones’ taint.”

Gamble has rejected out of hand any suggestion that the Ford and General Motors contracts should be invalidated if Jones is charged. In unintentionally revealing comments to *Automotive News*, Gamble said: “I know Gary Jones personally. I worked with him on the Ford agreement. *He came in Monday morning and we went 72 hours straight* [emphasis added]. I am confident and very proud of everything in that agreement. The Ford Motor Co. themselves are very solid and their credibility is very high. Same thing at General Motors and with Terry Dittes (UAW-GM department vice president). He’ll tell you himself, he has the utmost confidence in the GM deal, and everything was done with respect to the members.”

These comments only implicate Gamble himself, along with Dittes. Moreover, he apparently admits that Jones is still involved with union business—exposing his decision to “step aside” as a fraud.

The corruption of the United Auto Workers goes far beyond individuals or bureaucratic factions who can be replaced by an election or by government receivership. The bribery and graft which is endemic to the UAW is the most naked expression of the integration of the unions themselves into corporate management.

These relationships are cemented financially not only through illegal schemes but through “legitimate” means. The companies have funneled billions of dollars into the joint training centers since their establishment in the 1980s. These corporatist bodies, based on an identity of interests between the unions and management, were set up only after the repeal of a federal law banning the company funding of unions.

The companies have also handed billions more to the UAW through lucrative investment vehicles such as the retiree VEBA program, which controls billions of dollars in company stock. The net impact of these

measures has been to make the unions financially independent from, and institutionally hostile to, the interests of the autoworkers that they falsely claim to represent.

The GM deal reportedly will lead to the selloff of the UAW-GM Center for Human Resources in Detroit, although the money will be transferred to other corporatist programs. The nearby joint UAW-Ford training center will remain intact under the terms of the contract. The two contracts which will also expand a whole series of joint bodies overseeing the expansion of temps, the cutting of wages for new technologies and lowering the companies’ health care costs.

The GM contract and, if the UAW forces them through over massive opposition, the contracts at Ford and Fiat Chrysler, should be considered by autoworkers to be null and void. These contracts and those that preceded them have been presided over by a corrupt apparatus that is now known to have stolen millions of dollars in dues money, which supplemented tens of millions in company bribes laundered through the UAW-company joint training centers. This only underscores the need for the building of rank-and-file factory committees, independent of the corrupt UAW, to counterpose the will of workers to the dictates of the corporations and their labor police force.



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