

UAW denies WSWS press credentials to cover Detroit convention

Our reporter
21 July 2022

In a blatant attack on democratic rights, the United Auto Workers (UAW) union has barred the *World Socialist Web Site* from covering the UAW's 38th Constitutional Convention, which begins Monday in Detroit. The union's public relations department informed WSWS Labor Editor Jerry White on Wednesday that his request for press credentials had been denied without providing any explanation for its decision.

The action is a violation not only on the free press rights of the WSWS but the rights of thousands of autoworkers who regularly read the WSWS for information necessary for their struggles. The UAW apparatus fears the growing militancy of rank-and-file workers and any exposure and criticism of its collusion with the corporations.

WSWS Labor Editor Jerry White first requested credentials on July 13 in an e-mail to Sandra Engle, the newly appointed head of the UAW public relations department. A week later, the WSWS received the following reply:

Greetings Mr. White,

Thank you for your patience while we reviewed all of the applications for media credentials from established news organizations. We are not issuing you a media credential.

Raenell Glenn
Assistant Director
Public Relations Department
International Union, UAW

In a response, White wrote the following reply:

Ms. Glenn,

We do not accept this thoroughly undemocratic decision. We demand an explanation why the UAW is denying the *World Socialist Web Site* credentials for next week's convention.

You refer to reviewing applications from "established news organizations." What are your criteria for acceptable news organizations?

Thousands of autoworkers across the United States regularly read the WSWS and look to our web site for information that is not distorted by the corporate media. The WSWS is the most widely read socialist web site in the world.

By "established news organizations" do you mean the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, the two Detroit newspapers, the *Automotive News* and other corporate-owned media outlets? Have you granted credentials to these publications that have nothing but contempt for autoworkers and their struggles?

As I informed you and Ms. Engle, the WSWS and its predecessor, the *Bulletin* newspaper, have covered UAW conventions for more than 40 years. The long-standing policy of granting us credentials was only changed under Dennis Williams and Gary Jones. The censorship of the WSWS was intimately connected to their efforts to conceal the corrupt crimes against UAW members.

The UAW rank and file can only conclude from the continuation of this disgraceful policy that the UAW leadership has something to hide from its members and the greater public.

We and the thousands of autoworkers who

read the WSWS demand that you reverse this decision and grant us credentials.

Jerry White
WSWS Labor Editor

The efforts to censor the WSWS take place as new revelations surface about continued criminal activity of top UAW leaders. On Tuesday, the independent monitor overseeing the UAW filed a report accusing UAW President Ray Curry and other International Executive Board members of violating the consent decree the union signed after the conviction of a dozen top officers, including two of the last national presidents, on federal bribe-taking, embezzlement and racketeering charges.

Curry and other IEB officers, the monitor said, deliberately kept information about criminal activity of top officials from his investigators. This only shows that nothing has changed, and that the UAW remains a criminal enterprise despite its claims about “rooting out corruption” and increasing “transparency.”

Most significantly, the UAW bureaucracy is confronting an increasing rebellion by its members. Over the last two years, workers at Volvo Trucks, John Deere, Dana, CNH, Detroit Diesel, Ventra, Tenneco and other manufacturing companies have repeatedly and decisively rejected pro-company contracts pushed by the UAW. In many cases, the contract rejections launched militant strikes, which the UAW barely contained.

Now, three years after the six-week strike in 2019 by 48,000 General Motors workers—the first national auto strike since 1976—the opposition of 155,000 Big Three autoworkers is reaching a breaking point. Workers are livid over inflation that is eating up the paltry raises the union settled for, the exploitation of ever-increasing numbers of temp and contract workers, grueling levels of overtime, the continued impact of the COVID pandemic, and now the growing number of layoffs announced by Stellantis, Ford and other automakers.

In struggle after struggle, militant workers are taking up the call by the WSWS and *Autoworker Newsletter* for the formation of rank-and-file factory committees to break the stranglehold of the UAW bureaucracy and launch a counter-offensive not just to overturn decades of UAW-backed concessions but to win substantial

improvements in living standards and working conditions.

The most conscious expression of this growing opposition is the campaign of William Lehman, a Pennsylvania Mack Trucks worker and socialist, who is a candidate running for the presidency of the UAW. Lehman is calling for the abolition of the corrupt UAW apparatus, the transfer of power to rank-and-file workers and an international strategy to coordinate the struggles of workers across national boundaries to fight the global automakers.

The undemocratic action has provoked protests from journalists and workers. Journalist Matt Taibbi called the banning of the WSWS “one of the most ridiculous things imaginable.”

In an e-mail to the UAW public relations department that was cc'd to the WSWS, Bernie Woodall, a former Reuters reporter in Detroit who covered the UAW and the auto industry from 2009 to 2017, wrote, “It mystifies me why the UAW would keep anyone out of convention coverage.” He added that “anyone who covers the labor movement should be allowed to cover the convention. Or be told why they cannot.” He noted that the WSWS was one of the few publications whose writers “wrote many more stories than other journalists about the labor movement and the UAW,” and urged the union to reverse its decision.

The WSWS calls on workers and all defenders of democratic rights to denounce the censorship of the WSWS and demand that the UAW reverse its undemocratic decision.

E-mails should be sent to sngle@uaw.net and rglenn@uaw.net. CC copies to autoworkers@wsws.org



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact