

Autoworkers denounce UAW attack on WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* reporters

By our reporters
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Autoworkers from throughout the US have spoken out in defense of the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* after United Auto Workers officials from Local 600 in Dearborn, Michigan physically ejected two of its reporters from a press conference Wednesday and forcibly took a cell phone being used to record the incident.

A video recording was automatically uploaded and has been posted below.

The press conference that WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* editor Jerry White and another reporter were prevented from attending was addressed by UAW Vice President Jimmy Settles, the chief architect of the sellout deal. It was called in response to growing opposition to the UAW-Ford tentative contract. On Tuesday and Wednesday, workers in Louisville, Kentucky and Chicago, Illinois delivered a stunning blow to the contract, voting overwhelming against the agreement.

Settles was joined by Bernie Ricke, president of Local 600, which covers the Dearborn Truck Plant, Dearborn Stamping, an engine plant and several other smaller facilities. With the contract facing defeat, UAW officials have used bullying tactics to get Ford workers at Local 600, the last local to vote, to ratify the deal.

Upon entering the union hall, the reporters were stopped by a UAW official who demanded they identify themselves. After learning they were with the WSWS, the official told them they would not be allowed to attend the press conference. Meanwhile reporters from various corporate-owned national and local media outlets walked in freely.

After White protested the anti-democratic action, more than a half-dozen UAW operatives surrounded

the reporters. One official grabbed the cell phone and manhandled White and the other reporter out the front door of the union hall. The UAW officials refused a request to return the cell phone.

UAW officials later turned over the phone to the Dearborn Police Department claiming they “found” it at the union hall, according to the desk sergeant. The video of the incident makes clear this claim was a lie. While the reporters filed a police report, the WSWS is not pressing charges at this time.

The forcible removal of the WSWS from the event exposes not only the UAW’s opposition to the *Autoworker Newsletter*, but its fear of and hostility to the workers the UAW claims to represent. The WSWS has attracted a broad readership among autoworkers because it has provided them with facts and articulated the widespread opposition to the UAW’s efforts to push through sellout contracts at Fiat Chrysler, GM and Ford.

A worker from the Dearborn Truck Assembly Plant denounced the attack and commented on the widely viewed video of the incident.

“I have watched the video a dozen times with my buddies sharing it on Facebook and passing the phone around in the shop. Everybody’s watching it.

“I don’t like it at all. I thought your reporter handled himself appropriately and he made a good point. The other media outfits were walking right in. And they don’t even speak for workers.

“I wonder if the UAW has a way of keeping track of who is reading your material and how many times they read it. I wonder if they have a list. It is ridiculous what happened. And they are supposed to be representing me. They just looked so ignorant. It’s just disrespectful.

“That is not who I want representing me. I see those

guys every day. It is almost like I am nervous about it. I heard last night that the 'no' vote was in the lead by 1,150 votes. I know they are worried about it."

A General Motors worker from Colorado said, "If you are not hiding anything, answer the questions. If an autoworker sees this video it is enough to make him not have any trust in that organization. The UAW are snakes in the grass and liars. Paying them is like paying a lawyer to do nothing. I would never go to the UAW."

"If you eliminate all the Jerry Whites you will have a dictatorship. It is a heartfelt guy going up against creeps. I am behind him 100 percent."

A Fiat Chrysler worker from Detroit said, "For the union to put its hands on you, no, that is wrong. You have every right to be there. What are they afraid of? What could have happened in that press conference that would have been different with you there? Is there something they want to hide? People don't have the truth now. That's what they are afraid of."

A retired GM worker from Canton, Michigan told the WSWS, "The UAW works for the company, not for the workers. I think someone is paying into their pockets. The *World Socialist Web Site* has rights."

"They don't want to talk about what is in the contract. This is the first time in 58 years that I know of where they didn't want to say anything. I think they should re-open the GM contract. Retirees haven't had a raise in 10 years. For the UAW to control the VEBA [retiree health care fund] is a conflict of interest. Our deductibles are so high. They should not be controlling our health care. They talk about a \$500 gift card [in the contract agreed with GM]. What a joke? It has been 10-12 years since we had a raise. Everyone is so crooked. I hope the Ford workers vote the contract down."

A Toledo Jeep worker said, "The video provides evidence of an assault. They shouldn't be able to get away with it. The *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* has enlightened the masses. The video shows thugs who couldn't answer why the WSWS was being banned."

"The claim by the UAW official that he doesn't know the *Wall Street Journal* is the most idiotic thing I've ever heard in my life. I was under the belief that you cannot ban the press from a press conference. The *Newsletter* had the right to be at the meeting. It was a violation of your constitutional rights."

"It's sad that the UAW is violating rights when they

are supposed to stand up for your rights. Especially when the UAW in the 1930s had to fight for the press to even acknowledge them in the first place."

"I was speechless and embarrassed to see what they did. I expected an elected local official to be held to a different standard. We don't need these people in union offices. They don't even conduct themselves like adults. Taking someone's phone is a high school tactic. They showed a blatant disregard for the law."

"The reason they didn't let the WSWS reporters in is because you guys weren't going to ask them any softball questions. The other reporters don't ask what workers want to know, only what the investors want to know. That's a travesty too. They are supposed to get their readers' questions answered, not the owners of the press."

"Benjamin Franklin would be appalled by such tactics. It's what the British did before the American Revolution. To believe that the UAW is the champion of the working class is dead wrong; they are the champions of the investors."

"I applaud the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* for going there and standing up."

To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>