

FBI raids UAW President Gary Jones' home, as workers vote to strike at GM, Ford and Chrysler

By Marcus Day
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The WSWS Autoworker Newsletter is holding an emergency online conference call Thursday, August 29, at 7:30 p.m. EDT to discuss a plan of action for rank-and-file autoworkers to take the contract negotiations out of the hands of the corrupt UAW and launch an international fight back for workers' interests. We urge all autoworkers to register and participate.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation and Internal Revenue Service raided the home of United Auto Workers President Gary Jones, the California home of former UAW President Dennis Williams, and a number of other UAW locations Wednesday morning, marking a major escalation of the years-long US federal investigation into corruption and bribery of UAW leaders.

"They were on the floor [of Jones' garage] counting cash, going through the wads," one eyewitness told the *Detroit News*. "They pulled out a five-foot tube that was a UAW banner. They were really examining the golf clubs."

The six-hour raid by federal agents of the home of one of the most prominent national UAW officials, coming on the eve of the expiration of contracts for over 155,000 General Motors, Ford and Fiat Chrysler workers, is virtually unprecedented.

The raids come on the heels of the expansion of the corruption indictments to officials from the UAW-GM department, including Michael Grimes, the top aide of former UAW Vice President Joe Ashton (who has also been implicated). They underscore what the vast majority of autoworkers know: that the UAW is a criminal syndicate, completely hostile to workers' interests.

The extreme crisis confronting the UAW coincides with and is compounded by surging militancy among autoworkers and their determination to carry out a serious struggle, including a nationwide strike. Strike

authorizations by thousands of workers continued to come in almost unanimously Wednesday. Ford's Kansas City Assembly—which employs nearly 7,000 workers—registered 98.4 percent "yes." Ford's Dearborn Truck (4,000 workers) and Louisville and Kentucky Truck (combined, over 12,000 workers) each registered 99 percent "yes."

Judging from initial reports, a sweeping and carefully planned operation was carried out by federal agents Wednesday, with multiple search warrants across the country being executed. Among the targeted sites that have been identified thus far are:

- The home of current UAW President Gary Jones
- The UAW Black Lake Conference Center, which is funded by interest from workers' dues, where retired UAW President Williams is having a private cabin built
- The California home of former UAW President Dennis Williams, which was purchased in January for over \$600,000, according to the *Detroit News*
- The office of UAW Region 5 in Hazelwood, Missouri, where Jones was director until last year, and which is the registered address of his charity, "5 Game Changers"
- The St. Louis home of Vance Pearson, current director of UAW Region 5
- The Wisconsin home of Amy Loasching, a former aide to Dennis Williams and reportedly the secretary and treasurer of his non-profit charity, "The Williams Charity Fund"

The raids are the latest and most explosive development yet in the UAW's ever-widening corruption, bribery and kickback scandal, which first burst into the open over two years ago.

The limitless criminality and greed of the union bureaucracy has included one crooked scheme after

another: dummy charities and phony vendors; massive sums squandered on luxury goods and all-expense paid vacations in Palm Springs and elsewhere for UAW big-wigs; and millions of dollars of corporate bribes funneling through joint union-management “training centers” in order to secure “company-friendly agreements.”

The sprawling illegal payments, however, have coincided with numerous “legal” means by which the companies have channeled funds into the union apparatus. All the while, beginning with the first concessions contract at Chrysler in 1979, the UAW has rammed through givebacks and suppressed workers’ opposition. This has resulted in countless shuttered plants, hundreds of thousands of layoffs, and the precipitous decline of wages and working conditions.

Workers contacted by the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* Wednesday responded angrily but were by no means surprised. A worker at the Ford Louisville Assembly Plant said, “They’ll be after the locals next. They’re the ones who voted all IUAW people in and gave them a 30 percent, \$45,000 a year, raise. All you have to do is go to OLMS [the US Labor Department’s Office of Labor-Management Standards] website and check the LM-2 reports to see them hiding money under other [union business] non-itemized disbursements. They’re all crooked.”

Referring to the decades of UAW-backed concessions that have gutted the wages and conditions of autoworkers, a Toledo Jeep worker said, “There has to be justice for all the victims of their greed.”

A senior worker at GM’s Wentzville Assembly Plant in the St. Louis suburbs said, “The membership is pretty pissed about all this. Clean house from top to bottom is what is being said. Anyone who stole more than their yearly salary, take their pension and lock them up. Those that stole less than their yearly salary should pay the money back, and lock them up too.”

She noted that workers view the motives of the federal government with suspicion. “Everyone is saying it’s a political ploy.”

Workers cannot place any faith in the Trump administration’s Justice Department. State officials are not pursuing the investigation out of any interest in defending workers. Rather, there is immense fear within the ruling class that the UAW is so discredited among workers, after forcing through decades of brutal concessions, that it will prove unable on its own to force through the demands of the auto companies in the coming

contracts.

The danger exists that the government will seek to intervene directly and create conditions for a settlement entirely on the company’s terms, either through placing the UAW under federal trusteeship—as was done with the Teamsters in the late 1980s under the Bush administration—or through some kind of forced arbitration.

In an effort at damage control, the UAW released a statement Wednesday saying that Jones had fully cooperated with government investigators and is “determined to uncover and address any and all wrongdoing, wherever it might lead.”

Taking workers for fools, it implored them to place their trust in an organization which has spent decades wrecking their wages and working conditions: “Trust in UAW leadership is never more important than during the bargaining process, when profit-laden auto companies stand to benefit from media leaks, false assumptions, and political grandstanding. The sole focus of President Jones and his team will be winning at the bargaining table for our members.”

The UAW is a criminal outfit from top to bottom, but it is up to autoworkers themselves to settle accounts with it.

Workers should act quickly: hold meetings independently of the UAW, and form rank-and-file committees to take the conduct of the contract struggle out of the hands of the UAW bureaucrats. The bribed UAW bargaining committee should be tossed out and a rank-and-file committee made up of the most militant and trusted workers formed, to fight for the demands that autoworkers and their families need, not what the corporations, the UAW and both big business parties say is affordable.

Preparations must be made now to carry out a nation-wide strike when the contracts expire and to spread it to union and non-union workers throughout the entire auto and auto parts industry, while appealing to workers in Canada, Mexico and around the world for joint cross-border industrial action.

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