

# In DNC speech, UAW President Fain covers up role of Democrats and union bureaucrats in mass layoffs

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*The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) is holding a meeting this Sunday, August 25, at 3:00 p.m. US Eastern Time, “For global action to defend jobs at Warren Truck and around the world!” To register, click here.*

The Democratic National Convention, as the WSWS predicted, has had a totally unreal character. Since it began Monday, speaker after speaker has presented a rosy picture, totally disconnected from reality, of the United States and this right-wing capitalist party.

One low point came with the appearance of United Auto Workers President Shawn Fain on Monday night. Fain gave fulsome praise to the Biden administration and Kamala Harris as defenders of the working class. “Harris,” he proclaimed, “is one of us.”

Who is “us?” Presumably, Fain meant for the TV audience to think he was responding to workers, but there were no workers in attendance in the hall. Instead, the crowd was packed with celebrities, businessmen, upper-middle class professionals and trade union functionaries, which form the base of the Democratic Party, as well as Democratic politicians themselves.

These forces are a million miles away from and deeply hostile to the working class. This was expressed in the fact that none of them, least of all Fain, could give an honest picture of the immense social hardship facing workers as a result of bipartisan class war policies.

Fain played to the cameras as a spokesman for the working class, but he is not a workers’ leader. He is a bureaucrat and political operative with decades of experience bargaining away massive concessions and placing the burden on the backs of the workers. He and the UAW bureaucracy are currently helping impose massive layoffs in the auto industry, made possible through a sellout contract rammed through with lies in 2023.

Fain was elected union president in early 2023 with the votes of just 6 percent of eligible UAW members, in a federally supervised election where hundreds of thousands of autoworkers never received ballots. This was an operation to repair the credibility of the UAW, among the most politically

prominent unions in the US, by elevating a fake “reformer” from within the apparatus.

Fain ran against Will Lehman, a socialist autoworker running on a platform of abolishing the bureaucracy. In a union debate (see below), Fain argued that Lehman’s opposition to the bureaucracy made him unfit for office. Now, he and other officials are being investigated for corruption, while a judge ruled in favor of a lawsuit by Lehman over irregularities in the 2022 vote. There is growing support for new elections, overseen by the workers.

On Monday night, Fain spoke in Chicago as a spokesman for the corporatist alliance between the bureaucrats, management and the government, especially the Democratic Party. This has existed for decades but has been brought to new heights under Biden, who is seeking to use the apparatus to strangle opposition from below and limit or prevent strikes.

Fain used his speech to promote the recent sellout contract, which followed a “standup strike” last year designed to avoid impacting production. “Last fall we achieved life-changing gains in our strike at the Big Three,” he said. “We even won a commitment to reopen a closed plant not too far from here [Belvidere Assembly Plant].” He concluded, “We were able to do that thanks to the support of Kamala Harris and Joe Biden.”

The main “life-changing” impact of the contract is that thousands of people have lost their jobs. The union knew these layoffs were coming but kept quiet to get the deal passed.

Earlier Monday, the UAW announced a “threat” to strike over Stellantis delaying its plans to reopen Belvidere—which in fact, the contract allows them to do, only underscoring that the deal is not legitimate. Even in making the announcement, however, the UAW stressed that it was not “their goal” to strike.

But Fain said nothing about the 2,500 planned layoffs at Warren Truck near Detroit or the thousands of supplemental workers whom the union promised would be rolled over to full-time status and instead have been fired.

Fain’s crediting of the Biden White House for the new contract is not totally hot air, however. Biden openly backed the contract, appearing at a “back-to-work rally” alongside

Fain, and opposite thousands of anti-genocide protesters. As in every major contract over the past four years, the White House has been centrally involved, with the aim of working with management and the union bureaucrats.

The UAW promises it will do “whatever is necessary at Stellantis or any other corporation to stand up and hold corporate America accountable.” But only hours before, the union bureaucracy sprang a snap contract vote on Dakkota parts workers to shut down their three-week strike, with terms identical to the proposal workers rejected earlier. The obvious purpose is to keep the parts workers isolated from Stellantis workers and others at the Big Three.

Citing empty photo-ops at the picket line, Fain declared Harris “stands shoulder to shoulder with workers when they are on strike.” In fact, the White House’s real attitude to strikes was shown in 2022, when it worked with Congress to ban a national strike by railroad workers.

The centerpiece of Fain’s speech was an attack on the billionaire Trump as a “scab.” When he unveiled this line, he theatrically removed his jacket, recalling Hulk Hogan ripping off his shirt at the Republican National Congress.

“Donald Trump did not bring back the auto industry,” Fain said. “When Donald Trump was president, auto plants closed. Trump did nothing!” Fain cited specifically the closure of GM’s Lordstown, Ohio plant, which he blamed entirely on Trump.

It takes one to know one, as the saying goes. Fain and the UAW bureaucrats are scabs: The plant closures he referred to, especially Lordstown, were all signed off on by the UAW bureaucracy. As for his claim that Biden “brought jobs back to Lordstown,” this is a reference to the Ultium battery plant where workers make poverty wages and work 12-hour shifts. Jobs are being “brought back,” with the support of the UAW, on the basis of cheap labor.

Calling Donald Trump a “scab” actually trivializes the real danger which Trump represents. Trump is a fascist. His program is to impose “national unity” by smashing the working class and ripping up their democratic rights. He is openly discussing sending US troops to the border and to major cities in a second term and is floating plans to rule as a dictator, declaring that if he is elected, “you will never have to vote again.”

American fascism, however, would only be a first step in preparing for massive new wars, especially against China.

Fain’s description of Trump as a “scab” is in keeping with the Democrats’ general downplaying of the danger he represents, referring to his campaign as “weird” instead of fascist, while their own feckless response to the January 6 coup attempt is the main reason that he remains at large and could win a second term.

Fain and the Democrats cannot draw attention to this because the class essence of their policies are, at bottom, the same as Trump’s. Both support nationalism, attacks on democratic

rights and war.

In particular, the UAW is steeped in decades of race-baiting against foreign and immigrant workers as responsible for taking American jobs. At Stellantis, Fain is promoting “America First” nationalism, demanding that “overseas executives” keep promises to “invest in America,” while ignoring layoffs by “American” executives both in the US and around the world.

Yet with consummate cynicism, Fain attacked Trump’s racism as “divide and conquer.” This is true, but Fain and the bureaucracy are doing the same thing.

To be blunt, there is little difference in substance between Fain’s speech and the one which Teamsters head Sean O’Brien gave to the Republican National Convention last month, where he accused stateless “international” elites of disloyalty to the United States. To the extent that O’Brien’s overtures to Trump have met with criticism from other union officials, they have not been for his ultra-nationalism, but only his choice of venue.

What Fain’s attacks on Trump boil down to is the claim that Biden, and not Trump, is the real nationalist.

Monday’s speech showed workers the lineup of forces that they are up against. As Will Lehman wrote on Twitter/X:

Watching the Democratic and Republican conventions this summer has illustrated how rotten and bankrupt both capitalist political parties are, whether it’s Sean O’Brien endorsing Trump or Fain endorsing Harris. Harris and Trump represent different factions of the ruling class. The defense of jobs and the rights of working people requires the rank and file to take the initiative ourselves, to link across plants and fight not for what the corporations want but for what we need. Join me in this fight and build rank-and-file committees in your workplace today.



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