

SMART union endorses fascist Republican Senator Josh Hawley

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The Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART) union has endorsed fascist senator from Missouri Josh Hawley for reelection this month. RealClearPolitics reported that SMART legislative director Greg Hynes sent a letter to Hawley on September 13 informing the senator of the union's support. Hawley is currently running for his second term as senator against Democrat Lucas Kuncie.

SMART also earlier endorsed Joe Biden, and then his replacement Kamala Harris, in the presidential election. SMART justified their endorsement of Hawley on the grounds of his "dedication to enhancing rail safety and protecting railroad employees."

The SMART bureaucracy, which controls over 200,000 members, is only the latest to throw in its lot with fascism. Earlier this month, the Teamsters announced they would not formally endorse a presidential candidate, a move universally acknowledged as de-facto endorsement of Trump. The move came after months of courtship between Teamsters General President Sean O'Brien and Trump, culminating in O'Brien's appearance at the Republican National Convention.

Hawley praised O'Brien's ultranationalist speech at the RNC in a fascistic op-ed blending criticism of corporations for outsourcing jobs overseas and for pushing "the religion of the trans flag." O'Brien, in turn, voiced his support for Hawley's statement on X/Twitter.

In justifying its endorsement, SMART referenced Hawley's support for a federal bill that would have required railroad companies to maintain two-person crews. Union statements on Hawley in the past have also praised him for supporting legislation to provide railroaders with seven days of paid sick leave, while failing to note that the bill was part of a strike-breaking operation from Republicans and Democrats to prevent a national rail strike in late 2022.

This justification is false to the core. The SMART bureaucracy has spent decades helping impose these exact same concessions. It has just released an agreement with BNSF to impose one-person crews. SMART, along with the other major rail unions, blocked a national strike in 2022 until it was preemptively banned by President Biden and Congress.

The reality is that SMART has endorsed Hawley not in spite of, but *because of* his fascist, "America-First" politics.

Hawley's politics

Hawley is a leading figure in the Republican fascist right. He was a leading co-conspirator in Trump's efforts to overturn the 2020 election on January 6, 2021, has routinely attacked LGBTQ and trans people, opposes the right to abortion and is a supporter of Trump's vicious attacks on immigrants.

While supporting the Israeli genocide in Gaza, he has used antisemitic rhetoric, criticizing what he called "cosmopolitan elites" for abandoning the "American middle" in the interests of a "powerful upper class and their cosmopolitan priorities." The term "cosmopolitan elites" was used by the Nazis as an antisemitic code word for Jews.

Hawley's remarks, given during a speech in 2019 at the National Conservatism Conference, laid out his fascistic views. He decried that "The cosmopolitan elite look down on the common affections that once bound this nation together: things like place and national feeling and religious faith. They regard our inherited traditions as oppressive and our shared institutions—like family and neighborhood and church—as backwards."

This conception of "shared institutions" returned in his response to O'Brien's speech. "There was a time," he wrote, "when Republicans knew that American strength depends squarely on American workers—and their way of life: family, neighborhood, church, union hall."

Right-wing populism

With the Republican Party, Hawley's role in recent months has been to help craft a right-wing populist appeal, building up alliances in particular with sections of the union apparatus.

Once a supporter of right-to-work and an opponent of raising the minimum wage, Hawley has over recent years embraced a number of reformist policies, including raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour for large corporations, capping insulin prices at \$35, reversing the Citizens United ruling that

allowed unlimited corporate money into elections, and rail safety legislation.

Hawley has even gone so far as to call himself the “most pro-labor Republican” and has criticized members of his own party who supported “corporate tax cuts and low barriers for corporate trade then watched those same corporations ship American jobs overseas,” saying the Republicans should “start prioritizing the working man.” He even visited the picket lines of striking auto workers last fall.

He has also made certain criticisms of the unpopular war in Ukraine, opposed bringing Ukraine into NATO, voted against bringing Finland and Sweden into NATO, and voiced opposition to US military operations in the Middle East.

However, Hawley “opposes” the war in Ukraine mainly because he believes these resources would be better put to use in the upcoming war against China. “American might is not limitless,” said Hawley at the Center for a New American Security, “nor are the lives and treasure of the American people. Now we must make hard choices and articulate clear priorities in order to meet the challenge before us.

In a letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken opposing plans to bring Ukraine into NATO just prior to the outbreak of war, Hawley argued that Ukrainian membership would not serve US interests. Instead, he argued, China “could harness that region’s resources to further propel its rise, while restricting U.S. access to many of the world’s most important markets.”

The bureaucracy and fascism

As the WSWs earlier observed when O’Brien spoke at the RNC, the union apparatus is a natural base of support for fascism. Because it is “completely integrated with management, dependent on its ties with the state, the bureaucracy is deeply hostile to the working class.”

We continued: “The unions are run as bureaucratic dictatorships, never hesitating to resort to fraud and even violence to overcome resistance from the rank and file. Politically, the bureaucracy is dominated by nationalism and anticommunism, which expresses its mortal fear of the revolutionary threat posed by the working class.”

The bureaucracy finds itself in agreement with the words of Mussolini: “Fascism is likewise opposed to trade unionism as a class weapon. But when brought within the orbit of the State, Fascism recognizes the real needs which gave rise to ... trade unionism.”

Bureaucrats like O’Brien and at SMART are treading the same path of Edmondo Rossoni, the Italian trade union leader who embraced fascism and became Mussolini’s leader of the General Confederation of Fascist Syndical Corporations, the

fascist-run trade unions.

However, the Democratic Party, indifferent to and hostile to the needs of the working class and obsessed with the war in Ukraine, bears their own responsibility for this development. Biden’s own trade union policy is aimed at using the apparatus to prepare the home front for war, summed up in his recent statement that the AFL-CIO is his “domestic NATO.” While Biden is not a fascist, this corporatist alliance bears more than a passing similarity with the policies under Mussolini.

Their joining hands with Republicans in slandering all opposition to the Gaza genocide as “antisemitic” creates the conditions where genuine antisemites like Hawley, Trump and others can operate with virtual impunity.

The turn of a section of the bureaucracy toward fascism is a serious warning. It raises the urgent necessity of an independent movement of the rank-and-file against the bureaucracy. This parasitic layer must be smashed, and power returned to the workers on the shop floor.

Two years ago, railroad workers rebelled against the sellouts by the SMART apparatus and those of the other rail unions, organizing the Railroad Workers Rank-and-File Committee to push for a national strike and to prepare workers for government intervention by Biden and Congress. The work of this committee must continue, directed against not only the railroads but against the entire rotten corporate political system.

The RWRFC is part of a global movement, the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees, which includes striking Boeing workers, autoworkers, UPS workers and others. Only by leveraging the independent power of the working class can the danger of dictatorship and war be stopped.



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