

UAW President Shawn Fain declares his willingness to “work” with fascist Trump

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The following statement was issued by Will Lehman, the Pennsylvania Mack Trucks workers who ran as a socialist candidate for United Auto Workers president in 2022.

United Auto Workers President Shawn Fain has declared the UAW open for business to the new fascist administration. This was the meaning of his editorial in the *Washington Post* on Sunday, headlined, “I’m president of the UAW. We’re ready to work with Trump.”

Fain has gone almost overnight from presenting himself as a so-called “militant,” “democratic unionist,” spouting slogans like “eat the rich” and denouncing Trump as a scab, to announcing his willingness to collaborate with the most right-wing government in US history.

This exposes, without a shadow of a doubt, that the union bureaucracy is a vicious enemy of the working class, ready to work with this government of corporate oligarchs and fascists to destroy all of workers’ hard won rights. The conclusion which workers must draw is: This apparatus cannot be “reformed” but must be smashed and replaced with rank-and-file committees, organs of workers’ power.

Fain’s olive branch to Trump is the continuation and outcome of his pro-capitalist and nationalist policies from the start. The long-time UAW bureaucrat was installed in the UAW presidency to bolster the credibility of the union officialdom, wracked by scandal and hated by workers. In 2023, Fain worked with Biden to impose a sellout contract on GM, Ford and Stellantis workers after his bogus “standup strike,” which resulted in thousands of job cuts.

Only a few months ago Fain endorsed Kamala Harris, hoping to continue the corrupt relations under Biden. But after the collapse of the Democrats—hated for their endless wars and indifference to the social catastrophe facing workers—Fain has switched sides with ease. If there is any friction, it will come from Trump’s side.

Fain is only the latest labor bureaucrat to cozy up to Trump. Teamsters President Sean O’Brien, another so-called reformer, was an honored guest at Trump’s inauguration. International Longshore Association President Harold Daggett called Trump a “hero” earlier this month after

preventing a strike by more than 40,000 dock workers that would have developed into a direct clash with the incoming administration.

The leaders of the teachers unions have also expressed their willingness to collaborate with Trump, particularly after announcing his nominee for US Labor Secretary, Lori-Chavez DeRemer, who supports the PRO Act. The union bureaucracy is happy as long as it keeps its dues money flowing and is given a “seat at the table” to suppress strikes and do the bidding of its corporate masters.

Fain particularly signaled his support for Trump’s trade war “America First” policies. He said:

We do not agree with Trump on much of his domestic agenda, but we hope to find common ground on overhauling our devastating trade policies and rebuilding U.S. manufacturing. Trump has promised to enact tariffs to protect workers, and we agree that tariffs are a necessary tool ... We agree that we need a strong system of tariffs that serve the national and working-class interest. Tariffs should bring jobs back to America, put products in communities such as Belvidere, Illinois, and push companies to invest in good jobs, not exploit workers abroad.

Here Fain is repeating the same lies as Trump, who made a specific nationalist appeal to autoworkers during his inauguration speech. No doubt some of my coworkers have been taken in by this protectionist rhetoric. But they are sorely mistaken. The decades-long destruction of jobs, which has occurred in every country, is not the product of “unfair” trade deals but of capitalism.

Trump hopes that his trade war measures will boost the profits of the American oligarchs against their foreign rivals and divide workers along national lines. This includes the world’s richest man, Elon Musk, whose Tesla factories are

notorious sweatshops, even by the declining standards of the US auto industry.

As historical experience, including the deindustrialization of the 1980s, has proven, protectionism is inevitably bound up with new and even more savage cuts to jobs and living standards in the name of making American capitalism more “competitive.” Long before Trump appeared on the national political stage, the UAW bureaucrats were shouting about “America First.”

This coincided with violent anti-Japanese campaigns and racist incitement against immigrants, including the 1982 murder of Chinese-American engineer Vincent Chin. This never saved a single job, but served to divide workers and conceal the UAW bureaucracy’s own role in enforcing mass layoffs and pay cuts that devastated Detroit and other cities.

Fain’s separation of “domestic” from “foreign” policies is false to the core. Trump and the oligarchy have a single policy of class war all over the world. It begins with the war against immigrants, workplace raids and mass deportations targeting many of our brothers and sisters in the auto industry, and it will expand to a general war against the social and democratic rights of all workers.

This is shown by Trump’s moves to overturn the Constitution and destroy birthright citizenship. Under this plan, citizenship rights will no longer be guaranteed to everyone who is born in the United States but only those who demonstrate their “obedience” and “allegiance” to the government. This means any worker who strikes or protests plans to cut Social Security and other vital programs to fund corporate tax cuts could be stripped of their most elemental democratic rights.

America First nationalism also goes hand-in-hand with new imperialist war. For the last two years, Fain has been promoting the “Arsenal of Democracy” under Biden. He drew this slogan from the war economy during WWII in order to prepare the working class for WWIII. Only now Trump is dispensing with the pretense that wars are fought for “democracy” and openly declaring his plans to seize resources and territory by annexing Greenland, the Panama Canal and perhaps even Canada.

It will be workers and their children who are sent to fight these wars; and it will be the working class that pays for them.

The working class is an international class, which today is more connected through a single process of global production than in any other period in history. Workers in America cannot defend themselves at the expense of workers in every other country.

The solution for workers is not America First but the unity of the working class around the world, including VW workers fighting massive job cuts in Germany and Stellantis

workers in Italy, the UK and other countries.

In 2022, I ran for UAW president based on such a platform . I connected the fight for the international unity of the working class with socialist politics, including the expropriation of the corporate and financial oligarchy and the reorganization of economic and political life to meet the needs of the working class. In opposition to the the Democratic Socialists of America, UAWD, *Labor Notes* and all those who claimed Fain would reform the union, I insisted that workers had to abolish the UAW apparatus and put power in the hands of workers on the shop floor.

Now, like the UAW president himself, those pseudo-left forces who promoted Fain have proven to be nothing but accomplices of Trump and his fascist government.

As the naked class interests that Trump represents become clear to millions, including those who voted for him, working-class opposition will grow. But this rebellion can only be developed if workers consciously reject the nationalist and pro-capitalist poison long promoted by the UAW bureaucracy and both corporate-controlled parties.

This means expanding the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees into every factory and workplace. The fight against job cuts and capitalist exploitation must be combined with the defense of our immigrant co-workers and opposition to wars for profit. The massive wealth and concentration of economic power in the hands of Musk and other oligarchs must be broken and their vast private fortunes expropriated so they can be used for social needs. This is the only way that jobs and high living standards can be guaranteed to all, and democracy prevail over fascism and dictatorship.



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