

Kucinich pushes anti-Chinese chauvinism in visit to Cooper Tire lockout

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7 February 2012

The United Steelworkers (USW) invited US Congressman Dennis Kucinich to Findlay, Ohio Saturday, providing the long-time Democratic Party politician with a platform to posture as a friend of the locked out Cooper Tire workers.

Kucinich's visit was timed to coincide with the first negotiations between the company and the USW since mid-December. Kucinich claimed the talks were a sign of "progress" forced on the company, adding, "chances are, you are going to protect your standard of living."

In fact, Cooper management was waiting for the USW to push through a concessions contract on 1,500 workers at its other unionized plant in Texarkana, Arkansas, thereby leaving the Findlay workers to fight alone. With all the initiative on its side—and the USW in its pocket—the company feels it can ram through it demands.

Such an outcome can only be prevented if workers wrench control of the struggle from the USW bureaucrats.

Well aware of this, Kucinich sought to conceal the conflict between the rank-and-file and the USW. In the face of growing opposition from rank-and-file workers, he sought to provide a boost to the unions, which he said were waging a heroic struggle to defend the "fundamental democratic rights" to organize, strike and earn decent wages and benefits.

The Democratic congressman then sought to frame the struggle at Cooper Tire in nationalist terms, denouncing companies that didn't work with the unions as "un-American." The unions were engaged in a fight to "keep America free," above all, from Chinese "communism," he said.

"If (Cooper) could get the Steelworkers to work for \$10 an hour, they'd do it...Well, I'm not ready to be like China ... where they have cheap labor and they don't have their democratic rights," Kucinich told reporters afterwards.

"If you want to have a free country, people have to

make a decent living, they have to be able to negotiate. This isn't communist China. It's still the United States of America, and I'm here to support these workers who are trying to do the right thing for their families and for their country, frankly."

Several things must be said about Kucinich's anti-Chinese and red baiting rant.

First of all, Cooper Tire is doing exactly what every other American corporation is doing—slashing wages and benefits in order to boost the profits of its top executives and Wall Street investors.

Secondly, the attack on workers is fully supported by Kucinich's political party—the Democrats—and the president he backed to the hilt, Barack Obama. Obama initiated the policy of savage wage cuts in the 2009 attack on GM and Chrysler workers.

To the extent that Obama has a "jobs policy," it is to systematically close the wage gap between US workers and their brutally exploited counterparts in China and other countries to convince American and international corporations to relocate their manufacturing operations in the US. In this, the White House has the full backing of the USW and other unions.

Despite Kucinich's claims, China is not a communist or socialist country. More than two decades ago, the Stalinist bureaucracy in Beijing restored capitalism. This was achieved through the violent suppression of the working class, which culminated in the crushing of the protests in Tiananmen Square in 1989 and the mass repression that followed.

It was precisely at this point that American-based corporations and others flooded investment into China to exploit the conditions of cheap labor and police state rule.

By presenting the struggle of American workers in nationalistic and anti-communist terms, Kucinich is seeking to conceal who the real enemy is—the capitalist profit system and the two big business parties that defend

it. Workers have learned from bitter experience that such flag-waving appeals by the trade union bureaucracy have not saved a single job. On the contrary, they have only been used to extract one concession after another, in the name of making US corporations “more competitive.”

Even more ominously, Kucinich is mouthing his anti-Chinese poison as the Obama administration is stepping up its plans for trade war and future military action against China. American nationalism only drives a wedge between American and Chinese workers—who have in recent months engaged in mass strikes and struggles—and lays the groundwork for a war that would have devastating consequences for humanity.

As for Kucinich’s remarks about “freedom,” he defends a president who has declared his right to imprison or assassinate US citizens without trial. Last year, Democratic Party governors and their Republican counterparts dispatched thousands of police in riot gear to arrest and crush the anti-Wall Street protests.

In its manic drive for ever-greater profits, the American ruling class is putting into place the machinery of a police state to crush popular resistance to social inequality. It that regard, workers must take a warning from Obama’s repeated pledge that he will do everything to convince US corporations to relocate their production from China to the US.

The attempt to massively reduce the living conditions of the working class can only be re-imposed in the US through dictatorship. That is the logic of the capitalist system, which Kucinich, Obama and the trade union bureaucracy defend.

The aim of Kucinich, as with the USW, is to prevent workers at Cooper Tire and throughout the country from drawing the necessary conclusion from their struggles: that the defense of their democratic and social rights is bound up with a struggle against the profit system and its political defenders, including above all the Democratic Party.



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