

UAW endorses Clinton, “Wall Street’s presidential darling”

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27 May 2016

On Wednesday the United Auto Workers formally endorsed Hillary Clinton for president of the United States. While the UAW’s endorsement of the Democratic frontrunner was no surprise, its embrace of the candidate with the closest ties to Wall Street and the American military intelligence apparatus is nevertheless significant. It underscores the gaping chasm between this corporatist organization and the workers it fraudulently claims to speak for.

UAW President Dennis Williams made the announcement on MSNBC’s “Hardball with Chris Matthews,” saying the UAW executive board had unanimously endorsed Clinton and “all our members will be with us.” Williams claimed the decision had come after polling members and holding “focus groups” that showed “very close” numbers for Clinton and Bernie Sanders. Republican Donald Trump got the support of 28 percent of those polled, Williams said.

The UAW’s endorsement comes amidst a deepening political crisis for the Clinton campaign. Though she has declared the Democratic primaries effectively over, she is widely despised by Democratic Party primary voters. There is far greater support for the self-described democratic socialist Bernie Sanders, who defeated Clinton in Michigan and Indiana—two centers of the auto industry.

The day after the UAW endorsed Clinton, CNBC reported that Clinton has “been Wall Street’s presidential darling so far by a large margin,” noting that she had taken in a “stunning haul from the finance industry—just shy of \$27 million and counting, according to the latest filings as analyzed by OpenSecrets.org.”

Significantly, while endorsing Clinton, Williams had difficulty concealing his sympathy for Trump’s nationalist tirades against Mexico and China and said

nothing about the fascistic candidate’s anti-immigrant agitation. Williams said the UAW “was with Trump” on what he said about taxing Ford if it moved production to Mexico. The problem, Williams said, was that Trump supported lowering wages to “compete” with Mexico, something the UAW said it would never support.

In fact, the UAW has conspired with the companies and big-business politicians for decades to lower the wages of autoworkers. In particular, it worked with Obama, who insisted on cutting the wages of new hires in half as a condition for the 2009 bailout of General Motors and Chrysler. The UAW will have no problem supporting similar demands if Clinton or Trump reaches the White House.

If the UAW delayed its endorsement for this long it is because it was seeking more commitments from Clinton to wage trade war on behalf of US companies. Clinton, whom Trump has criticized for supporting the North American Free Trade Agreement, obliged by issuing a statement that dripped with the virulent national chauvinism long associated with the UAW and other unions.

Responding to the endorsement, Clinton said, “autoworkers need more than tough talk on trade. They need a president who knows how to compete and win for American workers. I have said for years that I want to see NAFTA renegotiated to give American workers a level playing field. And we need to take on new challenges, like weak auto ‘rules of origin’ standards that provide a backdoor for Chinese steel and other products into the US. We’re going to throw the book at China and stop them from cheating American workers.”

In its statement, the UAW added that Clinton would “empower a new chief trade prosecutor who will report

directly to her and aggressively combat trade violations. She also will triple the number of trade enforcement officers and crack down on currency manipulation that hurts American workers,” and create “high standards for domestic sourcing and ‘buy American’ laws.”

This nationalist poison has long been the stock-in-trade of the UAW, which is bound up with its ever-closer collaboration and integration into the structure of corporate management. According to the UAW, Clinton, Sanders and Trump, it is not capitalism that is responsible for the destruction of millions of jobs and the pitting of workers around the world in a fratricidal race to the bottom, but “unfair trade deals” that give advantage to China and other economic competitors.

The nationalism of the UAW is used to divide American workers from their brothers and sisters around the world who are waging a struggle against the same transnational corporations. It is also aimed at creating the political climate to justify an escalation of imperialist militarism and war against China. In this regard, the UAW and Clinton, the most hawkish of all the capitalist candidates in the elections, are marching in lockstep.

Clinton knows full well that the UAW is a tool of corporate management and the government, and she assured the UAW and other unions that if elected, “organized labor will always have a champion in the White House and a seat at the table.” She specifically expressed her support for the UAW drive to “organize” the Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The joint efforts of the German-based automaker and its in-house union, IG Metall, to install the UAW has repeatedly run into the opposition of workers at the plant, as well as laws prohibiting company-controlled unions.

Clinton, echoing President Obama, boasted, “The US auto industry has come roaring back from the great recession and just posted its best year ever,” attributing this to the hard work and creativity of American workers. In fact, the vast profits, which have been used to enrich wealthy investors and top executives, are the result of relentless attacks, aided and abetted by the UAW, on the jobs, wages, benefits and work conditions of autoworkers.

In exchange for collaborating with Obama during the 2009 auto industry restructuring, the UAW was given

control of billions of dollars in corporate stocks as part of a deal to take over the provision of retiree health care benefits and relieve the employers of any further obligations. Holding the largest block of GM stocks, the UAW also has a “seat at the table” on GM’s corporate board of directors.

The UAW barely survived a near-rebellion by rank-and-file autoworkers last fall, after Fiat Chrysler workers voted down the first UAW-backed national labor agreement in 33 years. It was only able to ram through the sellout deals by resorting to lies, threats and vote fraud. The new four-year deals retain the hated two-tier wage and benefit system and contain labor cost increases to below the rate of inflation.

The UAW endorsement of Hillary Clinton is a marriage made in heaven, or better yet Wall Street. They both share the fear that the UAW will not be able to survive another upheaval by autoworkers who, like tens of millions of other workers, are being radicalized by unprecedented social inequality, unending wars and the turn by the corporate and financial oligarchy in the US and around the world to ever more authoritarian forms of rule.



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