

# As anger grows against Carrier deal, United Steelworkers grovels before Trump

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The pro-company, anti-worker character of the recently announced deal between President elect Donald Trump and heating and cooling manufacturer Carrier is quickly being exposed.

As opposed to initial claims by President-elect Trump and the United Steelworkers that 1,100 jobs would be saved, only 730 production jobs and 70 maintenance jobs out of 1,400 current positions would remain in Indianapolis. The deal also sanctions the shutdown of Carrier's Huntington, Indiana, plant and the elimination of 700 more jobs. The jobs of more than 500 production workers would still be affected by outsourcing to Mexico.

For its part, Carrier's parent, United Technologies (UTC), will profit enormously, pocketing \$7 million in state tax breaks over the next ten years. In addition, Trump promised the UTC boss, Gregory Hayes, that he would "reform" federal tax codes and regulations that would allow Hayes "to print money."

The United Steelworkers had initially bestowed effusive praise on the deal brokered by Trump. However, facing growing worker anger as details became available, the USW Local 1999 president who oversees the Indianapolis Carrier plant, Chuck Jones, told the *Washington Post* Tuesday that Trump "lied his ass off" about the number of jobs saved at the factory.

The next day, Trump, in his characteristic thuggish manner, responded with several Twitter posts attacking Jones. In the first post, he wrote, "Chuck Jones, who is President of United Steelworkers 1999, has done a terrible job representing workers. No wonder companies flee country!" Later he followed up with, "If United Steelworkers 1999 was any good, they would have kept those jobs in Indiana. Spend more time working-less time talking. Reduce dues."

Following Trump's outburst, Jones reported

receiving phone threats, including against his wife and children.

In an interview with MSNBC News following the exchange between Trump and Jones, USW President Leo Gerard said he would not let Trump's attack stand in the way of forging closer collaboration with the incoming administration. Expressing "disappointment" with Trump's comments, he called Jones a "hero."

Gerard went on to defend the record of the USW against Trump's suggestion that excessive wage demands were responsible for driving companies like Carrier to seek cheaper labor overseas.

The steelworkers chief noted that the USW had offered massive concessions to Carrier, only to be rebuffed. "Our union offered Carrier 'what would it take to keep you here' and they said, 'there is nothing you could do to keep us here unless you would work for under \$5 an hour.'" As it stood, the USW accepted huge concessions at Carrier, including a three-tier wage scale with starting pay at the near poverty level of \$14 an hour.

Gerard went on to complain, "The USW has been fighting the export of jobs to developing countries for more than 35 years. We could not work low enough in wages and benefits to maintain jobs against Mexican workers, against Chinese workers, against Bangladeshi workers or Vietnamese workers."

These remarks demonstrate that the USW functions as a fifth column for management. If the USW has not yet been able to force down wages to third world levels, it has not been for lack of effort, but due to the bitter resistance of US workers to poverty wages.

In recent contracts at ArcelorMittal and US Steel, the USW forced through concession-laden deals imposing higher out of pocket health care costs, an effective wage freeze and other cuts. At Allegheny Technologies

(ATI), the USW forced through a concessions deal after deliberately isolating workers during a six-month lockout.

While the USW claims it has fought to defend jobs, the reality is the union collaborated with billionaire asset stripper Wilbur Ross, recently named as Trump's Commerce Secretary, to shut down whole sections of the steel industry. In the process, workers were robbed of their pensions while the financial assets of the USW were preserved.

In his remarks to MSNBC, Gerard went on to complain that Trump had never responded to a fawning letter addressed to him by the USW declaring the readiness of the union to work with the new administration on repealing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and other trade deals on the basis of a shared program of "America First" economic nationalism.

He then praised the threat by Trump to impose a 35 percent tariff on US companies that shift production outside the country. "We are willing to sit down and work with this president," Gerard insisted.

For his part, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka issued a statement Thursday defending Jones, while at the same time pleading with President-elect Trump to "engage with local union leaders at Carrier." In earlier statements, Trumka had insisted that the AFL-CIO stood "ready to work" with Trump on the repeal of NAFTA and other trade issues.

While the unions have generally allied themselves with the Democratic Party, which has tended to be more open to using their services to police the working class, they are more than open to working with the Republicans as long as the interests of the labor bureaucracy are respected. In any case, they are in many regards closer to Trump, who has adopted the America-First nationalist rhetoric that the USW and other unions have spewed for decades.

These comments make it clear that the unions view the attack by Trump on the president of the Carrier local as an unfortunate misunderstanding that must not be allowed to stand in the way of their collaboration with the extreme-right-wing nationalist program of the new administration. The affinity of the unions for the semi-fascist Trump has a definite logic rooted in the corporatist evolution of the unions over the past 40 years.

As organizations based on the defense of the capitalist profit system and tied to the capitalist nation state, the unions preach the identity of interests of American workers with the American government and corporate owners. On this basis the unions insist workers must secure the "competitiveness" of US industry against its overseas rivals. Under conditions of deepening capitalist crisis and intensifying trade conflicts, this signifies a drive to destroy every gain the working class has achieved in a century of struggle. Ultimately this requires force and violence.

The program of the unions offers no way forward. Far from having common interests with the corporate bosses, workers—whether they are American, Mexican or Chinese—are locked in a bitter class struggle against the billionaire owners of industry. A worker at Carrier in Indianapolis has far more in common with a Carrier worker in Monterrey, Mexico, than with Donald Trump or UTC CEO Gregory Hayes.

The tariff barriers advocated by the USW would inevitably lead to all out trade war as the economic rivals of the US retaliate. Just as in the 1930s, this is a recipe for economic collapse, full-scale depression and world war.

As opposed to the nationalist program of the unions, the World Socialist Web Site and the Socialist Equality Party fight for the working class to adopt a global strategy, forging common bonds with workers overseas in a fight against the transnational companies. This must be based on the fight for socialism, the transformation of giant corporations like UTC into public enterprises under the democratic ownership and control of the working class, and the reorganization of economy to meet human needs, not private profit.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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