

Ohio Democratic Senate candidate attacks Trump loyalist from the right

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Ohio Democratic Senate candidate Congressman Tim Ryan positioned himself on issue after issue to the right of the Republican candidate, fascistic Trump supporter J.D. Vance, during a debate this past Sunday. Ryan made an appeal to what he called the “exhausted majority of Democrats, Republicans and Independents.” He called for an “aggressive response” against Russian President Vladimir Putin, stated that he would support Taiwan in a war with China and maintained he is a more consistent backer of a strong military and police than his Republican opponent.

Ryan went on to declare that the US-Mexico border is not secure and that he would support more border walls, border patrols and the greater use of technology to stop immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers from entering the country. He said that he was in favor of declaring fentanyl a “Weapon of Mass Destruction.” This is the same term used by President George W. Bush to justify the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Presumably Ryan would support the invasion of China, which he blamed for the fentanyl epidemic in the United States.

His performance in the debate and Ryan’s entire campaign exemplifies the fact that the working class has no choice in the upcoming elections. On one side the Democratic Party has positioned itself as the primary party of imperialist war, support for the military and aggression against US capitalism’s main targets in Russia and China. On the other side the Republican Party has increasingly become an outright fascistic party, led by Donald Trump, who is Vance’s main backer.

In fact, Ryan underscored that he wants to take the Democratic Party even further to the right, saying that while in Congress he supported many of the measures Trump undertook, citing specifically his support for Trump’s military budgets, trade tariffs against China. He declared that he has and will continue to stand up against the Democratic leadership of Nancy Pelosi, Chuck

Schumer and President Joe Biden, in each case opposing them from the right.

The one and only debate between Ryan and Vance was held just days before early voting began in Ohio to replace two-term Republican Senator Rob Portman, who announced his retirement earlier this year. Ohio is one of several Senate seats that are considered closely contested, and the outcome will help determine which big business party will have control of the Senate.

On almost every issue, with the exception of abortion and same-sex marriage, Ryan sought to position himself to the right of Vance. This is no easy task. Vance is an adamant Trump supporter, supported the January 6 coup attempt, the police murder of unarmed people, the inhuman treatment of refugees seeking asylum and Trump’s whipping up of fascist-style attacks on his opponents.

Ryan is an all-out backer of the Democratic Party’s push for war. When directly asked by the debate monitor what the United States response should be to Putin’s threat to use nuclear weapons, Ryan said, “Well, it would have to be an aggressive response.” Ryan would not rule out the US use of nuclear weapons and stated that “we should be prepared for when he does that. It should be a swift and significant response.”

Vance, appealing more to the general population’s fear of nuclear war and the mass death that it would bring, accused the Biden administration of “sleepwalking into a nuclear war.”

Ryan responded by accusing Vance of being soft on Putin and said, “J.D. Vance would let Putin roll right through Ukraine” and into Poland. Ryan went on to declare his support for the military and the need to further increase the Pentagon budget. “We’ve got to have a strong military, and we’ve got to make sure to push back Putin,” he said, disregarding the threat to humanity posed by a nuclear war.

He did not limit his support for war against Russia but also unequivocally stated that he would support Taiwan in a war with China. When asked if the United States should use military force to defend Taiwan from China, Ryan said, “I believe that we should, I believe that we should.”

He went on to declare that the United States has to see China as its primary opponent, which is why he supported the measures of former President Trump against China. “We need to outcompete them economically,” he said. “That’s why I’ve always supported strong investments into our defense, including President Trump’s defense budget, and President Trump’s initiative with Space Force. We’ve got to continue to invest in our Navy. We’ve got to have a strong military. We got to have a strong defense. China is no joke. They are investing heavily in their military, and we have to be ready.”

Ryan is not one of the growing number of Democrats from a military-intelligence background, but it is clear that he supports them. He is part of that section of the Democratic Party more closely aligned with the trade union bureaucracy, promoting nationalism and chauvinism while attacking the jobs and living standards of the working class to make American capitalism more competitive on the global market.

At times in the debate Ryan took aim at Vance for not being hostile enough to China, claiming that Vance, who is a multi-millionaire, has investments in China that were replacing American jobs.

“Here is the problem, J.D. Vance has invested into companies in China.” he said. “The problem we’re having now with inflation is our supply chain all went to China, and guys like Vance made a lot of money off of that, and that is why our supply chains are locked up.”

He went on to say that throughout his entire career he supported tariffs against China. “One of my first bills I had was to penalize China for manipulating their currency. I worked to get tariffs on China’s steel coming in.”

And again solidarizing himself with Trump, Ryan went on to say, “I supported generally Trump’s position on China and Chinese tariffs, while he [Vance] is investing in China and making money. I’m trying to fight these guys.”

When asked about the police murders of unarmed people and specifically the murder of Jayland Walker in Akron and Donovan Lewis in Columbus, Ryan did not condemn the killings. Instead, he boasted that he secured \$500 million for local police in Ohio as part of Biden’s American Rescue Plan. “We need more cops,” he said.

“We need better paid cops. ... We need more technology and equipment. ... I brought back nearly \$500 million for law enforcement here in Ohio.”

Ryan went on to defend the Capitol Police and attacked Vance for being half-hearted in his support for police since Vance also supported the January 6 coup attempt, in which 140 police were injured.

On the question of immigration, Ryan again went out of his way to position himself in opposition to the Biden administration. When asked about the recent statement by Vice President Kamala Harris that the Southern border was secure, Ryan replied, “Kamala Harris is absolutely wrong. The Southern border is not secure. We have a lot of work to do. I’m not here to toe the Democratic Party line.”

He said nothing about Trump’s illegal treatment of refugees, the splitting up of families—including the separation of children from their parents, the practice of the border patrol and ICE agents of placing children in cages and denying them medical assistance. Ryan echoed Trump’s 2016 campaign rhetoric of calling immigrants from Mexico rapists and drug dealers.

Here his only criticism of Trump was that one continuous wall from “sea to sea” was impractical. Rather, he said, “If you can put a barrier up, I’m all for it. ... I’ve always supported increased funding for the border patrol.”

Throughout the debate Ryan stated that he was willing to stand up and oppose the Democratic Party and its leadership. He contrasted himself to Vance, whom he accused of “kissing Trump’s ass” he was willing to “kick ass,” referring to the Democratic Party leadership of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer and President Biden. He said he did not support Biden running for reelection in 2024.

Ryan is not just a typical right-wing Democrat, he is part of the further shift of the Democrats and all capitalist politics to the right. If elected and the Democrats retain the control of the Senate, Ryan, like Joe Manchin, will be among the deciding votes.



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