

# Trump pledges to stop EVs, issues ultra-nationalist appeal to autoworkers

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In the run-up to the contract deadlines for 170,000 autoworkers in the US and Canada, former President Trump is appealing directly to autoworkers in speeches and social media posts, grotesquely posturing as their champion. In an X (formerly Twitter) video last week, Trump denounced the push by the Biden administration for the development of electric vehicles, calling it an “idiotic policy” and claiming that he, Trump, would “save jobs in Michigan and the other auto states.”

Trump ranted, “Shawn Fain, the respected President of the United Auto Workers, cannot even think about allowing ALL ELECTRIC CARS—THEY WILL ALL BE MADE IN CHINA, and the Auto Industry in America will cease to exist!”

Trump is calling on autoworkers to support his return to the White House, tweeting, “United Auto Workers, VOTE FOR TRUMP. Get your leaders to ENDORSE ME, I WILL KEEP ALL OF THESE GREAT JOBS.” He has also called on UAW members to stop paying union dues.

In a speech in Oakland County, an urban county to the north of Detroit with several major auto plants, Trump said: “Driven by [Biden’s] ridiculous regulations, electric cars will kill more than half of US auto jobs and decimate the suppliers that they decimated already.”

The ability of Trump, a billionaire fascist and real estate con man, to pose as a friend of autoworkers is entirely attributable to the treachery of the United Auto Workers bureaucracy, which, far from opposing the coming jobs massacre, is colluding with Biden and the Democratic Party to facilitate it.

As the WSWs has warned, looming over the contract talks is a threat to the jobs of hundreds of thousands of autoworkers. Behind their backs, the auto companies, with the support of the government, have developed detailed plans to eliminate jobs, close plants and impose poverty-level wages as part of the transition to electric vehicles.

President Biden and the American ruling class have not suddenly become environmentalists. Rather they see the development of electric vehicle technologies as critical to the escalation of the economic and military confrontation against China, which currently dominates EV production and the processing of the raw materials needed for them.

Trump opposes the transition to EVs not because of its negative impact on workers. Trump’s opposition is largely driven by his ties to the fossil fuel industry, in particular, petroleum interests that stand to suffer in the transition to EVs. Therefore, he and the other corporate stooges in the Republican Party deny the significance of climate change, which has had a devastating impact on the working class and

threatens the world with extreme weather and disaster events for which working class communities are left unprepared.

Exploiting the economic concerns over a further decimation of jobs, Trump is making an appeal to an array of backward prejudices: extreme anti-Chinese, anti-Mexican nationalism, climate change denial, opposition to technology and thinly veiled anti-Semitic rants against “globalists.” Above all, his guiding principle is that there must be no restrictions whatsoever on the “right” of corporations to make profit.

For his part, UAW President Shawn Fain and Biden have sought to hide the truth about the massive scope of threatened job cuts, with empty talk about “a just transition” to electric vehicles.

The working class must stake out an independent position to defend both jobs and living standards and the future of the planet. The development of EV technology in itself is not the problem. The issue is in whose interest will this transition be carried out?

In its August 30 statement, “Stop the EV jobs bloodbath!”, the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) wrote:

There can be no “just transition” to EVs under capitalism. What is required is for the auto industry to be taken out of the hands of the corporations and placed under public ownership and workers’ democratic control. Rank-and-file autoworkers must run the auto industry without the executives and shareholders, to ensure that global vehicle production is organized to meet human need, not to generate private profit. This requires the international unity of autoworkers across the world, who confront the same enemies in the world’s transnational auto companies.

It continues:

Under capitalism, advances in artificial intelligence, robotics and other labor-saving technologies are used to throw workers onto the unemployment line. But if they are controlled by workers and directed in their interests, the advances in humanity’s productive capacity can be used to lessen the physical toll on workers, shorten the workweek and guarantee a high standard of living for everyone.

If EVs require less labor time to produce, the IWA-RFC states, then workers' hours should be reduced and pay increased. At the same time, workers must demand the release of the list of all planned factory closures and mass layoffs to prepare a fight to defend every plant and every job. This battle, moreover, must be organized across national borders to prevent the fratricidal struggle and race to the bottom that the corporations and the nationalist unions want workers to engage in.

This is the opposite of the pro-capitalist and nationalist perspective advanced by the UAW, which has proved an unmitigated disaster for autoworkers. Decades of reactionary "Buy American" campaigns, denunciations of Mexican workers and collusion with the companies in the name of making them "more competitive" have resulted in the destruction of the jobs of over 1 million UAW members in the auto industry in the last 40 years and the decimation of workers' living standards.

As part of the Obama administration, Biden helped oversee a savage attack on autoworkers' jobs and wages during the 2009 restructuring of GM and Chrysler. Now he is handing out billions in tax cuts and other incentives to the auto companies to slash even more jobs by working with the UAW to create a workforce in the EV plants who will make poverty wages.

All of this has given the Trump and the Republicans, vicious enemies of the working class, an opening to posture as friends of workers. His fascist rants are aimed at channelling the anger of sections of the middle class and disoriented workers over collapsing living standards in an extreme right-wing direction.

His promotion of xenophobic hatred of Mexican workers serves to drive a wedge between the striving to unite of American workers and the powerful Mexican working class, which demonstrated its militancy in the 2019 rebellion of Matamoros maquiladora workers and the heroic stand by workers at the GM Silao plant in defense of striking GM workers in the US.

Trump's aim is to build a fascist movement based on hatred of socialism, anti-Semitism and anti-immigrant xenophobia to be used as a battering ram against the working class. This is taking place under conditions of a rising tide of worker militancy and the growing attraction of socialism and internationalism, as evidenced by the examples of cross-border unity of workers and the support received by socialist rank-and-file Mack Trucks worker Will Lehman in the 2022 UAW election.

The authoritarian aims of Trump were exposed clearly in the events leading up to January 6, 2021 coup, when he refused to accept the results of the election and conspired to stay in office regardless of the outcome of the vote.

Trump's posturing as a defender of workers is a complete fraud. Under his administration, health and safety, as well as environmental regulations, were ripped to shreds. On the railroads, Trump's removal of safety standards led directly to the East Palestine, Ohio, toxic train disaster. In 2020, he oversaw a massive bailout of Wall Street and the rich while opposing any measures to protect workers and their families against the spread of Covid. This prompted a wave of wildcat strikes by autoworkers in March 2020, which led to the temporary shutdown of workplaces.

While Trump has sought to appeal to workers on the basis of opposition to the US proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, that is mainly because he favors a focus on war with China. Trump and the Democrats both call for massive increases in military spending in direct preparation for WWII.

The differences between the Biden administration and Trump are in the final analysis tactical. The Democrats generally favor working through the medium of the trade union bureaucracy to suppress the class struggle and enforce the dictates of the corporations and the type of "labor discipline" needed for war. The increasingly fascist Republican Party wants to build an extreme right-wing movement to crush the opposition of workers and young people.

In the end, both parties are resorting to authoritarian methods against the working class. This was demonstrated last year when Trump's Republican supporters in Congress voted along with Democrats to legalize the strike by 110,000 railroad workers and impose a pro-management contract that workers did not want.

The efforts by the Democratic Socialists of America and other pseudo-left organizations to promote Fain and the Democratic Party, which are conspiring to destroy the jobs and living standards of workers, only strengthens the hand of Trump and the far right. Indeed, far from the Democrats opposing the fascist politics of Trump, the Democrats have aided and abetted the aspiring dictator by covering up his conspiracies and the fascist transformation of the Republican Party itself.

The working class in the US and around the world is being radicalized by the economic, social, political and environmental crisis caused by world capitalism, and is increasingly being driven to find revolutionary solutions. The militancy of autoworkers in the US and Canada is part of this global movement.

What workers urgently need is to develop their own political and industrial initiative, independent of the UAW apparatus, the two capitalist parties, the Democrats and Republicans.

In every factory, they should expand the network of autoworkers' rank-and-file committees, which operate under the direction of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), and prepare to launch an all-out strike on September 14 to stop the EV jobs bloodbath and defend the jobs and living standards of autoworkers around the world.

The defeat of the extreme right is only possible on the basis of the independent political mobilization of the working class, which will cut the feet out from underneath fascist demagogues like Trump. Above all, this requires the building of the Socialist Equality Party as the revolutionary leadership of the working class.

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