

# Biden to speak at UAW political action conference as union prepares to endorse warmongering president

Jerry White  
24 January 2024

President Joe Biden will address the United Auto Workers political action conference in Washington D.C. on Wednesday. Whether the UAW leadership immediately votes to endorse Biden's reelection bid or not, it is only a matter of time before it does so.

Throughout the four-day UAW Community Action Program (CAP) conference, none of the keynote speakers even mentioned Biden's name, knowing full well he is widely hated for backing Israel's genocide in Gaza and other reactionary policies. Nevertheless, UAW President Shawn Fain, Secretary Treasurer Margaret Mock and other union officials took their talking points right out of the Democratic Party election playbook, arguing that the defeat of Trump was the only way to defend democracy and abortion rights, and to fight for "economic and social justice."

US Senator Bernie Sanders played his assigned role in portraying the Democrats—a party spearheading a global war for imperialist domination and colluding with the Republicans to attack immigrants and destroy democratic rights—as a champion of the working class against the "billionaire class."

Biden has cultivated the closest ties with the UAW and other unions. This is central to his administration's corporatist integration of the labor bureaucracy to impose austerity and labor discipline at home to wage war abroad.

After decades of rank-and-file opposition to the corrupt UAW bureaucracy, Fain was installed as union president in 2023 in a rigged election process that excluded 90 percent of the membership and was upheld by Biden's Labor Department. Throughout last year's contract struggle with the Big Three automakers, White House officials were in almost daily contact with Fain

and other UAW officials. The UAW apparatus used the phony "stand up" strike to wear down resistance and impose labor agreements that defend the corporations and the financial and institutional interests of the union bureaucracy.

During the "stand up" strike, which involved less than a third of the 146,000 UAW members at the Big Three automakers, Biden held photo ops with Fain on Michigan picket lines and joined the UAW president at an Illinois rally to hail the sellout contracts, which have paved the way for the destruction of hundreds of thousands of jobs as the auto companies convert to electric vehicles.

During his keynote address, Fain claimed that his "stand up" strike had brought the auto bosses to their knees and forced them to grant large raises to current and retired workers, "end tiers" and accede to the union's demand to strike over plant closures. Immediately after the contracts were signed, however, GM, Ford and Stellantis announced thousands of layoffs, along with the mass firings of up to 2,300 supplemental (temporary) workers who the UAW promised would be converted to full-time workers.

Pointing to another supposed achievement of the limited strike, Fain continued, "It's very significant we set a new contract deadline for May the 1st 2028, May Day and international solidarity day. We got to pay for our sins of the past back in 1980 when Reagan at the time fired the air traffic controllers and everyone in this country should have stood up and walked the hell out. We missed the opportunity then but we're not going to miss it in 2028. That's the plan. We want a general strike. We want everybody walking out just like they do in other countries."

If Fain did not even call out every autoworker on strike, why should anyone fall for his claims about calling a general strike? Just like everything else that comes out of his mouth, the rhetoric about a general strike was cooked up by the Democratic Socialists of America members in his PR department to paint the long-time UAW bureaucrat in “militant” and pseudo-left colors.

Behind the empty rhetoric, the main aim of the Fain’s speech and the conference as a whole is to promote the Democratic Party and Biden’s election campaign.

In his remarks, Fain never mentioned Biden’s backing for the genocide in Gaza, expanding military operations throughout the Middle East, and the increasing military confrontation with Russia and China, which threatened to erupt into nuclear war. Nor did he say anything about the intervention of the Democratic president and Congress to outlaw the strike by 110,000 railroad workers in 2022 or the president’s backing of Republican anti-immigration and austerity measures in exchange for support for further funding of Ukraine.

Fain referred in passing to the UAW executive board’s adoption of a toothless resolution urging Biden to support a “ceasefire” in Gaza, while saying nothing about Fain’s own intervention to block strikes at General Dynamics and Allison Transmission, which supply weaponry to the Israel Defense Forces.

For his part, Sanders, who has repeatedly said “Israel has the right to defend itself,” said nothing about the Israeli genocide and stuck to his standard claims that it was possible to radically redistribute wealth without overturning capitalism. He paid homage to the UAW, Teamsters, United Electrical workers, Communications Workers of America and other unions for “fighting back against corporate greed and the massive inequalities that we see in our country today” and telling “corporate America that their workers demand a fair shake.”

In a grotesque display of contempt toward the working class, Sanders praised the UAW and other unions for preventing workers from shutting down the economy as COVID spread through factories other workplaces, killing more than one million Americans and debilitating millions more.

“I want you all to remember go back four years when the pandemic hit us ... Millions of workers, blue-collar

workers, white-collar workers, they went to work in factories and food processing plants ... The result of that tragedy is that millions of workers became sick and tens of thousands died while these workers went to work heroically keeping our economy going and you are some of them keeping the economy going to make sure that people have what they needed to survive during those terrible times.”

In fact, the union apparatus helped to shut down efforts of workers to stop production and demand emergency measures to save lives in the initial stages of the pandemic. The UAW and other unions played a critical role in enforcing the “back to work” campaign of the ruling class and both the Democratic and Republican parties.

In a recent *Guardian* interview, Sanders praised Biden for being the only president in US history to walk a picket line and said he was “the strongest pro-union president that we have had, certainly, since FDR [Franklin D Roosevelt].” He concluded his remarks at the UAW conference by making his pitch for the Democratic president without naming him.

The fight, he said, would “determine whether we have a democratic society, whether we have equal rights for blacks and Latinos, for women... I believe that when we all stand together and we don’t let Trump and his friends divide us up because where we were born or the color of our skin, when we stand together nothing can stop us.”

The danger of fascism arises not out of some shift to the right by the majority of the US population—which is being increasingly being radicalized by exploding social inequality, attacks on democratic rights and endless wars—but by the efforts by the Democrats and the union bureaucracy to block a politically independent movement of the working class against capitalism, the source of war and dictatorship.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**