

The UAW apparatus backs the war criminal in the White House

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On Wednesday, the United Auto Workers endorsed President Joe Biden's reelection campaign at its national political action conference in Washington, DC. With its endorsement, the UAW bureaucracy is locking arms with the widely-hated war criminal in the White House who is coordinating Israel's genocide in Gaza.

The endorsement provoked opposition, with protesters interrupting Biden's speech with chants of "ceasefire now." The UAW members, who included academic workers at Columbia and Northeastern Universities, were quickly surrounded by fascistic UAW goons and Secret Service agents who grabbed their Palestinian flag and dragged them out of the hall by their arms. While this was occurring, the UAW bureaucrats repeatedly shouted "U-A-W" to drown out the voices of the protesters.

Due to the widespread opposition of workers to the US-backed slaughter in Gaza, last month the UAW was compelled to adopt a toothless resolution calling on Biden to demand a ceasefire. But this was a hypocritical stunt, designed by UAW Communications Director Jonah Furman, District 9A Director Brandon Mancilla and other Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) members, to provide UAW President Shawn Fain an "anti-war" cover.

In his introduction of Biden, Fain predictably said nothing about Gaza or the president's expanding war against Russia and military preparations against China, which threaten mankind with nuclear annihilation. Instead, he pretended that workers could increase their wages, win retirement security and fight social inequality without waging a struggle against war.

He claimed that Biden, a life-long tool of Wall Street and "Senator from Dupont," would stand up to "the billionaire class" and fight for "economic and social justice."

The reality is that the American ruling class is waging a war on two fronts, supported by both the Democratic and the Republican Parties. One is to defeat its geopolitical rivals, primarily Russia and China, and subjugate the world's resources and people to the global hegemony of US imperialism. The other is a class war at home to impoverish the working class and impose the type of austerity and authoritarian labor discipline needed to fund and produce the weapons for World War III.

The war has the character of a civil war against the working class, abroad and at home. Within this framework, the apparatchiks that staff the union apparatus serve as a labor police force, for which they are well compensated. This is the case not only in the UAW, but also the Teamsters, the railroad workers unions and the AFL-CIO as a whole, as has been amply demonstrated in one experience after another.

To suppress opposition, Biden has promoted a corporatist strategy of integrating the labor bureaucracy into his wartime economic planning. In his remarks to the UAW conference, Biden again referred to the World War II alliance between the UAW, the Roosevelt administration and the auto companies to produce warplanes, tanks and other weaponry. This so-called "Arsenal of Democracy" included a ban on all strikes against the war profiteers.

Addressing the UAW bureaucracy, Biden complained that Trump had allowed China to dominate the electric vehicle market. In the past, he said, "Corporate America found the cheapest labor in the world, they sent those jobs to those laborers, and sent the product back to us. But not anymore. We're building product here and shipping it overseas. What's really important, you made sure the other future of the world will be made in America."

These comments blow up the lies that the UAW's labor agreements with the automakers were "historic" victories for the working class. In fact, they have paved the way for what will be the biggest wave of plant closures and mass layoffs since the 1980s, and a further regression in the wages and conditions of autoworkers.

Since the ratification of these deals, the automakers have announced thousands of layoffs, "voluntary retirements" and the permanent termination of up to 2,300 temporary workers who Fain claimed would be converted to full-time under the new contracts. This is only the beginning of a jobs massacre that threatens to destroy tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of jobs as the auto industry converts to EV production.

Last year's contracts were the outcome of a conspiracy by the UAW bureaucracy, the auto bosses and the Biden administration against rank-and-file autoworkers. In consultation with the White House, the UAW carried out a phony "stand up" strike that never involved more than a third of the UAW members and was designed to wear down the resistance of the rank and file, not the auto bosses.

In return for its services, the Biden administration pressed the automakers to bring the UAW into the new EV battery plants and has tied the hiring of "union labor" to its federal subsidies for EV production. The contracts guarantee a fresh influx of dues money into the coffers of the UAW bureaucracy as it collaborates in the destruction of jobs.

The struggle against capitalist exploitation is inseparable from the struggle against imperialist war. Workers and young people must oppose the ruling class' plan for global conquest, which will be accompanied by ruthless austerity and the suppression of democratic rights, whether the warmonger Biden or the fascist Trump is in the White House.

A struggle against exploitation and imperialist war is only possible by developing a politically independent movement of the working class, in opposition to both corporate-controlled parties, the trade union bureaucracy and the capitalist system they all defend.

The 2022 campaign by Mack Trucks worker and socialist candidate for UAW president Will Lehman demonstrated that there is a powerful constituency among autoworkers for internationalism and socialism, and a struggle against war.

Lehman called for the abolition of the UAW

bureaucracy, the transfer of power to the workers on the shop floor through the building of rank-and-file committees in every factory, and the unification and coordination of workers' struggles across borders through the expansion of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).

Running as a socialist and internationalist, Lehman won nearly 5,000 votes despite the efforts by the UAW bureaucracy, backed by Biden's Labor Department, to prevent workers from even knowing there was an election taking place.

In a November 2023 TikTok video, viewed hundreds of thousands of times, Lehman endorsed the call by the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions asking workers of the world to refuse to build and transport weapons to Israel, and to take action against companies involved in implementing Israel's brutal and illegal siege.

But Fain and the UAW bureaucracy have ignored this call and intervened to block strikes at General Dynamics, Allison Transmission and other companies that supply the Israeli war machine. Now they plan to spend millions of dollars of workers' dues money to keep Biden in power.

The fight against war and capitalist exploitation is the same fight. It requires a struggle to break the grip of the pro-imperialist trade union bureaucracies, oppose both the Democrats and Republicans, and develop a powerful anti-war movement based on the international working class and the fight for socialism.



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