

“That was a political stunt... he hasn’t said anything about those workers who lost their jobs”

Autoworkers respond to UAW President Shawn Fain at Biden’s State of the Union

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United Auto Workers head Shawn Fain was President Biden’s guest of honor at the State of the Union address last week. Biden introduced Fain as a “great friend and a great labor leader” and claimed the UAW, with the help of his administration, had stopped the closure of an auto plant in Belvidere, Illinois, and secured 4,000 new jobs in last fall’s contract negotiations.

Following his appearance at the State of the Union speech, Fain gave interviews to MSNBC, the *Nation* and other news outlets, where he praised the Democratic president, a lifelong shill of corporate America, as a steadfast defender of the working class.

The difference between Biden and Trump, he told the *Nation*, was: “One stands with working class people, and one represents the billionaire class—and is a member of the billionaire class—and doesn’t give a damn about working class people.”

With poll numbers showing Biden trailing Trump, Fain has become one of the president’s most prominent spokesmen. In so doing, he has covered up Biden’s support for Israel’s genocidal war in Gaza and Biden’s offer to work with Trump to pass the most reactionary anti-immigrant measures in US history in exchange for Republican support for the expanding US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, which threatens the world with nuclear war.

At the same time, both Fain and Biden continue to perpetuate the claim that the UAW’s bogus “stand up strike”—in reality, a non-strike that kept most workers on the job—achieved “historic” gains for autoworkers. This included the supposed conversion of supplemental (temporary) workers into full-timers and the end of “perma-temps.”

In fact, just a few days before the State of the Union

speech, Stellantis fired 341 temporary workers at its Toledo Assembly Complex in Ohio. They are among the more than 2,300 supplementals being permanently terminated by Stellantis with the full blessing of the UAW bureaucracy.

Workers contacted by the *World Socialist Web Site* were furious at the praise heaped on Fain by Biden. Natalie, a recently terminated supplemental worker at the Detroit Assembly Complex, said Fain “has been missing in action at Stellantis, but then I see him with the President at the State of the Union where he was praised.

“That was a political stunt. He has not been to Detroit. He has not addressed our issues. I have not seen anything he has done. I haven’t seen a flyer. I haven’t seen a video. I haven’t seen anything from him addressing what happened to those workers who lost their jobs and cannot provide for their families.”

Natalie continued, “I am a third generation UAW autoworker, and I looked forward to working at Stellantis. But the contract was not what they promised. I had hopes and dreams of being rolled over. No TPTs were converted. I was supposed to be converted from temporary part-time to temporary full-time and after another nine months to full-time. At the local union meeting they told us we would get profit sharing in 2024 based on hours worked in 2023. That was a lie too.

“They have been taking union dues from us this entire time, and they let the company put us out on the street. I was there for less than a year and had to pay over \$1,000 in union dues and fees. As soon as our pay went up to \$21 an hour, they started taking \$54 in union dues.

“We are being used as pawns by Stellantis. Across the US and across the world, workers are not being treated fairly.” Pointing to the recent strikes by Italian Stellantis

workers against job cuts, she said, “No matter where they are, workers are not tolerating just being disposable. Because that’s how I feel. I literally put my sweat and blood into building vehicles, and I have scars on my body where I had to go to medical. I have sweat on hot summer days when it’s 115 degrees in the plant. I have cried on the job. It’s not fair.

“The company made \$20 billion last year. Ford and General Motors too. We didn’t get the \$21 an hour until November. Forty hours a week off of \$21 is not that much. I only brought home \$600 my last week. Even working overtime I have never seen \$1,000 a week.”

Commenting on Fain’s appearance at Biden’s State of the Union address, a driver for a parts distribution company that subcontracts with Stellantis in Detroit said, “The banning of the railroad strike in 2022 hit me hard. I used to vote Democratic, but when Biden outlawed the railroad strike, he lost me. I will never vote Democratic again.”

A recently terminated Stellantis worker from Sterling Heights Assembly Plant in suburban Detroit said, “Fain is a snake. You have to call things like they are. You go by their actions. I was supposed to be made full-time after the 2019 contract, but I was never rolled over. You only seem to see Fain now when he is meeting with the president.”

Following Fain’s appearance, Jerry White, the Socialist Equality Party’s candidate for US vice president, posted the following on his X account:

In an effort to burnish his “pro-worker” credentials, Biden invited his favorite bureaucratic lackey, UAW President Shawn Fain, to the State of the Union. Biden referred to him as “a great friend and a great labor leader.”

Fain stood up and absurdly tried to strike a militant pose, raising his fist while basking in the praise. Moments after, Biden remarked, in an honest moment, about Wall Street: “They’re not bad guys.”

A few minutes later, again speaking to his listeners among the financial aristocracy, he said, “Look, I’m a capitalist. If you want to make a million bucks—great!”

What explains this apparent contradiction? Biden, long known as “the senator for DuPont” corporation, has relied on the pro-corporate UAW and other union bureaucracies in order to

suppress the class struggle and give US imperialism a free hand to wage war abroad.

Fain may be a “great friend” of Biden’s. But he is not a “labor leader” in any meaningful sense of that phrase, contrary to the claims of the pseudo-left DSA (which itself now occupies top positions in the UAW bureaucracy).

The UAW’s 2023 “stand-up strike” was a fraud, keeping the vast majority of workers on the job, and the contracts it pushed on workers were sellouts. Fain is a highly paid functionary of the corrupt UAW apparatus, a man who has spent his entire career enforcing the demands of the corporations onto workers.

Lastly, UAW President Fain’s slavish toadying before Biden at the State of the Union should further put to rest his claims to support a ceasefire in Gaza or to be in any way an opponent of war.

Biden’s #SOTU was a full-throated defense of the central preoccupations of his administration: war against Russia, as well as preparations for war against China. Fain and the UAW leadership have endorsed “Genocide Joe,” who is fully complicit in Israel’s genocidal war on Gaza, which has resulted in more than 35,000 deaths. Moreover, Fain and the UAW apparatus have refused to call strikes among their members involved in the production of military equipment for Israel at Allison Transmission, Caterpillar and elsewhere.

Are you an autoworker? Sign the form below to get information on building rank-and-file committees to fight the job cuts and the sellout contract.



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