

“We would have a new iteration of the Stand-up Sellout,” former faculty warn of UAW betrayal as University of California strike vote begins

Marc Wells
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On Monday, 48,000 University of California academic workers and members of United Auto Workers Local 4811 began electronically casting their ballots to approve a strike authorization. The vote is scheduled to last through Wednesday.

The UAW was forced to call the vote as a result of massive anger among grad students and academic workers to an attack by armed Zionist counter-protesters—abetted by the police, UC administration and UAW leadership—on the UCLA Gaza Solidarity encampment two weeks ago. While police did nothing for hours as the encampment was attacked by right-wing thugs, the following night, police returned to conduct mass arrests of peaceful students and workers.

The strike authorization vote places the rank and file in direct conflict with the UAW leadership, which fully endorsed President Joe Biden’s 2024 candidacy despite his genocidal and warmongering policies. After an over week-long delay in calling the vote, Local 4811 finally announced the vote but rendered a possible strike contingent on whether “circumstances justify.”

Moreover, the union unilaterally calls for the infamous “standup strikes” and reserves the right to restrict them to selected campuses only, for the purpose of limiting as much as possible the impact and effectiveness of strike action. The “standup strike” pro-corporate tactic inflicted a massive defeat on autoworkers last fall. Instead of calling the entire membership on strike, UAW president and Biden’s biggest fan Shawn Fain left workers on the job at the most profitable plants, betraying workers’ readiness to fight.

In addition to limiting the action to an “Unfair Labor Practice” claim against the UC system and “standup strikes,” the UAW is also undercutting workers’ action by limiting the duration of the strike to less than two months. In a ballot shared with the *World Socialist Web Site* by a member of Local 4811, the UAW wrote, “The strike will end on all campuses no later than June 30th, 2024.”

Despite the attempt by the union to smother and curtail strike action, the authorization vote is a highly political expression of workers and students who are overwhelmingly opposed to war, the genocide in Gaza and those primarily responsible for it, namely the

state of Israel and the Biden administration. Anger and opposition to the criminal onslaught of Palestinians and imperialist war is mounting in country after country.

In the US, the development has enormous implications in an election year in which the political establishment has nothing better to offer than two reactionary candidates who agree on the pursuit of imperialist crimes abroad and repression of democratic rights at home. Now, opposition to these policies is being articulated en masse in daily protests.

The WSWS recently interviewed several academic workers and students, all of whom denounced the attacks on democratic rights by the Biden administration, support a ‘YES’ vote and support an end to the genocide and war.

Ross, a former faculty, noted that

The campuses are occupied zones. What happened at UCLA was utterly abhorrent, and I would even say was, considered as much as it can be as a domestic affair, the most audacious, lawless conspiracy of fascist and state forces since the January 6 coup, and this in a state run from head to toe by the Democratic Party; in LA, whose public school district is run by the DSA.

On the allegations of antisemitism he said,

How many among the political establishment, the most reactionary elements of academia, and the wealthy and ultra-wealthy donors, were and will continue calling for the deployment of the National Guard, because, at worst, a slogan had been raised here or there for an intifada, for a campaign, or perhaps a gesture, of self-defense by the defenseless, the starved, maimed, and shell-shocked civilians, orphans and widows? To call any of this antisemitism, or to suggest that certain students feel unsafe or are actually unsafe is false, and shamelessly dishonest.

Ross continued:

I support graduate students' demands for strike action, and I am grateful to the *World Socialist Web Site* for elevating the voices of workers against the genocide, as well as in defense of democratic rights. Of course, the attack on democratic rights has hardly been limited to the US. I know the WSWS has warned against students waiting on the UAW; there is, I think, no case in which the brief delay will extend to anything less than a total betrayal, that is, short of leaving the UAW out of it.

They ought not be permitted to set the date, print or count the ballots, or even report the results, much less be entrusted the authority to call a walkout. The autoworkers, and not a few grad workers, can testify eloquently to this. Given the broad police mobilization and violence against protests, across the country, in a walkout at UC, we would have at most a new iteration of the Stand-up Sellout, if the action is left in the hands of Fain and Co., who are already seeking to isolate it.

Fain doesn't speak of the arsenal of democracy merely because he supports the total victory over Hamas, and the US didn't just send Bibi [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu] \$18 billion to merely cleanse Gaza. I think the whole Zionist War Cabinet has given public voice to their commitment to imperialist plans for Lebanon. Certainly, Rafah will not be saved by the ousting of Netanyahu, nor, I think, Lebanon. Among students, the focus on Gaza is largely understandable, but nevertheless shortsighted and extremely dangerously limited. The bestial assault on all of Palestine must be recognized as a prerequisite for Israel to realize its true *raison d'état* as it is today: to lead the imperialist offensive across the arc from Lebanon to Iran.

In conclusion, Ross stated:

Nuclear war becomes the capitalist solution, the last hedge, against sticky inflation, corporate defaults, state bankruptcy and world socialist revolution. Capitalism is short on time, and without the revolutionary solidarity of the international working class, so too is all of humanity.

Spencer, a UCI graduate and UC Merced lecturer, told the WSWS

I think what's happening is disturbing and scary. When the government cracks down on pro-Palestine protesters, they're endorsing the genocide, they're ensuring it can continue. So basically Biden, California, and the universities in California are showing us that they support bombing children and starving civilians. It's pretty

disturbing to realize that's what our leaders are willing to do.

I think a lot of students and professors oppose the occupation and genocide, but the schools have been captured by outside interests. They are often portrayed in the media as these leftist institutions, but I think this shows what a lie that is. The universities are completely on the side of the corporations, the state, the empire, Wall Street, etc.

Spencer observed:

Increasingly, the politicians are out of touch with their constituencies. I believe the majority of Americans oppose sending arms to Israel, but the government keeps doing it. Citizens want better schools, better jobs, better healthcare, but we don't get it. So people are rightfully getting angry. Instead of changing course and appealing to the citizens, the government has decided to strangle dissent. I think it's an authoritarian move, and it's coming as much from the Democrats as from the Republicans. They are united in this.

Speech is being censored on the internet, protests are being made illegal, bank accounts are getting frozen, dissidents are being smeared in the press. During these most recent protests, I've heard they are using facial recognition technology to identify protesters so they can be denied jobs and otherwise punished. I expect this tactic will be used anytime the public targets the government with protest. And it's the same with other tactics used today.

Spencer concluded:

If the government cracks down on some segment of the population, you can be sure that they will apply those tactics to larger segments of the population in the future. That's really scary. They will continue to erode our rights, continue to limit what we can think and say and do. I am very impressed by the protesters, because they have the courage to fight back. They are very brave and they are standing up for what's right. So I thank them and I hope we will see more protests around a wider variety of issues in the country. I think that's the only way we'll be able to break this stranglehold.



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