

UAW bureaucracy endorses Harris for president, Biden's war criminal replacement

Marcus Day
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On Wednesday, the United Auto Workers International Executive Board voted to endorse Kamala Harris for president. In doing so, the UAW bureaucracy is seamlessly continuing its efforts to chain workers to the pro-war, anti-working class Democratic Party, which it has done for decades.

In a statement, the UAW claimed that Harris's "historic candidacy builds on the Biden-Harris administration's proven track record of standing with the UAW and delivering major gains for the working class."

The statement quoted UAW President Shawn Fain as saying, "Our job in this election is to defeat Donald Trump and elect Kamala Harris to build on her proven track record of delivering for the working class."

By repeating phrases like "proven track record," the UAW's communications department hopes to somehow convince workers to forget their experiences under the Biden-Harris administration, which included surging inflation, mass infection from COVID-19, deteriorating working conditions, a growing jobs bloodbath and rapidly escalating war internationally.

As for Harris's own record, it consists of merciless law-and-order attacks on workers and the poor during her time as a California state prosecutor. As a US senator and then vice president, Harris cultivated the closest connections with the military and intelligence agencies and fully supported US imperialism's proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and the genocide in Gaza. She has combined these reactionary policies with the promotion of identity politics, aimed at dividing workers along racial and gender lines.

Throughout, she has received and reciprocated the support of Wall Street and billionaire corporate oligarchs.

Fain and Harris spoke directly over the phone last week, according to *Politico*, supposedly "clinching" the UAW's support for her candidacy. But the UAW's eventual endorsement of Harris as Biden's replacement was hardly in doubt, certainly not once the Democratic Party rapidly coalesced behind her.

The entire process for the UAW's endorsement of first Biden, then Harris—both lifelong corporate shills—further refutes any claims of "democracy" or "transparency" within the union. The decisions to support two of America's most widely hated big business politicians were made in secret, behind the backs of the UAW's more than 1 million members, with not even a pretense of democratic discussion or debate.

The UAW bureaucracy will expend millions of dollars in advertising for Harris, as well as other Democratic Party candidates. Responding to the UAW's endorsement, the Harris campaign expressed its appreciation for the UAW's "immense organizing power," meaning

its well oiled get-out-the-vote machine for the Democrats.

UAW President Fain has served as a foremost spokesman for the senile president and a de facto member of his administration since last year. According to *Politico*, friction had emerged between Fain and the White House in recent weeks, following Biden's disastrous debate performance and growing concerns over the viability of his candidacy.

Whatever the case may be, Fain has continued to laud Biden as "the best president in my lifetime."

In his statement Wednesday, Fain said:

We stand at a crossroads in this country. We can put a billionaire back in office who stands against everything our union stands for, or we can elect Kamala Harris who will stand shoulder to shoulder with us in our war on corporate greed.

But the fact that Trump, a fascist demagogue and ruthless enemy of the working class, remains the frontrunner in the 2024 elections is the most damning indictment of the policies of both the Biden-Harris administration and the UAW bureaucracy.

Following Trump's January 6, 2021 attempted coup, Biden and the Democratic Party worked assiduously to prop up the Republican Party, shielding Trump's co-conspirators in Congress, on the Supreme Court and in the military and intelligence agencies.

For nearly four years, Biden's chief concern has been to ramp up US imperialism's predatory wars, particularly the proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, into which Washington has funneled tens of billions of dollars.

The White House has relied upon the UAW and other union bureaucracies to suppress the class struggle, both in the service of US corporate profit interests and to prevent any disruption to the war efforts.

The UAW worked closely with the Biden administration to sabotage the 2023 Big Three autoworkers contract struggle, limiting the much-heralded "stand-up strikes" to just a handful of plants. Since the UAW pushed the contracts through, the auto companies have rapidly escalated sweeping job cuts, laying off or terminating thousands.

Fain has played an especially sinister role, pledging to send workers "to war" for Biden and repeatedly touting the auto plants as "arsenals of democracy," referring to the conversion of factories to military production during World War II, which entailed no-strike pledges and brutal war-time speed-up.

In an admission of the pro-war function of the union bureaucracies, Biden described the AFL-CIO union federation as "my domestic

NATO” earlier this month, comparing it to the US-led imperialist military alliance.

The trade union officialdom has welcomed the increased support it has received under the Biden administration and largely sees Harris as likely to continue Biden’s promotion of its interests. The AFL-CIO Executive Council, of which Fain is a member, had already voted unanimously to endorse Harris within a day of Biden announcing his withdrawal.

Meanwhile, other sections of the union apparatus, such as Teamsters President Sean O’Brien, are openly courting the fascistic Republican Party under Trump, drawing the bureaucracy’s pro-imperialist, pro-capitalist and virulently nationalist perspective to its logical conclusion.

The UAW bureaucracy’s fraudulent opposition to the Gaza genocide

Since last October, the White House and both parties in Congress have funded and armed Israel’s genocidal war against the Gazan people, massively discrediting Biden among young people, who widely refer to him as “Genocide Joe.”

Fain’s administration—including top staff drawn from the pseudo-left Democratic Socialists of America—have attempted to dissipate and blunt the opposition to the genocide among the UAW membership with toothless appeals to the White House for a “ceasefire.”

But the real attitude of the UAW’s leadership towards antiwar sentiment has been revealed in its unstinting support for Biden and its repressive response towards pro-Palestinian protests. At the conference announcing the UAW’s endorsement of Biden in January, Secret Service agents and UAW officials dragged anti-genocide protesters from the hall. At a UAW event promoting Biden in the Detroit suburbs in February, riot police were deployed against demonstrators.

The same police state measures are undoubtedly being prepared against anti-genocide opposition to Harris, including at a UAW rally for her in Detroit on August 7.

While the UAW is already attempting to paint Harris as more critical of Israel than Biden, her actual position was demonstrated in her vicious denunciation of pro-Palestinian protests in Washington D.C. last week, which she condemned as “unpatriotic.” Following a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Harris reaffirmed her commitment to Israel’s “right to defend itself,” which is code in Washington for Israel’s “right” to continue slaughtering and oppressing Palestinian civilians.

Harris repeated the same justification after Israel’s provocative assassinations of Hamas and Hezbollah leaders in Lebanon and Iran earlier this week. *The Hill* reported that Harris joined a phone call between Biden and Netanyahu Thursday, where, “The President discussed efforts to support Israel’s defense against threats,” including “new defensive US deployments,” the White House said.

The DSA, as well as other middle class organizations such as the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL), has nevertheless attempted to present the UAW and other union apparatuses as leading a fight against the genocide. But the various “ceasefire” resolutions by the unions are not a progressive response to “pressure” from the rank and file. Rather, they are an effort to get out ahead of antiwar sentiment

and keep it contained within the Democratic Party.

At a demonstration sponsored by the ANSWER Coalition, the PSL and DSA on July 24, UAW Region 9A Brandon Mancilla, a DSA member who sits on the UAW Executive Board, said, “Autoworkers in Dearborn, Michigan, have been personally affected by this issue and have demanded that their union and their government stop funding a genocide.” Since then, Mancilla, along with other DSA members in the UAW’s top staff, have promoted the endorsement of Harris, who has worked in lockstep with Biden in funding and arming Israel’s genocidal war on the Palestinians.

At the rally, Mancilla claimed that “labor unions are one of the only democratic institutions we got in this country,” an assertion in stark contradiction with reality and the UAW, in particular.

Fain, Mancilla and others came into office in 2023 as the result of a union election fundamentally marred by voter suppression, with Fain himself receiving the votes of barely 13 percent of the UAW membership. The new “reform” slate, once in office, has proceeded to impose a series of sellout contracts at Clarios, Ford, Stellantis, GM, Lear and elsewhere that contain below-inflation wage increases and have given the companies a free hand to carry out mass layoffs.

Meanwhile, revelations of renewed investigations into corruption in the UAW’s top leadership have thrown Fain’s administration into crisis, with a federal monitor describing a “culture of fear of retaliation” and “stonewalling” by Fain’s administration in recent court filings. In response, rank-and-file workers have called for new elections in the UAW, to be overseen by workers themselves.

The UAW’s endorsement of Harris “is an illegitimate decision”

“The UAW bureaucracy’s endorsement of Harris was decided behind the backs of the rank and file,” Will Lehman, a rank-and-file Mack Trucks worker and 2022 candidate for UAW president, told the WSWs Thursday. “It is an illegitimate decision that represents neither the will nor the class interests of autoworkers.”

Harris, Trump and Biden are “all capitalist politicians,” Lehman said. “They represent the interests of the ruling class, not the working class.”

In contrast, he said, “the Socialist Equality Party is a working class party. Joe Kishore and Jerry White, its candidates, are running on a program that represents the interests of workers.

“Fascism and dictatorship cannot be prevented by voting for Harris, and war and inflation cannot be stopped by voting for Trump,” he continued. “Workers need a strategy and a party to unite us internationally, against war, genocide, inequality and their root cause—the capitalist system.”



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