

UAW praises Trump-backed deal to “save” Stellantis jobs

Jerry White**23 January 2025**

The efforts of the United Auto Workers bureaucracy to collaborate with the new Trump administration, based on their shared “America First” economic nationalism, are rapidly taking shape in the days since the inauguration.

On Wednesday, Fain announced that Stellantis had agreed to reopen its assembly plant in Belvidere, Illinois, by 2027, cancel plans to shift production of the Dodge Durango SUV from Detroit to Windsor, Canada, and make a “significant investment” in Kokomo, Indiana, “reversing plans to move work out of this country.”

Fain attributed the company’s decision to the UAW’s “Keep the Promise” campaign, saying the “victory” is “a testament to the power of workers standing together and holding a billion-dollar corporation accountable. Thank you to the thousands of members and leaders who rallied, marched, filed grievances, and talked to coworkers. Your solidarity forced Carlos Tavares out as CEO of this company, and it’s been a game-changer.”

In fact, the UAW launched the toothless publicity stunt to head off a growing movement of rank-and-file workers against the massive job cuts, which Stellantis and the other automakers began carrying out after the UAW bureaucracy sold out the 2023 contract battle by 150,000 Stellantis, GM and Ford workers. Fain claimed the union would call a national strike to defend jobs, without any intention of doing so.

The UAW bureaucracy’s assurances about securing jobs are not worth the paper they are written on. Nor has Fain indicated what labor cost reductions the UAW offered to secure the deal.

As a Stellantis worker at the Sterling Heights Assembly Plant (SHAP) in metro Detroit told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “The UAW’s statement really doesn’t say anything, just Fain claiming victory. But the CEO is pushing to make the company competitive again, and that is going to mean more pressure on our jobs and conditions.”

Fain admits, “We still have thousands of our union sisters and brothers laid off.” Indeed, the 2023 labor agreement praised as a “historic, job-creating” deal by Fain and President Biden opened the door for thousands of job cuts. This included a hidden clause in the 900-page UAW-Stellantis contract agreeing to the permanent firing of more than half of the company’s 5,200 temporary part-time workers after promising them full-time jobs.

Concluding his cynical letter, Fain writes, “Throughout this process, we’ve all learned an important lesson: it takes a fight to keep jobs here in this country. We’ve shown the company, and the nation that we are ready for that fight.”

While Fain did not openly acknowledge it, the Stellantis decision followed meetings between company executives and Trump in the days leading up to the inauguration. “Stellantis Chairman John Elkann spent four days in Washington meeting with incoming U.S. President Donald Trump and several top administration officials, two people familiar with the matter told Reuters on Tuesday.” The Reuters report continues, “The talks underscore the efforts of business leaders, such as Elkann, to build ties with the new U.S. administration while Trump threatens to disrupt the status quo with major economic and trade policy changes.”

Elkann, the scion of the Agnelli family, reportedly met with Trump two times during his stay in Washington before flying back to Italy. The automaker, which imports 40 percent of the cars it sells in the US from Canada and Mexico, would be hit hard by Trump’s threats to impose 25 percent tariffs on the two countries.

After the visit, Stellantis issued a company statement, saying, “Trump’s clear focus on policies that support a robust and competitive manufacturing base in the United States is hugely positive. We look forward to working with him on the crucial objectives of strengthening our industry and the nation’s economy.”

CNBC also reported Wednesday that the “Leaders from each of the ‘Big Three’ automakers in Detroit have now separately spoken or met with Trump. They also were among the companies to each donate \$1 million to Trump’s inauguration.”

It is not clear yet whether Fain or any other UAW bureaucrats took part in the pilgrimage to kiss Trump’s ring. But the day before the inauguration, the *Washington Post* published an editorial by Fain, titled, “I am the UAW president. We’re ready to work with Trump.”

In it, Fain singled out Trump’s trade war policies for praise, saying, “We agree that we need a strong system of tariffs that serve the national and working-class interest. Tariffs should bring jobs back to America, put products in communities such as Belvidere, Illinois, and push companies to invest in good

jobs, not exploit workers abroad."

Workers do not have "national interests," only class interests.

The Keep the Promise campaign was based on two fundamental lies, which have united the UAW bureaucracy with Trump: (1) that the job cuts were caused not by the ruthless drive for capitalist profit but the "foreign owners," who have no regard for American workers and America; and (2) that US workers can only defend their jobs at the expense of Canadian and Mexico workers, instead of uniting against the global automakers in a common fight to defend the right to a secure, good-paying job for all workers.

Fain and his backers in the Democratic Socialists of America used the campaign to promote the election of Kamala Harris. In his appearance at the Democratic National Convention in August 2024, Fain criticized Stellantis for renegeing on its deal, praised Harris and Biden for "standing shoulder to shoulder with working people" and denounced Trump as a scab.

But since the electoral defeat of the Democrats, whose endless warmongering and indifference to the social and economic catastrophe enabled Trump to posture as a champion of workers and win, Fain has dropped such rhetoric. Instead, the UAW president is bending over backwards to win the favor of the oligarchs and fascists in Trump's regime. Like the ruling class, the union bureaucrats fear nothing more than a massive movement from below that threatens their wealth and privileges.

While some workers have been taken in by Trump's nationalist rhetoric, history shows such a reactionary perspective can only lead the working class to disaster.

For decades, the UAW bureaucracy, the auto bosses and the two corporate-controlled parties have promoted "Buy American" nationalism to demand workers sacrifice their wages and working conditions to boost the competitiveness and profitability of their "own" capitalist corporations. This never saved a single job. Instead, some 850,000 UAW jobs have been lost at the Big Three since 1979. This is not due to "unfair trade agreements" but to the crisis of American and world capitalism and the ruthless drive to lower labor costs and boost profits.

The anti-Asian racism promoted by the UAW bureaucracy in the 1980s, which resulted in such horrors as the beating death of Chinese-American engineer Vincent Chin in 1982, was used to divide workers and cover up the UAW leaders' own complicity in the slashing of the jobs and wages of hundreds of thousands of workers.

Trump intends to use the services of the trade union bureaucracy to completely subjugate the working class and wage war against American imperialism's rivals abroad. He is beginning with the scapegoating and rounding up of immigrants, but this will be followed by the use of the military to crush all domestic opposition to the rule of the oligarchs and their wars to seize resources and territories like the Panama Canal, Greenland and even Canada.

Will Lehman, the Pennsylvania Mack Trucks worker who ran as a socialist candidate for UAW president in 2022, issued a statement responding to Fain's groveling before Trump. In it, Lehman stated:

The working class is an international class, which today is more connected through a single process of global production than in any other period in history. Workers in America cannot defend themselves at the expense of workers in every other country.

The solution for workers is not America First but the unity of the working class around the world, including VW workers fighting massive job cuts in Germany and Stellantis workers in Italy, the UK and other countries.

Lehman concluded:

As the naked class interests that Trump represents become clear to millions, including those who voted for him, working class opposition will grow. But this rebellion can only be developed if workers consciously reject the nationalist and pro-capitalist poison long promoted by the UAW bureaucracy and both corporate-controlled parties.

This means expanding the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) into every factory and workplace. The fight against job cuts and capitalist exploitation must be combined with the defense of our immigrant co-workers and opposition to wars for profit. The massive wealth and concentration of economic power in the hands of Musk and other oligarchs must be broken and their vast private fortunes expropriated so they can be used for social needs. This is the only way that jobs and high living standards can be guaranteed to all, and democracy prevail over fascism and dictatorship.



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