

# Sanders in Michigan promotes pro-Trump, pro-trade war UAW President Shawn Fain

**Matthew Brennan, Barry Grey****10 March 2025**

On Saturday, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders brought his fraudulent “Fight Oligarchy” tour to Altoona, Wisconsin, and Warren, Michigan. The rally in Warren, an industrial suburb north of Detroit, drew an overflow crowd of more than 10,000 people.

Sanders uses “left” rhetoric and demagogic to channel growing popular anger against Trump’s fascist policies back behind the Democratic Party, while covering for the Democrats’ role in facilitating the attacks and attempting to whip up support for economic nationalism and imperialist war. The event in Warren underscored this latter objective most clearly, with the appearance of United Auto Workers (UAW) President Shawn Fain as the opening speaker.

Fain spoke just days after issuing a statement supporting Donald Trump’s tariffs against Mexico, Canada and China and backing the economic nationalist agenda of the far-right government with the lying claim that it was a defense of US autoworker jobs. This followed his statements pledging to “work with” the fascist in the White House.

Trump’s trade war measures will wreak havoc on the jobs and conditions of autoworkers in all three countries by disrupting global supply chains and fueling national divisions among workers, who will be made to pay the price of trade war and ultimately military conflict.

Fain has played a critical role in betraying the struggles of autoworkers. He vigorously campaigned for Joe Biden in the 2024 election, wearing an “arsenal of democracy” sweatshirt, a World War II reference intended to align the UAW with Biden’s escalation of war with Russia.

Warren, Michigan, is a major industrial hub of auto companies like General Motors, Faurecia and Stellantis. In September 2024, Stellantis laid off 2,450 workers at the Warren Truck Assembly Plant, with no opposition from Fain and the UAW bureaucracy outside of a one-day “Day of Action” protest stunt.

Wearing an “Eat the Rich” shirt at the rally, Fain denounced billionaires and “unchecked corporate greed.” While attacking the auto companies for shifting American jobs to Mexico, Fain hypocritically said, “Our fight is not with our Mexican brothers and sisters.”

Though Fain denounced Elon Musk several times, he avoided

mentioning the billionaire president and aspiring dictator Trump. The very next morning, Fain appeared on the ABC-TV “This Week” program, where he enthusiastically praised Trump’s trade war policies.

On the Sunday talk show he acknowledged that the UAW bureaucracy was working with Trump and his team, saying, “Members of my team have been working with him … name me one president in the last 25 years that’s talked about doing these things and trying to fix this broken system.”

Sanders was, if anything, even more cynical and demagogic. While he denounced social inequality, cuts to social services, desperate living conditions and corporate greed, he made no mention of the source of these social crimes—capitalism. He never raised the role of the Democratic Party in paving the way for Trump and facilitating his attacks since taking office.

At one point Sanders called for the “minimum wage to be raised to \$15 or \$17 per hour.” According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the average hourly “housing wage” required to afford a modest two-bedroom rental home is \$32.11. And this does not take into account rising prices for basic goods and the impending impact of US-instigated trade wars on housing costs.

For all his slogans about “fighting the billionaire class” and “ending corporate greed,” Sanders’ remarks were most notable for what he did not address. He said nothing about Trump’s pogrom against immigrants, the spearhead of his assault on the democratic rights of the entire population. This includes the deployment of the military to carry out mass deportations and crack down on political dissent, the de facto abolition of the First Amendment guarantee of freedom of speech, with the detention and deportation of pro-Palestinian non-citizen protesters on college campuses, and the assertion of presidential powers that amount to dictatorship.

He never referred to Trump’s tariff war, he refused to call the Biden-Trump policy on Gaza by its right name—genocide—and he adhered to the policy of the Democratic Party in abandoning the “f” word, fascism, in reference to Trump’s rampage against the democratic and social rights of the working class.

Prior to the election, Biden, Harris and Sanders were characterizing Trump as a fascist who posed an existential threat to the US Constitution and democratic rights. Now that

their warnings are being realized in Trump's actions, Sanders and the Democratic Party are downplaying the dangers to the population, while doing nothing to oppose the would-be dictator.

Long gone are any references to socialism or calls for a "political revolution," which was Sanders' main 2016 presidential campaign slogan before he pulled out and backed Hillary Clinton. In 2020 he reprised his role, ending his campaign for the Democratic nomination and supporting Biden. In 2024, he backed Biden until the bitter end, calling him the most progressive president since FDR, and then campaigned for Kamala Harris.

Twice during his speech, Sanders made historical analogies to the Civil War. But he said nothing of Trump's efforts to end birthright citizenship, a pillar of the 14th Amendment, one of the three Civil War amendments that were a product of the Union victory over the Confederate slavocracy.

Sanders' comments on the US-led war against Russia in Ukraine demonstrated his support for imperialist war. Referring to Trump's recent negotiations with Russian President Putin, he stated:

We are proud that we are the longest standing democracy in the world. ... But I have to tell you that for the first time in our 250-year history, we have a president who is turning his back on democracy and allying us with authoritarianism.

This is turning history on its head. By some estimates, the American ruling class, through its intelligence agencies and military, has covertly or overtly overthrown more than 60 different sovereign governments in just the last 100 years and installed US-backed regimes, including vicious dictatorships such as the Shah of Iran, Suharto in Indonesia and Pinochet in Chile.

This includes the 2014 coup in Ukraine, which ousted a pro-Russian government and installed a NATO puppet regime that is riddled with fascists and neo-Nazis. At no point during the rally was there a call to end US-led wars or dismantle the US military apparatus and its trillion-dollar yearly budget.

Above all, Sanders took care not to call on his audience of some 10,000 people to take independent action in the form of strikes or mass protests against the threat of fascism, war and the destruction of education, healthcare and other basic social services. He and the rest of the Democratic Party, reflecting the ruling class as a whole, are petrified of doing or saying anything that might encourage the mounting popular anger to assume the form of a mass rebellion.

Leading the cheers for Sanders were members of the Democratic Socialists of America, a faction of the Democratic Party and trade union bureaucracy.

Sanders made only one proposal to his listeners—to pressure the district's Republican Congressman John James, who narrowly won in the November 2024 election. He called for the audience to phone James and ask him to vote against the Republican reconciliation budget bill and hold a town hall.

James is a far-right Republican who is politically allied with Trump advisor Steve Bannon. James was able to narrowly win in Macomb County because of decades of layoffs and auto plant closures, most recently the Romeo Ford Engine plant in 2022, which have left the Democrats deeply discredited.

Sanders, working in tandem with the Democratic Party leadership, is staging his "Fighting Oligarchy" rallies in narrowly contested congressional districts currently held by Republicans, the better to suppress the growing opposition of workers and youth against Trump and block it from taking a mass, independent and potentially revolutionary direction.

That is why he paraded Fain before the crowd in Warren, attempting to boost the right-wing, pro-corporate and economic nationalist trade union apparatus, which is likewise doing everything it can to suppress and undermine working class opposition.

The impotent and bankrupt maneuver proposed by Sanders underscores the fraud of his supposed campaign against oligarchic rule in the US. There are, in fact, two fundamentally different and opposed oppositions to Trump. There is the emerging mass opposition of the working class and youth, which is rooted in the defense of democratic and social rights and is of a left-wing and potentially socialist character.

And then there is the opposition of sections of the ruling class, including elements within the oligarchy itself, which oppose Trump on foreign policy questions, above all, his threat to pull back in the war against Russia. On making the working class pay for the mounting crisis of American capitalism, both bourgeois factions are in agreement. Sanders speaks for and represents the bourgeois opposition.

Members of the Socialist Equality Party and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality campaigned outside the rally. The SEP and IYSSE distributed hundreds of *World Socialist Web Site* newsletters, including the Perspective statement "Bernie Sanders attempts to divert opposition to Trump behind the Democratic Party and support for war with Russia."

Their calls for building rank-and-file workplace, neighborhood and action committees, as well as breaking with the Democrats and fighting for socialism were met with broad interest.



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