

UAW holds “invest in US” rallies to support Trump’s tariffs and scapegoat Mexican autoworkers

Shannon Jones
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In defiance of mounting rank-and-file anger over job cuts, the United Auto Workers bureaucracy is continuing to promote Trump’s tariffs and foul anti-Mexican sentiment.

Tightly controlled “invest in US” rallies held in Warren and Trenton, Michigan last week were attended by perhaps a few dozen people, mostly UAW officials. Speakers called on Stellantis to shift production to “underutilized” US plants rather than send “jobs to low-wage, high-exploitation countries.”

A statement issued in the name of UAW Region 1, promoting the Invest in US rally in Warren declared, “auto tariffs should motivate Stellantis to bring every laid off worker back to work, utilizing the excess capacity at nearly all our facilities.”

The rallies follow the release of a UAW white paper, last titled, “Unlocking the potential of US auto manufacturing.” It denounces the “offshoring production to low-wage, high-exploitation countries like Mexico.”

While UAW officials tried to dress up their promotion of tariffs with faux populist rhetoric, attacking multi-billion-dollar dividend payouts to stockholders, their thrust was clear: to defend the union’s alliance with the fascist Trump.

Despite his claims to the contrary, Fain’s support for Trump’s poisonous America First chauvinism aligns the UAW bureaucracy with the administration’s mass deportation of immigrants, who are being blamed for all the social ills created by capitalism, along with the banishment of international students for opposing the genocide in Gaza.

The economic nationalism promoted by the UAW is reactionary and ignorant. It is well-known that auto production relies on a complex and highly integrated global supply network involving workers in many different regions. Any disruption to production in one country has much broader ramifications. There is no such thing as an American or Mexican car. Every vehicle that is produced contains parts produced by the labor of workers in many different countries.

The claim that American workers can only defend jobs by taking them away from workers in other countries accepts the limits of the capitalist system, divides the working class, undermines solidarity and ties the working class to “their”

corporate bosses and capitalist governments.

More fundamentally, the under-utilization of production capacity results from the anarchic and unplanned nature of capitalist production, with all considerations of social need subordinated to the mad drive for personal enrichment. Does any autoworker think the UAW’s cozying up to the fascist Trump or appeals to the auto companies “to do the right thing” will defend a single job? In fact, all the rights workers have were the product of bitter class struggle, not granted out of the good hearts of capitalists or big business politicians.

The only viable strategy to defend jobs is based on a perspective of uniting workers globally against the transnational auto companies. The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), is spearheading this fight by mobilizing workers independent of the pro-corporate and nationalist union apparatus and building lines of communication to coordinate workers struggles globally.

That such a global fight is possible is shown by the recent strikes by workers in China as well as strike votes by German autoworkers over Ford’s job cuts. Mexican autoworkers, who the UAW stigmatizes, have waged militant struggles against the US transnationals, including the 2019 Matamoros rebellion. In 2019, GM workers at the Silao plant in Mexico took solidarity action in support of striking US GM workers.

The UAW white paper last month spelled out the nationalist arguments for backing tariffs. It states, “In 2024, the U.S. auto industry had the capacity to build more than 14.7 million vehicles. However, only 10.2 million vehicles were produced, leaving 4.5 million units of unused capacity,”

It then notes, “The American auto industry has a proud legacy of rising to national challenges—from mobilizing for World War II as the Arsenal of Democracy to producing critical medical equipment during the COVID-19 crisis.”

The reference to the WWII “Arsenal of Democracy” demonstrates that, as it did under Biden, who called the unions his “domestic NATO,” the UAW is once again offering its services as a pro-management police force over the working class, suppressing strikes and enforcing brutal exploitation to

supply the US war machine.

Tariffs are not aimed at creating jobs for American workers. Instead, they are a critical aspect in Trump's war planning. They are aimed at securing the supply chains needed for ramping up military production in preparation for a world war in which China is the primary target. It should be recalled that in the 1930s the setting-up of tariff walls paralleled the rise of fascism, the fracturing of the world into rival trading blocs, culminating in the catastrophe of WWII.

The decision by the UAW not to mobilize rank-and-file workers for its phony job rallies is revealing. UAW President Shawn Fain is well aware of the boiling anger among autoworkers over his embrace of Trump's tariffs, which have already resulted in thousands of layoffs in the US, Canada and Mexico. Further, growing numbers of workers are alarmed at the violent attacks on the democratic rights of citizens and noncitizens alike, as well as the provocative threats and war mongering on the part of the fascist Trump.

Fain's complaints about the auto companies exploiting low wages in Mexico are the height of cynicism given the role of the UAW in undermining the pay and conditions of American workers.

The supposedly "historic" 2023 UAW-Detroit Three contract sanctioned the firing of thousands of temporary workers, who were falsely promised full-time employment. Fain also signed off on the closure of more than a dozen Stellantis parts distribution facilities in exchange for a bogus commitment by Stellantis to open a new parts hub in Belvidere, Illinois along with the reopening of the idled Belvidere Assembly plant and construction of a new battery plant. Plans for the parts hub and battery plant were officially scrapped by Stellantis earlier this week.

The UAW has blocked opposition to layoffs and the mass firing of temporary workers while helping management impose conditions of speed-up and forced overtime on the remaining workforce. Death and injury on the job are increasing, as reflected in the death of Stellantis Toledo Jeep worker Anthony Gaston last August and Dundee Engine skilled trades worker Ronnie Adams last month.

In the EV plants where the UAW has gained recognition, such as the StarPlus battery plant in Kokomo, Indiana, workers earn substandard wages and face unsafe conditions while still being forced to pay dues to the UAW.

Recent job cuts have met no resistance from the UAW. This includes the layoff of more than 1,000 workers at Stellantis Warren Truck Assembly and the delay in the reopening of Belvidere Assembly until at least 2027. Hundreds have been laid off at Warren Stamping and Sterling Stamping as well as transmission plants in Kokomo, Indiana. GM laid off 200 workers at Factory Zero in Detroit last month and Volvo-Mack Trucks is laying off 1,000 workers in Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania.

Job cuts are also hitting workers in Canada and Mexico.

Stellantis just announced another one-week shutdown of the Chrysler minivan plant in Windsor, Ontario following a two-week layoff in April. It has also temporarily idled production at its plant in Toluca, Mexico.

GM temporarily halted production at the CAMI plant in Ingersoll, Ontario and another 700 workers are facing layoff at the GM Oshawa plant in Canada. Thousands of auto parts workers in the US, Canada and Mexico are being impacted by these layoffs.

A global jobs bloodbath has been underway for quite some time as auto companies all over the world have escalated job cutting as they seek to offload the costs of the transition to electric vehicles onto the backs of workers. EVs require considerably fewer parts and less labor to build, presaging a global jobs bloodbath. In fact, many of the plants that the UAW lists as having excess capacity are undergoing retooling for the production of electric models.

Given these facts, a globally united fight back is both possible and necessary.

Will Lehman, a Mack Trucks worker and a candidate for United Auto Workers president in the union's 2022 elections, stated in an op-ed piece in Newsweek, published this week:

Workers in the U.S. must reject the lie that we can only save our jobs at the expense of workers in other countries. We can only defend our interests by uniting with our class brothers and sisters throughout the world.

That's why I urge autoworkers to form rank-and-file committees in every plant and to join the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC). The corporations are globally coordinated. We must be too.

We don't need a trade war. We don't need nationalism. We need a new strategy: internationalism and socialism. Not backing the nationalist competition between different corporations, but creating a society based on genuine equality, in which the global economy is controlled by the workers and for the workers.

To join the fight for rank-and-file committees, fill out the form below.



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