

Detroit autoworkers denounce US-Israeli war on Iran: “This is for Big Oil”

Our reporters
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Workers at the Stellantis Sterling Heights Assembly Plant (SHAP) in suburban Detroit expressed widespread and angry opposition to the US-Israeli war against Iran during shift changes Thursday, denouncing the conflict as a war for profit while voicing deep alarm over the prospect of a military draft.

Reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to workers as they passed through the factory gates, shortly after reports emerged that the US government is moving toward automatic registration for a potential military draft. Under the National Defense Authorization Act, passed by Congress with bipartisan support last year, the Selective Service System will shift to automatic registration of all eligible men aged 18 to 25 by December 2026—a measure that would dramatically expedite the conscription of working-class youth if the draft is restored.

The reaction at the plant gates was visceral and immediate. “This war is bull—t,” one worker declared as he rushed into the plant. Another, phone pressed to his ear, called out: “I’m on the phone with my son now and we’re talking about them starting a draft—no way!” A third said her son was currently in Europe and she feared the young man would be sent into combat. “They should take Trump’s kids, not ours,” another worker said bitterly, while another added, “a lot of innocent kids are going to get killed.”

The opposition runs deep and is shared widely across the country. According to the latest Economist/YouGov poll, 53 percent of Americans oppose the war. Sixty-two percent oppose sending ground troops into Iran, while only 15 percent support it. President Trump’s net approval rating has fallen to a record low of minus 16.9 points—with 56.5 percent disapproving and just 39.5 percent approving—since the war began, according to Nate Silver’s national polling aggregate. There was widespread skepticism among workers over the two-week ceasefire

Trump announced shortly after threatening that a “whole civilization will die” if Iran did not surrender. And that skepticism is well-founded.

As the WSWS reported Wednesday, the ceasefire began unraveling within hours of its announcement: Israel launched its deadliest bombardment of Lebanon since 2006, killing hundreds of people, even as the terms of the agreement remained disputed and unclear. Sharp divisions have opened up within the American ruling class over how to proceed, with influential voices in both parties condemning the ceasefire not as too aggressive, but as a dangerous concession to Tehran.

Trump himself, posting on Truth Social late Wednesday, vowed that US military forces would remain in the region until a “REAL AGREEMENT” was reached—and threatened to attack Iran “bigger, and better, and stronger than anyone has ever seen before.” Every ceasefire Trump has proclaimed in the Middle East has functioned as a prelude to further military escalation, and workers at SHAP have no illusions about this one.

One worker stopped to voice anger over Trump’s comments last week that there would be no money for childcare, Medicaid, or Social Security because “we’re fighting wars.” Several workers said the costs of war would be offloaded onto the working class while the wealthy profit.

A worker with 13 years at SHAP put it plainly: “I think 100 percent what’s behind this war is money. Bigwigs are making a lot of money on this war, and nobody’s really benefiting from this whatsoever, except for Big Oil.” When asked about Trump’s cuts to Social Security and Medicaid to fund the military campaign, he was unsparing: “I think it’s crap. I don’t think there’s any reason for us to be paying for this war whatsoever. It’s just a means for them to save their pockets and dig more into our pockets.”

On the prospect of a reinstated draft, the same worker

noted the bitter irony of who is demanding sacrifice from working-class families: “That’s coming from a guy that dodged the draft. Him, his father, his grandfather—all men who are well known to have dodged a draft.”

He then addressed himself directly to the Iranian people: “I’m sorry you guys are going through that right now. It’s a terrible thing. Many of us here do not support those attacks whatsoever. I hope the majority of you guys pull through this. I know you’re losing people regularly with these attacks, and my prayers are with you.” He was emphatic that there is no basis for American and Iranian workers to be killing one another: “None whatsoever. It serves no purpose other than big money making money. That’s all it is.”

His frustration extended to the broader absence of organized resistance. “It’s disheartening that there’s not more of us here willing to stand up and fight,” he said. “We should be overthrowing...going through revolutionary issues right here, right now. Everybody should be up in arms, and we’re not, and it’s sick.” He also turned his criticism on the UAW leadership, noting that despite 13 years at the plant he cannot afford his own home or support a family. “This guy’s up there sitting pretty, making \$275,000 a year,” he said, referring to UAW President Shawn Fain. “It’s absolutely ridiculous.”

A veteran SHAP worker wearing an “Abolish ICE” button and active in the No Kings demonstrations was equally passionate. “You’ve got to take a stand. There’s got to be solidarity. We aren’t going for this BS no more. We’re sick of it.” On Trump’s threat to “end a civilization” in Iran, he said: “It’s BS what is happening in Iran, and it’s BS with Israel and the genocide they’ve got going on in Gaza.” Asked what he made of the Democrats complicity with Trump’s war, he was dismissive: “Come on, it’s the same party. They’re all the dog family. One’s a pitbull and the other one is a Bouvier—it’s all the same.”

The opposition of rank-and-file workers stands in sharp contrast to the conduct of the UAW bureaucracy, whose silence on Trump’s criminal war amounts to complicity. Far from mobilizing autoworkers against the war, UAW President Shawn Fain has been among the most prominent boosters of Trump’s tariffs and trade war, promoting the fascist president as a champion of American workers’ jobs. He has suppressed strikes at major defense contractors, including the General Dynamics Naval shipyard in Bath, Maine, and has offered the UAW’s services to enforce labor discipline in a wartime economy. The bureaucracy functions not as a

voice for workers’ interests but as a transmission belt for the policies of the corporations and the state.

The Democratic Party offers no alternative. Last week, US Senator Elissa Slotkin—a former CIA officer—held a meeting with union leaders in Saginaw, Michigan, shortly after workers at Nexteer Automotive voted by 96 percent to reject a UAW-backed contract that would pay new hires a poverty wage of \$19 an hour. Hostile to the rebellion of rank-and-file workers, Slotkin co-authored a letter with Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer urging Trump to block Chinese automakers from investing in the United States on “national security” grounds.

Deploying the language of McCarthyism, the letter denounced China as an “adversary” and claimed that Chinese electric vehicles driven near US “military sites, government buildings, or power stations could transmit sensitive data to the Chinese Communist Party and the People’s Liberation Army.” The Democrats differ from Trump not in their commitment to American imperialism, but only in their preferred tactics for pursuing it.

The anger at SHAP is widespread. “Are we really surprised?” one worker asked. “The United States has been doing stuff like this for more than 100 years.” Another said simply: “I’m against this war. I think they are invading Iran for profit.” These instincts point in the right direction, but they must be developed into a conscious political movement, independent of both the Democratic Party and the union apparatus that has subordinated itself to corporate and state power.

That is the central task. The war against Iran will not be stopped by appeals to politicians who support it, or by relying on a labor leadership that is on the side of the warmakers. It requires the independent mobilization of the working class—in factories, across industries, and across national borders—guided by a socialist and internationalist program. The system that produces war also produces poverty and inequality. The fight against one is inseparable from the fight against the other.



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