Struggle-La-Lucha.org

Hands off the UAW!

written by Stephen Millies
July 17, 2024

Feds’ probe is retaliation for urging peace in Gaza

On Dec. 14, 2023, UAW President Shawn Fain called for a ceasefire alongside congresspersons Rashida Tlalib, Ayanna Pressley, and Ilhan Omar outside the U.S. Capitol. Photo from Tlaib on X.

What's behind the investigation of United Auto Workers union president Shawn Fain by U.S. government-appointed monitor Neil Barofsky? The inquiry comes just eight months after UAW members won big wage gains by striking Ford, General Motors, and Stellantis (which took over Chrysler).

This was the first big strike in the U.S. since the Teamsters' strike against UPS in 1997. The UAW has started organizing drives in southern auto plants. It won a union recognition election at the Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

The capitalist government took advantage of corruption charges involving both UAW officials and Chrysler corporation executives to impose a monitor on the UAW in 2021. Stealing money from a union is reprehensible, but it's chicken feed compared to the crimes committed by the auto companies and their government.

Over 40 years of givebacks and job cuts devastated entire cities, including Detroit and Flint, Michigan. General Motors closed nine of its ten plants in Flint, impoverishing the Black-majority city.

Why wasn't former Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder sent to jail for poisoning the children of Flint with filthy water?

The 2009 government bailout imposed pay tiers that sharply cut the pay of newly hired employees. These pay cuts helped GM to rake in $100 billion in profits in the following decade.

The victorious UAW strike last year restored equal pay for equal work.

'Stay in your lane'

The current investigation is ostensibly about an internal union dispute concerning UAW Secretary-Treasurer Margaret Mock. But it's really about the UAW President Shawn Fain supporting a ceasefire in Gaza.

The UAW is so far the largest union to demand an end to the killing of Palestinians. Other union leaders urging a stop to the war include American Postal Workers Union President Mark Diamondstein, who is Jewish.

Government monitor Barofsky urged Fain to be silent. Barofsky called Fain the night before the UAW president spoke at a Dec. 14, 2023, news conference calling for a ceasefire.

As the UAW attorney Benjamin Dictor pointed out, Barofsky's action had nothing to do with his job as a monitor. Even Barofsky admitted that "this issue is outside the Monitor's jurisdiction."

This was an outrageous attempt to make a union leader shut up. Big business, if they tolerate unions at all, want labor leaders to "stay in their lane."

The wealthy and powerful want to go back to the days of the Cold War. AFL-CIO President George Meany supported the dirty U.S. war against Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia that killed millions, including 58,000 GIs.

Unions supporting a ceasefire in Gaza is a good first step. We hope the UAW and the rest of the labor movement go further.

The UAW's endorsement of Joe Biden won't stop the Trumps. Only mass action, like the UAW strike last year, can do that.

Government Monitor Neil Barofsky needs to be fired. Hands off the UAW.