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Behind the attacks on the UAW

By Martha Grevatt posted on July 22, 2026

The United Auto Workers is under attack from both wings of the ruling class. President Donald Trump’s so-called Department of Justice (DOJ) is investigating claims that UAW President Shawn Fain retaliated against UAW Vice President Rich Boyer. But these claims are based on a recent report by the union’s federal court-appointed monitor, Neil Barofsky, described as “a lifelong Democrat who donated money to the Obama campaign.” (salon.com, Feb. 15, 2011)



UAW strike rally, Detroit, Sept. 15, 2023.

Barofsky claims the alleged retaliation against Boyer, the vice president in charge of the UAW’s Stellantis (formerly Chrysler) department, was because he refused to approve a bonus that would have benefitted Fain’s fiancée, Keesha McConaghie, and to advance a workers’ compensation claim for her sister. Fain denies Barofsky’s allegation, calling it a political maneuver to undermine Fain’s reelection campaign.

Fain accused Boyer of pressuring him to hire Boyer’s grandson as well as agreeing to concessions at Stellantis that were not part of the pattern set at Ford and General Motors after the 2023 “Stand Up Strike” that hit all three Detroit auto companies.

The veracity of the accusations and counter-accusations is actually a secondary issue. What is central is that the capitalist state — via both the appointed monitor and the DOJ — is exploiting allegations of unethical conduct as a means to interfere in an internal union dispute.



The conflict between the government and the union is a conflict between two antagonistic class forces. The state, whether led by a Democrat or a Republican, represents the interests of the billionaire capitalist class. Unions, whatever their merits or shortcomings, represent the interests of the working class. The capitalist class makes profits by exploiting the working class — here and around the world. The interests of the two classes are irreconcilable. This is a scientific fact, whether or not current union leaders recognize it.

The UAW has built-in mechanisms to deal with weak, corrupt or ineffective leaders. Rank-and-file union members strengthened their ability to remove such leaders when they voted in favor of “one member, one vote” in 2021. Since then they have had the ability to directly elect the UAW’s top leaders who serve on the International Executive Board (IEB). Prior to that historic vote, the IEB members were elected by delegates to the UAW’s tightly-controlled Constitutional Convention, held every four years.

If the members believe that President Fain is unsuited for his position, they can simply vote him out of office — without “assistance” from the capitalist government!

Why is the UAW being attacked now?

In 2024, Fain removed Boyer from his position in charge of the union’s Stellantis Department. He restored Boyer’s leadership of that department in December 2025 after the monitor ordered him to do so. That should have been the end of the monitor’s interference.

Why is the monitor now investigating Fain two years after the removal of Boyer?

Fain has tied the attacks on the union to the union’s call for a ceasefire in Gaza in 2023. He referred to recordings of conversations with Barofsky in which the monitor urged Fain to reverse the union’s position rather than be accused of antisemitism.

Fain’s assertions have merit — and the monitor’s report and the DOJ investigation were both announced right after the UAW convention voted to divest union funds from Israel bonds.

However, there is another reason why both Republicans and mainstream Democrats — who are united in their support for the Zionist state — would go after Fain now, just weeks after he was nominated as a candidate for UAW president at the Constitutional Convention.

At the time of the 2023 strike, The New York Times lamented, “Shawn Fain’s disdain for the ‘billionaire class.’” The Times pointed to comments from the auto companies, saying, “G.M. denounced the union’s ‘rhetoric and theatrics,’ and Ford said the UAW should focus on talks and not ‘planning strikes and P.R. events.’” (Oct. 5, 2023)

The Times is a mouthpiece for the ruling class. Fain’s militant language frequently refers to the “working class” and denounces “billionaires.” This contrasts with past UAW leaders who euphemistically called for “saving the middle class.” The strike won back gains that past union leaders gave up in the name of keeping companies “profitable” and “competitive.”

Fain is actually inconsistent when it comes to building global, working-class solidarity or class struggle unionism. He has supported Trump’s tariffs on Canada, Mexico and other countries as a mechanism to bring jobs back to the U.S. — at the expense of workers elsewhere in the world. He even wrote an opinion piece for the Jan. 19, 2025, Washington Post with the headline, “I’m president of the UAW. We’re ready to work with Trump.”

Fain has continued the UAW’s long pattern of running the union in a top-down fashion. He is running as part of a slate that is dominated by his former electoral opponents, members of the class collaborationist Administration



Caucus that controlled the union for decades.

Nevertheless, the capitalist class considers the current UAW president too militant. They want him out, and they see the union’s current problems as a way to increase their control over its functioning.

Workers and oppressed people should clearly demand: Government hands off the UAW!

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