# UAW presidential candidate speaks at meeting of Indian and German Ford workers

**Our reporter**
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Will Lehman, a Mack Trucks worker in Macungie, Pennsylvania who is running for president of the United Auto Workers (UAW), spoke with Indian and German Ford workers at a meeting on Sunday against plant closures that was sponsored by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).

Lehman is running to develop a rebellion by UAW members against the bloated union bureaucracy and to establish the power of the rank and file on the shop floor. His participation in the meeting of Ford workers from the threatened plants in Tamil Nadu, India and Saarlouis, Germany underscores that the foundation of his campaign is the fight for the international unification of the working class against the attacks on jobs and living standards by Ford and the other transnational auto giants.

In every country, the biggest obstacles to a unified struggle are the nationalist and pro-capitalist union bureaucracies, which have imposed one concession after another in the name of making their "own" capitalist corporations more competitive and supposedly "saving" jobs. This policy has only pitted one section of workers against another in a fratricidal race to the bottom and has never saved a single job. In the US, the number of hourly Ford workers has fallen from 191,400 in 1978 to barely 55,000 in 2021.

Lehman was invited to the meeting to speak about the significance of his campaign for the UAW presidency. He made the following remarks, which were translated into German and Tamil.

"I'm proud to be among you in this meeting of international workers. I'm Will Lehman, and I'm running for the office of international president of the United Auto Workers trade union.

"My campaign is not for a seat at the trade union bureaucracy's table, but to oppose the national isolation program of the UAW bureaucracy. For decades, UAW officials have told us that our enemies are not the corporations that have been attacking our jobs and conditions, but our fellow workers in other countries. Workers are increasingly seeing that it is the companies and the union bureaucracies that are the enemy, and workers in other countries as our brothers and sisters, not our enemies.

"I want to make workers aware of the vastly more powerful stance of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) and highlight the betrayals of the UAW to dispel any notion of reforming the union by replacing one bureaucrat with another. My campaign advances the call for the complete abolition of the union bureaucracy and putting power into the hands of the workers, who I urge to form rank-and-file committees.

"In America, workers are entering back into struggle, with many going on strike for the first time in decades. The workers at Mack Trucks, where I work, went on strike for the first time in 35 years in 2019. The situation is very similar for many other autoworkers in America.

"Last year saw the strike of New River Valley Volvo Trucks workers in Virginia. Through the work of the Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee, they were able to reach out to Volvo workers in Belgium, Canada and other countries for international solidarity. John Deere workers went on strike, workers at auto parts manufacturer Dana rejected their contract and their struggle was diverted by the UAW, and cereal makers at Kellogg's went out on strike for weeks to abolish tiers. This year, auto parts workers are attempting to enter into struggle at the Ventra plant in Evart, Michigan.

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“Workers in the US are continuing to find that the old methods of reliance on the unions are not adequate in confronting corporations for adequate pay and working conditions.

“My campaign seeks to point the way forward for these workers through international struggle. Ford workers in the US will need to recognize that Ford workers in any other country are also their allies. Ford is not an ‘American’ company, it is an international company. If it is to be fought successfully it must be fought by workers internationally; the same for Mack Trucks’ parent company, Volvo, and the rest. The global nature of production will be made clear in my campaign. The only valid method of struggle of workers will be through international solidarity.”

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