

Autoworkers eager to back Will Lehman's campaign for UAW president

Our reporters
2 August 2022

For more information on Will Lehman's campaign, go to WillforUAWpresident.org.

Autoworkers across the country have sent messages of support for Will Lehman, a Mack Trucks worker and socialist, who was nominated to run for president of the United Auto Workers at last week's UAW convention in Detroit.

In a statement issued after his nomination, Lehman said, "This is a major victory for our campaign to build a rank-and-file movement against the entire pro-corporate UAW apparatus. I want to thank all the workers who made videos and wrote in to demand that your delegates nominate me. It would not have happened without your support."

Rick is a worker at Volvo Trucks New River Valley plant in Dublin, Virginia, and a leader of the rank-and-file committee that fought both the company and the UAW bureaucracy during last year's five-week strike. He said, "I think it's good that we got somebody from the Mack Trucks Rank-and-File Committee to step up like he is, putting himself out there. It just shows that if people step up in these rank-and-file committees, they can make a difference."

"I am glad someone nominated him at the convention and stuck their neck out. It's an amazing feat, and it shows just how far we've come this year that people are changing their minds and fighting. I just hope we can keep the momentum going! When the bureaucrats changed their mind on strike pay, that was typical," he said, referring to the vote at the UAW convention rescinding an increase in strike pay. "They get their big money, and the workers are suffering as usual."

Tina is a worker at the Ventra parts plant in Evart, Michigan. The Ventra workers have built a rank-and-file committee to fight the conspiracy by the company and the UAW, which are trying to impose basically the same contract that workers rejected by 95 percent last

month.

"Will Lehman is a candidate that we can count on to put the needs of our brothers and sisters first!" Tina said. "As a fellow autoworker, he has lived in our shoes and sees the need for change!"

A worker at the Stellantis Sterling Heights Assembly Plant (SHAP) in suburban Detroit said, "Tell Will that me and others are running his name thru the plant. This is an attempt to remove [incumbent UAW President] Curry and change the entire elected plant team. Right now, full-time workers must work six days just to get 40 hours. They're being sent home once the company reaches its production goal. Even with \$8 billion in revenues for six months, the company won't buy much-needed equipment. The president and vice president of Local 1700 are using the TPT [temporary part-time] workers to get reelected, but they can't help them."

A young TPT worker from the Flint GM Assembly plant said, "I am very pleased to see that Will Lehman has been successfully nominated to run for UAW president in the coming election. As a TPT worker at GM, I have seen first hand the complete uselessness and incompetence of the UAW as a supposed workers organization. Lehman's campaign appeals to me because he rejects the union as being capable of being reformed but rather wants to build a movement of workers independent of it. Workers need to understand Lehman's insistence on breaking from the UAW bureaucracy and forming rank-and-file committees opposed to the nationalist orientation of the union. The auto companies are fully international organizations and to fight them and gain concessions workers need to fight internationally as well. I agree with his demand that autoworkers not only in the US but in every nation must connect up their struggles through the building of the rank-and-file committees."

A worker at the Ford Rouge complex in Dearborn, Michigan, said, "Will seems to be a good fit for our

president. Someone who actually is for the workers and not in the companies' pockets. He wants to fight against the corruption that has been there for years."

A Ford Chicago Assembly Plant worker said after the nomination, "That's great news. This is a second chance. I hope he makes it all the way and show them people who really is in charge. I'm keeping my fingers crossed, and my wife and I will be voting for him. Thank you & the WSWs for all your help. Thank you for me & every member of UAW that doesn't know it yet what could and should be done for us."

"This definitely needs to happen! They [union] do not have our best interest," said a Dana parts workers from Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Tammy, the wife of an autoworker who lives in Flint, Michigan added, "I support Will Lehman. From what I have read and watched, he seems like the right guy for the UAW president. He is fighting for unity and wage increases. Go, Will!"

Lehman also won support from retired autoworkers.

Bill, a retired GM Pontiac Truck & Bus worker, said, "I watched Will's video and subscribed to his YouTube channel. In my view, the workers have been beaten down enough by the ruling class and kept there by union toadies that he is sure to get the support he needs. Will is a Facebook friend so I congratulated him on his nomination. I also told him that I would help in any way I can. This video went to Facebook!"

"It's great that Will is going to be on the ballot," said Lyle Roussey, who retired in 2009 after working at four General Motors plants in Michigan. "He can get a lot of support from active workers and retirees.

"Workers have been hired in at low wages and work side by side with workers making twice as much. At the UAW convention, the delegates voted against abolishing the two-tier system. That shows you they're on management's side. The same bureaucracy is still in charge.

"We need the change Will is fighting for. He can't do this alone. We need a rank-and-file movement. It's the ranks who should be running the union, not the national officers. The power should be in the rank and file. Workers are starting to build rank-and-file committees. It's through these committees that workers can talk directly to each other and fight for what they want and need.

"Retirees are now the majority of union members. They remember the fights in the past and how the UAW gave up what we fought for. Will is the only candidate that has

come from the ranks and believes in the ranks.

"Will sees that the problems we face in the US are the same as workers all over the world. Everywhere workers want wages and cost-of-living to protect them against inflation. They want medical benefits and pensions. They want peace, not nuclear war with Russia and China. The working class is 90 percent of the world's population or more. Why shouldn't we all get together, like Will says, to fight the corporations? The corporations don't care about boundaries. It's time for the working class to act internationally."

Lehman is fighting to mobilize workers to abolish the UAW bureaucracy and establish rank-and-file power. He is fighting for massive wage increases to make up for decades of concessions; cost-of-living adjustments to meet soaring inflation; the abolition of the two-tier system and the rollover of all part-time workers; full pensions and high-quality health care for workers and retirees; the restoration of the eight-hour day and an end to grinding schedules and forced overtime.

Appealing to workers to support his campaign, Lehman said last week, "I can't do this alone, I am not a miracle worker. This campaign is not so much about me but about you. It will be successful to the extent that you get involved, that we develop through this campaign the organization and initiative to fight and to win.

"I call on all workers to sign up to build this movement. Make it as widely known as possible. Discuss it with your co-workers. Build election committees. Organize meetings. Make statements on social media. Get the word out any way that you can.

"The working class is on the move, and we must press forward. By taking the initiative and organizing ourselves, we can fight and build a society that is based on our interests, not on the profits and wealth of the few. In the words of one worker I spoke to at Warren Truck this week: 'Let's do this.'"

For more information on Will Lehman's campaign, go to WillforUAWpresident.org.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact