

# Workers action committees in Sri Lanka support Will Lehman's campaign for UAW president

Sri Lankan plantation, Health and educators action committees  
5 August 2022

*Published below is a joint statement by members of the Plantation Workers Action Committee, Health Workers Action Committee, and the Teachers, Students and Parents Safety Committee in support of Will Lehman's campaign for president of the United Auto Workers.*

From the outset, we would like to offer our fullest support and best wishes from action committees in Sri Lanka to the campaign of Comrade Will Lehman who is running for president of the United Auto Workers (UAW) in the United States of America.

Mack Trucks worker Will Lehman's campaign for UAW president in the forthcoming November election is an important element in the struggle against the union bureaucracies, not just in the in the US, but all around the world, including in Sri Lanka.

As Comrade Lehman has stated, the vote is not to replace the incumbent bureaucracy with another corrupt bureaucracy but to overthrow it. Lehman's campaign is not an attempt to "reform" the UAW by changing its leadership but to mobilise autoworkers in a mass movement to liquidate the bureaucracy, transfer power to the rank-and-file, and return its resources to rank-and-file workers.

The assault on the working class in the US and internationally being waged by the UAW and other union bureaucracies, in alliance with big corporations and capitalist governments, must stop.

This can only be done by mobilising the industrial and political power of the working class through the building rank-and-file committees in the United States and internationally. Comrade Lehman's campaign is a very important step forward in advancing the program of the International Workers' Alliance of Rank-and-

File Committees (IWA-RFC), initiated by the International Committee of the Forth International and the Socialist Equality Parties.

As Lehman has explained, the building of IWA-RFC is to unify workers internationally against the transnational corporations' global drive for profits, and in opposition to the poisonous nationalism promoted by the UAW.

Under Socialist Equality Party leadership in Sri Lanka, action committees have been built in the health, education, plantation sectors and among the rural peasantry, as well as the establishment of an action committee fighting for freedom of expression and art. These committees, which are involved in organising workers and rural peasants across ethnic lines, are explaining the importance of this initiative to industrial workers and the rural masses in Sri Lanka and South Asia.

On April 28 and May 6, 10 and 11, millions of Sri Lankan workers participated in powerful national strikes, cutting across the ethnic and religious divisions promoted by the ruling class. The trade unions in every sector, however, limited these struggles to one-day actions in order to protect the capitalist system from the rising anger of the working class and to prevent the mobilisation of the working class on its own independent political program.

The Sri Lankan trade union bureaucrats, like their counterparts in the US and internationally, have done everything they can to stop the working class moving forward. Confronted with the growing demands of their members, the health sector union bosses, Ravi Kumudesh and Saman Rathnapriya, publicly admitted that they only called strike action in order to "manage"

their members' anger.

The trade unions backed the campaigns of the parliamentary opposition parties to form an interim capitalist government when the mass uprisings by workers, youth and the poor began in April against the now former President Gotabhaya Rajapakse-led government. The unions are continuing this reactionary work under conditions where all the opposition parties are committed to imposing brutal International Monetary Fund (IMF) cuts.

This week, pro-US President Ranil Wickremesinghe used his powers to create a new post—the Director General of Trade Unions—and appointed Rathnapriya as its director. This is not only a reward for Rathnapriya's betrayals but to further enlist the trade unions to suppress future workers' struggles.

The SEP in Sri Lanka has advanced the following policies around which the action committees are waging a political struggle. These directly challenge the ruthless IMF austerity demands being promoted by the government and the opposition parties.

- \* For workers' democratic control of production and distribution of all essential items and resources critical for the lives of people! Nationalisation of the banks, big corporations, plantations and other major economic nerve centres!

- \* Repudiate all foreign debts! No to the austerity demands of the IMF and World Bank that represent the international bankers and financial institutions!

- \* Establish a state monopoly of foreign trade to eradicate corruption in export and import processes and ensure the supply of all essentials!

- \* Seize the colossal wealth of the billionaires and corporations!

- \* Cancel all debts of poor and marginal farmers and small business holders! Reinstate all price subsidies, including on fertilisers for farmers!

- \* Guarantee jobs for all with decent and safe working conditions! Index wages to the cost of living!

We insist that there is no nationalist solution to any of the problems facing the working class in every country. Taking forward these demands, we are fighting to build a Democratic and Socialist Congress of Workers and Rural Masses. As part of this international socialist perspective, the aim of these transitional policies is to bring to power a socialist workers' and peasants' government.

Comrade Lehman's struggle in the US, one of the world's most developed industrialised economies, is powerful political encouragement to our struggle in South Asia and throughout the international working class.



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