

Twitter locks account of Will Lehman, rank-and-file candidate for UAW president, in act of censorship

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On Thursday morning at approximately 11 a.m. Eastern, Twitter locked the account of United Auto Workers presidential candidate and rank-and-file worker Will Lehman. The action against Lehman's account, which Twitter falsely claimed was implemented in response to violation of its rules, is a flagrant act of censorship and attack on the democratic rights of workers.

The lock on Lehman's account came without warning, Lehman's campaign told the WSWS, occurring almost immediately after it tweeted a thread reporting on the support for his campaign among John Deere agricultural equipment workers.

The specific tweet in the thread that Twitter claimed violated its rules stated, "Equality is a central concern of workers, as this young worker at Deere Harvester says:"

The tweet included a short video of a young worker at Deere's Harvester Works expressing his support for Lehman's campaign.

In the video, a supporter of Lehman asks the worker, "So what do you think about what Will's calling for, building a rank-and-movement of workers to put an end to the UAW bureaucracy and fight for what workers need?"

The worker replies, "I think Will's doing a good job in putting into this. We need someone to step up in the union, to give us the chance to have equal rights, just like the salaried side. I think what Will is doing is good for the future of John Deere Harvester, and I'm right behind you Will."

Supporters of Will Lehman had campaigned among workers at agricultural and heavy equipment giant John

Deere last weekend. Lehman, who works at Mack Trucks in Macungie, Pennsylvania, is calling for the abolition of the UAW bureaucracy, the transfer of power to workers on the shop floor, and the development of a network of rank-and-file committees to fight for workers' interests.

Lehman's campaign said that Twitter cited no specific rule in justifying the lock, instead linking to its full list of rules. In Orwellian language, Twitter prominently encouraged the account to delete the tweet and in so doing, "acknowledge your Tweet violated the Twitter Rules."

Lehman's campaign instead filed an appeal with Twitter, stating:

I am an official candidate for president of the United Auto Workers in the union's national elections this year, and demand that this lock be reversed, and the tweet be reinstated. Clearly, there were no rules that were violated by this tweet, and the lock is in error. This is a video of a worker speaking about my election campaign and the need for equality. Every minute my account is locked is violating my rights to freely campaign in the union's elections.

As of this writing, the appeal has not been responded to by Twitter.

"Twitter's lock on my account has the effect of not only censoring me and my campaign," Lehman told the WSWS. "It's an infringement on the democratic rights of all workers, their rights to freedom of speech and

freedom of information.

“I think it’s highly significant that the video and tweet in question, which Twitter falsely claimed violated its rules, was of a young worker voicing his support for my campaign program: to abolish the UAW bureaucracy, and to build a rank-and-file movement of workers that will achieve equality. These are widely held sentiments among workers, and the lock comes at a time when my campaign is winning growing support.

“I appeal to all those who wish to uphold the democratic rights of workers: Demand Twitter immediately unlock my account and issue an explanation of why this illegitimate action was taken!”

The WSWS urges all workers and readers to protest Twitter’s lock of Lehman’s account and demand its reinstatement, tagging @TwitterSupport.



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