

Twitter reverses account lock on Will Lehman, rank-and-file candidate for UAW president, without explanation

WSWS Autoworker Newsletter
30 September 2022

At 7 a.m. Eastern Time Friday morning, Twitter reversed the account lock it had implemented against United Auto Workers presidential candidate and rank-and-file worker Will Lehman the previous day.

Twitter had locked Lehman's account Thursday morning without warning, falsely stating that one of his tweets had violated the platform's rules. The tech company did not cite any specific rule that had been violated in notifying Lehman of the lock, however, while at the same time encouraging Lehman's account to delete the tweet and "acknowledge your Tweet violated the Twitter Rules."

The tweet Twitter claimed violated its rules, and which it hid during the lock, was of a worker at agricultural equipment maker John Deere expressing his support for Lehman's campaign and his desire for "equal rights":

Lehman's campaign had filed an appeal with Twitter within minutes of the lock, 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... Every minute my account is locked is violating my rights to freely campaign in the union's elections."

Summing up the significance of the lock, Lehman had told the WSWS Thursday that it "has the effect of not only censoring me and my campaign. It's an infringement on the democratic rights of all workers, their rights to freedom of speech and freedom of information."

The lock on Lehman's account had elicited broad protests among his campaign's supporters, who demanded @TwitterSupport reverse the lock and explain why it had happened.

In reversing its action, Twitter provided no satisfactory explanation, but indicated that the action had been taken in response to a report of a rule violation. Its notice to Lehman stated:

Hello,

We have restored your account, and we apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.

Twitter takes reports of violations of the Twitter Rules very seriously. After reviewing your account, it looks like we made an error.

Thanks,
Twitter Support

Twitter's reversal raises more questions than it answers. Why did the account remain locked for nearly 24 hours following Lehman's appeal? If the action was taken in response to a false report, who submitted the report? Or if the action was triggered by automated screening tools developed by Twitter, what was it in the company's algorithm's that found a tweet about equality and equal rights in violation of its rules?

There can be no doubt that the lock was not "in error," but rather a deliberate act of censorship against a campaign which has given voice to sentiments and aspirations of a growing movement of the working class.

Lehman, a socialist, has put forward a program calling for the abolition of the corrupt UAW bureaucracy and putting power in the hands of rank-and-file workers.

This same UAW bureaucracy, staffed with hundreds of officials making six figure salaries, is increasingly fearful of and hostile to Lehman's campaign and the growing support it is receiving from workers. Just last week, Lehman participated in a debate of candidates for UAW president, including longtime bureaucrats Ray Curry (the incumbent president) and Shawn Fain. During the debate, Lehman openly denounced the UAW officialdom's record of betrayals and parasitism.

Below, we repost the thread tweeted by Lehman after his account was unlocked. To find out more about Lehman's campaign, visit WillForUAWPresident.org.

**

Yesterday at 11 AM I was locked out of my Twitter acct, just weeks away from the vote for UAW president. Without any warning or prior violation, Twitter said a video of a Deere worker describing the need for equality in the workplace violated rules, but didn't say which rule.

For almost 24 hrs, one of my main methods of communicating with the public was blocked for absolutely no reason by one of the most powerful corporations in the world. I am fighting an uphill battle against a powerful, entrenched UAW bureaucracy, & this censorship is unacceptable.

This morning, ~20 hrs after I filed an appeal, Twitter finally unlocked my acct & claimed it was an "error." But their statement said my tweets were reported to them. By whom? If they did it once, they can do it again. I have the right to a detailed & immediate explanation.

Context is critical. This takes place as the UAW bureaucracy has intimidated workers for speaking to my campaign, like in Flint, MI where UAW officials photographed workers and called company security on my volunteers. The Monitor has taken no action so far about that incident.

This act of censorship is not just directed against my campaign. It is an attack on the free speech rights of the rank-&-file workers my campaign speaks for (including the Deere worker whose video was taken down). This is

exactly why I am running: to give power to the rank & file.

The damage has been done by this "error" but it must not happen again. If you have not done so already, sign up for updates at my campaign website WillforUAWpresident.org, & make a donation to help me overcome the censorship & the obstacles being put in my place.

Thank you to those who helped spread the word about this act of censorship. I believe the lock would have remained in place had there not been such a strong outpouring of opposition.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact