

UAW presidential candidate Will Lehman receives warm reception from co-workers at Mack Trucks in Macungie, Pennsylvania

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On Sunday, October 23, at 2:00 p.m. EDT, UAW presidential candidate Will Lehman is hosting an emergency public meeting to discuss a strategy to defend jobs. Register here. For more information on the campaign, visit WillForUAWPresident.org.

Will Lehman, a socialist candidate running for president of the United Auto Workers, received a warm reception this week from workers outside the Mack Trucks assembly plant in Macungie, Pennsylvania, where Lehman works.

Mack Trucks employs 2,083 workers in Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley. Workers at the company struck in 2019 against corporate abuse, low pay, and the company's use of lesser paid second tier workers. Like so many other struggles, the strike was sold out by the UAW apparatus.

Numerous workers familiar with Lehman's campaign called out to him by name, with several taking stacks of leaflets to distribute to their coworkers. Workers were angered by the conditions in their plant, with hundreds stopping to take leaflets and shake the presidential candidate's hand.

"I'm here to tell workers that we need rank-and-file committees so we can talk to each other and make decisions," Lehman said of his visit. "They can't run this facility unless we let them."

"Mack used to be one of the best places to work, if not the best in the Lehigh Valley," he added. "There used to be no tiers as recently as 1999, pensions as recently as 2009, and paid free health insurance conceded around 2012" He noted that the UAW leadership has given all these gains back over consecutive contract struggles.

A second-tier worker told Lehman, "I've worked in maintenance for two years... I used to work close to 60-plus hours [a week], just to make a decent wage in general maintenance.

"It's not right. There are some jobs that [might] be worth that rate of \$19.68-an hour, but there are more intrusive jobs, like cleaning the booths... You don't know what you're getting into with" a flex job, he said.

"I generally think there should be a higher wage across the board" the worker added. "If not, they're not going to be able to keep people. That's why this place has been a revolving door the past few years since I started."

Numerous workers asked Lehman if he would fight to get rid of the tier system.

Workers also denounced Mack Trucks' attendance policy. "It's unfair," said a worker. "You get one point off for being one minute late. They should give us leeway, five minutes at least. We have to walk all the way across the parking lot right after we get here," he said. This creates chaos in the company parking lot, with many speeding to get inside to avoid consequences.

"[UAW President Ray] Curry's done more for himself than anything for Mack workers," said Rod, a worker with two years. "They just want the money [rather than to represent workers' interests]."

"If you go to your foreman about something, they look at you like you're half nuts," Rod added. "Safety violations seem to get ignored. There was a guy who got hit by a forklift... got his knee all screwed up. The guy on the forklift never got drug-tested or anything because I heard his brother was a foreman."

“It just seems to depend on who you know [that determines] what you get away with here.”

“A lot of people weren’t happy with the union” for how it conducted the 2019 strike and the 2021 strike at Volvo Trucks, said another worker. “They said it was a victory. Who was it a victory for? We got nothing out of it.” The worker did not even trust the officials with his voting ballots: “How do we know they aren’t going to erase it?”

“What [the UAW leaders] are doing is taking everybody and turning them against each other, that’s not right,” he added.

Mack Trucks workers formed their own independent rank-and-file committee in the summer of 2021 in response to the strike at Volvo Trucks, which produces cabs for Mack. The Volvo Workers Rank and File Committee, which rallied workers against a trio of company-friendly contract proposals, was a key inspiration to the Mack Trucks workers.

Since its formation, the Mack committee has exposed blatant contract abuses at the facility, rampant Covid-19 outbreaks, which claimed the life of worker William “Willie D” Domitrovitsch Jr., and issued messages of solidarity to Volvo Trucks, Dana Corporation and John Deere workers, all of whom faced contract struggles last year that were sold out by the UAW.

Rather than unify the working class, the UAW apparatus works to isolate and stifle every expression of opposition. One worker at the Mack Trucks facility informed Lehman that he had discovered that Case New Holland (CNH) farm equipment workers were on strike by accident on social media. The UAW had not said a word about it.

“You don’t hear anything about what’s going on, inside or outside of the plant,” said a young worker who had just come on as a full-time employee. “Even for your training; they tell you [a few] details, but that’s it.”

Last week, Lauren Farrell, a member of current UAW President Ray Curry’s leadership slate, visited the Mack Trucks facility, flanked on either side by company Human Resources officials and former UAW shop chair Kevin Fronheiser. Farrell was given full access to the facility, despite government election regulations that forbid candidates from campaigning

while workers are on shift.

Fronheiser presided over UAW Local 677’s sellout of the 2019 strike and forced Mack workers to stay on the job and handle scab truck parts during the 2021 Volvo Trucks strike. For these services to the UAW apparatus, he was promoted by Curry to the position of Region 9 servicing rep, despite being voted out by the members of Local 677 last May.

“I’m glad [Farrell] came with Fronheiser, because now I know who not to vote for,” a worker told campaigners outside the plant. Other workers were motivated to support Lehman’s campaign due to the Curry team’s presence.

Lehman is running in the UAW election to promote the building of independent rank-and-file committees in workplaces around the country and internationally. He has called for “organizing the rank and file to transfer power to the shop floor, abolishing the UAW apparatus that blocks us from fighting and launching a real campaign to defend our interests” in his most recent election statement.

For more information on Lehman’s campaign, visit WillForUAWPresident.org.



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