

UAW candidate Will Lehman wins growing support among coworkers at Mack Trucks: “It’s time somebody stands up”

Our reporters
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For more information on Will Lehman’s campaign for UAW president, visit WillForUAWPresident.org.

With just over three weeks left in the United Auto Workers national elections, Will Lehman’s campaign for union president continues to gain significant support among rank-and-file workers.

On Thursday, Lehman campaigned with a group of coworkers at the Mack Trucks facility in Macungie, Pennsylvania, where he works. Lehman, a second-tier worker, handed out campaign literature to the first and second shift workers exiting the facility.

Many at the plant announced their intent to vote for Will, or that they had done so already. One worker, when asked if she planned to vote for Lehman, responded matter-of-factly, “Who do you think?”

Another worker, Joe, told the campaign team, “I’m voting for Will Lehman for UAW president because I’m supporting the working class throughout the world. And hopefully we can all get together and make this happen.”

“My spin on the election is we need some change here because there’s no accountability,” another worker said. “Everybody here knows that. We got issues. I can’t even deal with the [UAW] local, so I can’t even see the International, do you know what I’m saying?”

“Will sounds good,” he continued, telling a campaign supporter: “There’s a couple of things that are a little extreme to me, but overall, I like his attitude, what he’s standing for, to get people back in charge. That’s what we want to do. We need to get in charge again, however we do it... I know one thing, we got to vote!”

Many discussions at the plant’s gate among first- and second-tier workers centered on the UAW

bureaucracy’s forfeiture of basic job benefits over the years. The 2009 Mack Trucks-UAW contract, for instance, allowed for the axing of pensions for new hires at the company. This was allowed by the UAW despite the corporation being a top exporter of heavy-duty trucks that year, cornering nearly 31 percent of the market in 2009.

“I’ve been here a little over 10 years,” one worker said. “I feel like conditions over the past few years have definitely changed. I feel like morale has definitely gone down, for sure.”

Asked by Lehman about the pittance in strike pay paid out of the UAW’s massive strike fund—just \$275 a week during the 2019 Mack Trucks and GM strikes, only recently raised to \$400—the worker replied, “It’s definitely hard to survive on that, I mean, when you’re out and you are trying to fight for something better for all of us. And I think that changes people’s minds unfortunately. Signing whatever, and losing whatever. Because, you know, people have bills to pay.

“I mean, it all sounds good,” the worker continued about Lehman’s program. “It sounds good for a little change.”

“Well, I’m talking about a lot of change,” Lehman replied. “Essentially, the whole structure being in the hands of the workers right now. Full strike pay, calling for 50 percent wage increase across the board, no tiers, cost-of-living adjustments.”

Another worker with 11 years at the plant said conditions at the facility “are worse than when I started here.”

“Let me give you an example,” he continued. “I work on vehicle one on the rough side, in quality gate. When they put in that line, the way they put it in, they have

lights on one side of the aisle or one side of the frame, and none on the other side where I work. So I have to inspect the truck for defects. And I've been trying to get lights put in.

"Now I've talked to union reps, and I was told like a month ago that they were going to start putting it in. Now I'm told that they might not start until Thanksgiving, and then it might be Christmas.

"Now I'm 62 years old. Most of the guys on the line are a lot younger than I am. But the lighting sucks. They should have thought of that when they put the line in. Why would you only put lights on one side of the frame? And not the other, so the lighting is equal, right? And it shouldn't take that long to get it put in."

Lehman said in response, "In the old days, they used to stop work until the situation was corrected. And I mean the old, old days. And they used to, even here, have wildcats over different things. And it, I think, correlates with that fight going away that things have gotten a lot worse. And that's why I talk about workers directly controlling the fight. You know, because when we have issues, they need to be resolved, or the work doesn't get done. That's what I'm putting forward. What do you think?"

"Yeah, I guess that might put a fire under their butt," the worker replied, "if we stopped work because of the conditions."

Along with widespread desire to reverse years of concessions, Lehman and his campaign team said they encountered a desire for unity with other workers internationally, as a deep-seated hostility to war and both big business parties.

Another worker with eight years at Mack said, "Over the years, we've lost more and more, and it's time somebody stands up. We're looking at inflation right now, it's skyrocketing. You got no COLA. I'm sure next contract they're going to probably come after our health insurance and want to raise that again. So there's a lot of things that need to be fixed here."

"Well what I'm trying to advance to is an international fight," Lehman said. "So like Volvo [Volvo Group, which owns Mack Trucks], for example, is a multinational corporation, and the reality of the situation is they can shift labor wherever they want, *if* we aren't united internationally.

"So what do you think about the idea of being united, like every Volvo plant workers being united, so that

way we can call them up and say, 'Hey, they're trying to shift labor, block it,' and then we do the same for them?"

"Correct," the worker said. "I agree with that, 100 percent. It's something we need to do, all band together."

"What do you think about all this funding for war going on in Ukraine?" Lehman asked. "You know, America funding all this war over there, and while we're back here, facing rising inflation, and there's nothing for us?"

"Honestly I think we're pushing too much money into it," the worker said. "There's more things that need to be done, children going hungry, our education system needing to be fixed. Numerous other things, our infrastructure and all."

"I would imagine, you have no issue with workers in Russia," Lehman asked.

"No," the worker said, his expression indicating, "of course not."

"And I have no issues with workers in Russia or Ukraine, or China," Lehman replied. "You know, it's all these people at the top, the people that represent the ruling class's interests that are starting these wars. Politicians of both stripes."

"Oh, absolutely, I agree," the worker concluded. "It's not just one or another, it's both sides."

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