

“He and I face similar struggles, although we find ourselves in different unions and even in different countries”

Canadian workers express solidarity with Will Lehman’s campaign for UAW president

Our reporters
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Workers across Canada are following the campaign of Mack Trucks worker and socialist Will Lehman for the presidency of the United Auto Workers union which has 391,000 active members and 580,000 retired members throughout the United States, Puerto Rico and Canada. Lehman’s campaign is calling for the abolition of the UAW bureaucracy, which has conspired with management at the Detroit Big Three to slash workers’ wages and benefits for decades.

Lehman is calling on workers to build rank-and-file committees in factories to place power in the hands of the workers and unify their struggles with their class brothers and sisters around the world through the International Workers’ Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) to wage a common fight against the globally mobile automakers.

The political issues raised by Lehman in his campaign apply with urgency to workers in Canada. Over the past week, a strike by 55,000 education support workers in Ontario, which triggered a movement pushing for a general strike to defeat the provincial government of Premier Doug Ford, was unceremoniously strangled by Canada’s union bureaucracy. Top union bureaucrats from the education unions and national private sector unions like Unifor spent the entire weekend in secretive talks with Ford behind the backs of workers so as to arrive at a rotten compromise to scuttle the strike without any of the workers’ demands for wage improvements and investments in public education being met.

The Ontario Education Workers Rank-and-file Committee, established by education workers to fight for rank-and-file workers to seize control of the struggle from the union bureaucracy, released a statement denouncing the union leadership’s sabotage of the strike and will hold

a public meeting this Sunday to discuss the lessons of this experience. The key task now facing Ontario education workers, like their class brothers and sisters in the UAW, is to establish rank-and-file committees independent of the union apparatus to take their struggle forward.

Commenting on the common issues facing workers in the United States and Canada, a postal worker from Ontario wrote of Will Lehman’s campaign:

“I am a mail carrier at Canada Post, and I support Will Lehman’s campaign for President of the United Auto Workers union.

“He and I face similar struggles, although we find ourselves in different unions and even in different countries. While inflation rages on, the Canada Post Corporation (CPC) and Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) conspire against rank-and-file workers.

“The CPC is implementing ‘restructures’ across the nation, one depot at a time. Each restructure cuts significant hours off every route in the entire mail depot. Instead of spending about half of our shifts inside sorting, the machines give us ‘sequenced’ mail, significantly reducing our inside sorting time.

“Point of Calls are increased to maintain an 8-hour workday, and by extension jobs are lost, while those that remain have more parcels and more admail added to our already overwhelming daily volume.

“How does CUPW respond to this concerning development? By isolating the struggle to each individual depot!

“Instead of demanding raises to match inflation, CUPW claims a victory with a fraudulent Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) clause affording each employee a paltry one-time payout of \$.23 cents/hour. The COLA of \$0.23 per hour will amount to \$121.44 before taxes for 3

MONTHS of full-time work. Before taxes!

“The time has come to take control away from the corrupt unions and the corporations they represent and transfer that power to democratic organizations of rank-and-file workers!”

John, a steelworker from Ontario who has been following Will’s campaign through the *World Socialist Web Site*, commented, “As far as Will Lehman goes, I am cautiously optimistic. It would be nice if it happened. It would be a major earth-shattering moment for people if he won. It would be a major motivator for workers to wake up and break out, not just in the UAW but in the other various unions in North America. This concept that people who actually pay the dues are actually in control and have the ability to take control.”

Jory, a worker in the energy sector from Alberta, stated in his message of support:

“Working in the Alberta oil and gas industry for over 20 years, it’s quite common to find someone who’s done time as a tiered or contract worker in auto plants down east. The forces that have destroyed the auto industry for workers are also at play in my sector, especially temporary contracts. I know this, because I am also a contract worker.

“It doesn’t matter what country or sector you are from, energy, education, health or manufacturing, our wages and living standards everywhere are under attack, and it’s obvious that the bosses, parties on the left and right, and the unions are all in league against us.

“I watched the UAW presidential debate and Will’s contribution was amazing. Not only for exposing the corrupt nature of the union officials but also for his strategy—rank-and-file workers must organize independently in opposition to these corrupt bodies in the United States and across the world.”



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