

Ford Action Committee in Saarlouis, Germany declares support for Will Lehman

Ford Action Committee (Germany)

17 November 2022

The following statement was issued by the Ford-Aktionskomitee (Ford Action Committee), a rank-and-file committee of Ford workers in Saarlouis, Germany. To learn more about Will Lehman's campaign, visit WillForUAWPresident.org.

Dear Colleagues,

We, the members of the Ford Rank-and-File Committee in Saarlouis, Germany support the election campaign of Will Lehman for the presidency of the Auto Workers Union (UAW) in the USA and his call for an international struggle against the union bureaucracy.

We reach out to all our colleagues at all production sites and call on you: join Will Lehman's fight!

Will is a 35-year-old American autoworker at the Mack Trucks plant in Pennsylvania who is courageously standing up to the corrupt apparatus of the union bureaucracy. When a huge corruption scandal at the UAW was uncovered in recent years and several union bosses were sentenced to prison, it was clear that the UAW was controlled by crooks and gangsters paid by the corporations.

At that time, the courts appointed a monitor, who is tasked with ensuring fair elections in the union. Will seized the opportunity to run as a candidate against the corrupt UAW bureaucracy. Again and again he stressed that it is not enough to be angry and rail against the mafia structures of the union apparatus; it is necessary to fight against them.

The UAW election is currently being conducted in US auto plants and at their suppliers, and wherever Will appears, he wins strong support.

Four core demands lie at the heart of his campaign:

- The bureaucracy cannot be reformed; it must be abolished;
- Abolition of all bodies which the UAW apparatus

uses to collude with the employers, and which serve only to grease the UAW machinery;

Unrestricted control and authority of the workers over all collective bargaining, vote counting and safety and security in the workplace;

- Fighting for a program that includes what workers need: massive wage increases, automatic adjustment of wages for rapidly rising inflation, equal pay for equal work, and comprehensive health and retirement benefits for workers and retirees.

At the same time, Will emphasizes that he is a socialist and fights for a society that focuses on the interests and needs of working people, not the profit interests of corporations and billionaires.

That is why he is calling for the establishment of rank-and-file committees to internationally network and coordinate the growing resistance of workers across the world.

When Will joined striking workers at Ford's Chennai plant in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu at an international online meeting of our Action Committee this summer, he emphasized, "Ford is not an 'American' company; it is an international company. If it is to be fought successfully, it must be fought by workers internationally; the same for Mack Trucks' parent company, Volvo, and the rest. The global nature of production will be made clear in my campaign. The only valid method of struggle of workers will be through international solidarity."

Will Lehman's courageous struggle has great relevance to our local dispute with IG Metall. Here in Germany the union bureaucracies are no less corrupt than in the United States. The close cooperation and extensive fusion of the union bureaucracy, management and political establishment takes place within the framework of "co-determination" and "social

partnership.”

This year, we at Ford-Saarlouis experienced firsthand the effects of this partnership between IG Metall, the works council and management.

The works council agreed to a bidding competition and organized the blackmail of us workers. Our site was deliberately played off against that of our colleagues in Spain. To this day, the works council refuses to disclose what concessions in the form of wage cuts, social cuts and extended working hours it offered the company. At the same time, the works council prevented any serious joint struggle across all sites in a principled defense of jobs.

The result of this conspiracy by IG Metall, the works council and management is the announcement that our plant in Saarlouis will be closed in 2025, which would directly result in the destruction of 4,500 jobs and another 1,500 in the supplier industry.

Mass layoffs are taking place, and plant closures are being prepared at many other production sites. Audi has just announced that the company is “on the brink.” There is no doubt that the works council there is also offering massive wage cuts and slashed social benefits, with the argument that it is the only way to save the plant.

Moreover, IG Metall and all the other unions support the war policy of the German coalition government and have joined in “Concerted Action” with it, with the declared aim of passing on the costs of German military rearmament to us workers.

For four and a half years there has been no improvement in the wage scale. With continuing price increases, this means a massive reduction in real wages. In the current wage negotiations, too, IG Metall is trying to push through another drastic reduction in real wages.

In view of this situation, the courageous struggle of Will Lehman must be understood as a call to wrest control from the IG Metall apparatus here as well. If it is possible in the U.S. to confront the mafia-like structures of the union bureaucracy, it is possible here in Germany, too.

We call on you to start building rank-and-file committees in every one of your workplaces. We are fully ready to support you in this endeavor. Then we can use warning strikes to start a broad mobilization.

We support Will when he says, “It’s not enough to be

angry; it’s necessary to fight. I can’t do it for you; you have to do it yourselves!”

To contact our Action Committee and assistance, get in touch via WhatsApp at: +491633378340.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact