

“We never got a ballot”: Kentucky Ford workers denounce illegitimate UAW election

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There is deep disquiet among United Auto Workers members because the union’s “historic election,” which was supposed to give the rank and file the power to directly elect top UAW officers for the first time, has turned out to be a travesty of democracy.

By means of manipulation, voter suppression, lies and deceit, the UAW apparatus effectively excluded 90 percent of the membership from voting during the first round of the election late last year. Now, the UAW bureaucracy, with the blessing of the court-appointed UAW Monitor, is proceeding with a “run-off” between incumbent UAW president Ray Curry and long-time UAW International Representative Shawn Fain, who each received the votes of less than 4 percent of the membership.

The contest between the two handpicked candidates of the UAW bureaucracy is proceeding, even though the results of the first round have not even been certified because they have been challenged by Mack Trucks worker Will Lehman, one of the five candidates in the initial vote. In an official protest filed with the UAW Monitor on December 19, Lehman documented the deliberate efforts by the entrenched UAW leadership to suppress the vote and protect their positions.

As of this writing, the UAW Monitor has not responded to Lehman’s protest and demand that all five of the candidates in the first round be included in the current vote.

During the last three weeks, Will Lehman’s supporters have traveled to plants in Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Illinois and other states to inform workers about the protest and build opposition to this electoral farce. At the factory gates and in individual discussions, supporters have encountered widespread anger over the election and deep attachment to the right

to vote.

Many workers purchased printed pamphlets containing Lehman’s official protest and expressed their gratitude for his campaign to rally workers to defend their rights to a free and fair election.

Last week, campaigners visited the Kentucky Truck Plant in Louisville. KTP workers are part of UAW Local 862, a large amalgamated local with 8,600 members, which also includes workers at Ford’s nearby Louisville Assembly Plant.

John, a veteran worker at KTP, told the WSWs, “I wanted to vote but I never got a ballot. This is the first I am hearing of any of this. Nobody on my team got a ballot and that’s probably 14 or 15 people. I’ve got a notice at the house saying I was going to get a ballot, but I never saw it. I’m disgusted about it. I feel like I’ve got a right to a say in who leads us the same as anybody else who pays dues.”

Lehman’s protest documents how UAW officials at several plants threatened Lehman campaigners and called plant security to remove them, in clear violation of the Monitor’s election rules. “I was reading that,” John added. “That’s insane.”

Told that Ray Curry’s annual income was \$270,000 and that he sat on the board of directors of Daimler and other corporations, John said, “That doesn’t sound like anybody I want to be negotiating anything for me. I think a lot of people feel that way. None of our voices got heard.”

A co-worker at KTP, also named John, explained a number of concessions that the UAW has imposed over the last three contracts at Ford, and was especially critical of the two-tier wage and benefit system.

“If I’m working a job, the person that is working directly across from me should be making the same pay that I’m making. We’re putting out the same effort.

We should be paid the same.”

John strongly agreed with Lehman’s demand for a revote involving all the first-round candidates and making sure that every member knows about the election and has a chance to vote. “I stand behind the protest 100 percent,” he said.

John said he had not received a ballot in the first election, but recently got one for the fraudulent run-off. “It’s a sham. The whole situation is just crooked. The company is greasing the UAW’s palms.”

“I feel it’s pretty shameful,” added a co-worker, Kyler, “and disrespectful, honestly, for us not to know about an election that has to do with our future. That’s insane to me. I was not even aware of it in November.”

She said she had not received a ballot in the fall, but had gotten one for the runoff. She said UAW local officials were posting notices for the runoff all over the plant. “They’re everywhere,” she said, adding that she did not see any posters or notices of any kind during the vote in the fall.

During the first round of the election, Lehman won 128 votes at UAW Local 862, demonstrating that there is a strong foundation for his call for the abolition of the UAW apparatus and the transfer of power to workers on the shop floor through the setting up of rank-and-file committees.

Lehman is a socialist who opposes the capitalist profit system and fights for the unity of workers across all national borders against the global auto companies like Ford.

Kyler said workers have to fight for inflation-busting raises, and to abolish the tier system and the abuse of temporary workers. “We definitely have to make changes. But if we are going to do that we have to vote these people out and bring in people that are actually for us. I’ve been through two contracts now and the wages are still the same, but inflation is up.”

For more information about Lehman’s protest and the fight to build rank-and-file committees go to: <https://www.willforuawpresident.org> or fill out the form below.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.willforuawpresident.org)