“The attack on the SEP members is an attack on the international working class”: Will Lehman defends Socialist Equality Party in Sri Lanka

Will Lehman
12 December 2023

Will Lehman, the Pennsylvania Mack Trucks worker and socialist candidate for United Auto Workers president in last year’s election, issued the following statements defending the Socialist Equality Party in Sri Lanka. On November 30, two members of the SEP, Dehin Wasantha and Lakshman Fernando, were seriously injured when thugs from the Podujana Pragathishili Sevaka Sangamaya (PPSS) or People’s Progressive Employees Union branch in Moratuwa University attacked them at the university, south of Colombo.

The two assailants, PPSS President Indika Perera and Secretary Suranga Piyawardena, carried out a premeditated attack on the two SEP members, who were campaigning for the public meetings being addressed by SEP (US) National Secretary Joe Kishore on the “Centenary of Trotskyism.” Wasantha, a veteran university worker, is a well-known fighter for workers’ rights and socialism who has been repeatedly threatened by PPSS officials.

The SEP has issued a call to workers, youth and students in Sri Lanka and internationally to defend our party’s democratic right to freely engage in its political activities and demand that the culprits be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

The SEP is urging that protest letters be sent to the following addresses (with copies sent to the SEP’s email address: wswscmb@sltnet.lk.):

Senior Professor N.D. Gunawardena, Vice Chancellor, University of Moratuwa

Email: vc@uom.lk or ndg@uom.lk

Attorney General, Mr. Sanjay Rajaratnam

Email: agdurgentmotions@gmail.com

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Attorney General Sanjay Rajaratnam,

My name is Will Lehman, and I work at Mack Trucks in Macungie, Pennsylvania, USA. I am a member of the United Auto Workers union, and last year I ran for International President of the UAW on a socialist platform, stressing the necessity for the international unity of the working class to all my co-workers in the US.

I write to you today because I have read about the vicious, premeditated attack on Socialist Equality Party members Dehin Wasantha and Lakshman Fernando by the union thugs Indika Perera and Suranga Piyawardena.

The criminals Perera and Piyawardena must be held to full account for their actions. The two demonstrated that they had thought about their crimes beforehand as they not only rented the taxi but armed themselves with sticks to use against SEP members Wasantha and Fernando.

Furthermore, these two thugs were acting on behalf of the ruling party that is imposing IMF austerity on the working class in Sri Lanka. In the US, we too are familiar with the gangster-like methods the bureaucrats in the trade unions utilize to impose the dictates of the ruling class against the workers here. I will fight to make American workers aware of the attack on the SEP members in Sri Lanka so they too can come to the defense of the SEP and all workers internationally fighting inequality and oppression.

Failure to hold Perera and Piyawardena to account

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will not only give these criminals a free pass for the violent crimes they have already committed, but it will also encourage further cowardly attacks against the democratic rights of others in the future. An attack against these two SEP members was not only an attack against a political party but the democratic rights of the international working class.

Sincerely,

Will Lehman

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

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