

May Day 2025

Revolutionary struggle and the unity of the international working class

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This speech was given by Will Lehman, an autoworker at Mack Trucks in Macungie, Pennsylvania and member of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees, at the International May Day 2025 Online Rally, held Saturday, May 3.

My name is Will Lehman. I'm an autoworker at Mack Trucks in Macungie, Pennsylvania, and I would like to extend revolutionary greetings from workers in America to all those attending this international rally.

Workers in the US face hard truths. Wealth inequality is at all-time highs. The cost of living has soared out of control. Exploitation in factories, warehouses, hospitals, schools, docks and postal and packaging centers has only increased in recent years.

This is a process that has been occurring for decades, under both Democratic and Republican administrations. After falling support for the Democrats, the would-be Führer Trump is now again in the White House. Polls indicate that hopes that some had that Trump would change the economic situation have faded considerably. Trump's trade war has only worsened the economic outlook for workers in the US.

United Auto Workers president Shawn Fain has spent months cozying up to Trump and endorsing his nationalist tariffs. It is nothing new for a union leader in the US to promote the dead-end of nationalism. For decades, the unions have pushed it without saving a single job. Nationalism is a poison for workers. It has only led to the destruction of jobs, divisions among workers, and deeper exploitation in the race to the bottom.

Nationalism pits worker against worker, distracting from the real class war: the war of the corporate oligarchy against the working class. For years, union

bureaucrats throughout the world have told workers they must accept less to "stay competitive," using fear to protect their own privileged positions as corporate lap dogs. They betray the working class with every sellout contract they enforce, every concession they demand, and every time they pit us against workers in other countries.

The tariffs will only drive workers further into poverty internationally, as we are forced to pay for them. They have already resulted in layoffs in the US auto industry, including at my plant and other Mack Trucks factories and suppliers, with over 2,000 workers losing their jobs. They will lead to increased layoffs internationally as the price of cars increase and the resulting lack of demand decreases production.

Most importantly, history shows that trade war leads to shooting war. The real aim of the tariffs is to bring enough military manufacturing to the US to carry out world war, particularly targeting China. This did not begin with Trump, but was already taking place under Biden. Workers at my own plant should recall Biden's visit in 2021, when he declared that we're in a race with China. He spoke of the need for American manufactured chipsets as part of his infrastructure plan. They intend to use these chipsets in military production for war against China, not for the betterment of workers in the US.

The Democrats and Republicans seek to divide us and force us to compete with our class allies in the immensely powerful Chinese working class, with whom we share the same class interests. Just like workers in the US, Chinese workers have demonstrated an immense desire to fight in recent strikes. If we are to win in the struggles ahead, we cannot be divided from

our co-workers in or from any country, but instead need to build bonds of unity that transcend national borders.

Furthermore, war with China would lead to a brutal, bloody disaster for the working class forced to fight it. More than 80-million died as a result of World War II. A Third World War with all the major powers possessing nuclear bombs would lead to the destruction of humanity.

The same ruling class that promotes nationalism is assaulting immigrant workers and students in the US. These attacks are aimed at eroding democratic rights won through past revolutionary struggles. The US is a nation of immigrants, with most tracing their roots abroad. The ruling class scapegoats immigrants for economic hardship to divide workers and clear the way for broader attacks—including against native-born workers, whom Trump now calls “homegrowns” and threatens to send to concentration camps in El Salvador.

American workers must reconnect with our traditions of seeing an attack against one as an attack against all. We must fight for our immigrant brothers and sisters, and we must recognize that the struggle ahead cannot be won by allowing attacks against our democratic rights, regardless of where anyone was born.

We must be guided by the history of revolution in the US. When the founding fathers recognized that things could not continue in the old way under feudal monarchy, they launched a revolution that sparked revolutions around the world. “Four score and seven years” later, as Lincoln put it, a second revolution, the Civil War, took place, leading to the abolition of slavery.

Now, a majority of American workers recognize that we cannot continue to live in the old way. Evidence of this can be found in the recent years’ strike votes in the high 90 percent range. In February, workers at Rolls-Royce in Indiana voted by 99.5 percent to strike. There was not one worker in 100 among them that was against a fight.

But we need more than the will to fight, more than the recognition that things cannot continue the way they are. What we need is a political perspective based on our class interests. Those with that political perspective need to step forward to lead this fight through the building of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. Appeals to the

existing organs of power have proven to be worthless. We need a movement that we control and that progresses the fight for our class interests—against capitalist exploitation, against nationalist divisions, and against war.

We will find agreement among our co-workers for the necessity of this fight, but we have to lead it. We risk the future of humanity if we fail to act, and we have everything to gain by the struggles we must lead. Join the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees and help lead this fight. Thank you.



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