

Canadian workers defend Will Lehman in face of death threat from top UAW official

Our reporter
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Will Lehman, a candidate for the presidency of the United Auto Workers in the ongoing election, was sent a death threat by a top union official and close ally of current UAW President Shawn Fain. Lehman is a socialist who is running to abolish the bureaucracy and put power into the hands of the rank and file.

Raymond Jensen Jr., who served as the UAW regional representative for Lehman's region, a position for which he was paid over \$200,000 in 2025, posted an AI-generated picture of Lehman gagged, with blood dripping from his mouth and his hands tied behind his back. A masked gunman with a firearm could be seen pointing the weapon at Lehman's back.

Workers across Canada have responded angrily to Jensen's thuggish behaviour and contacted the *World Socialist Web Site* with statements of solidarity for the Mack Trucks worker.

Dan wrote:

I am a postal worker in Canada, and I stand in solidarity with UAW presidential candidate Will Lehman. Lehman is running on a socialist platform to abolish the corrupt union bureaucracy and bring workers' power back to the shop floor. This worker-first perspective is gaining traction among his coworkers and threatens the privileged positions of union functionaries whose business it is to sell out their membership in exchange for a "partnership" with the bosses.

The explicit class character of Brother Lehman's campaign helps explain both why he is so popular among his fellow autoworkers and why he faces open contempt from the UAW officialdom. Raymond Jensen Jr., Lehman's over-paid regional organizer and full-throated supporter of UAW President Shawn Fain, publicly issued death threats against his political opponent. A culture of intimidation and retaliation has been developed and institutionalized at the highest levels, exposed by the UAW's Federal Monitor in 2023 who quoted a statement, made in front of hundreds of participants, by Fain to "slit" the "f***ing throats" of anyone who stands up to his core team.

A.J., a worker from National Steel Car in Hamilton, commented:

I was honestly shocked! I thought, Are we still in the "On The Waterfront" days of union thugs? This is really terrible and shows what lengths an entrenched bureaucracy will go to in order to maintain its grip on power. This is a criminal act and I see, so far, nothing has been done down there to deal with this \$200,000-a-year weasel by the current UAW leadership. He's one of their own, so, I don't think a lot can be expected from them.

A worker from Quebec wrote:

As a Canadian truck driver I fully support Will Lehman's campaign to replace the corrupt UAW with workers' rank-and-file committees from the shop floor. Therefore I absolutely condemn in the strongest possible terms the death threats against Will Lehman. Anyone who makes such a threat must be brought to justice to face the full extent of the law. Will Lehman must be allowed to run his campaign without any fear, and any way he sees fit to achieve his goal. Just because he has different ideas, and believes in a better future for workers, he must not be intimidated and stopped. Will Lehman not only fights for workers in the auto industry—where he works—but also for the workers who have to endure long hours in hazardous places, for slave wages and exploitation all over the world. That's why it is very important that workers must be informed about this death threat and come to his defence. We—the workers—must support him all the way to his victory!

Dan stressed that if the threat against Lehman is allowed to stand, the consequences for workers everywhere will be severe.

As a member of the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC), and more generally, as a worker who criticizes my own union, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), I fear for the precedent the UAW is attempting to set. There have been no repercussions against Jensen Jr. personally, nor has a public repudiation of the

threat been made by the UAW. This sends a clear message, in the words of Lehman's lawyer, that "extreme violence against Will Lehman is encouraged and enjoys the sanction of the union leadership."

Supporters of the PWRFC in Canada have been subject to intimidation and slander during our recent contract ratification votes. Workers looking to us for leadership and political analysis outside the Barrie, Ontario (CUPW Local 503) ratification votes faced CUPW thugs who denounced us, threatened us, and snatched our leaflets out of workers' hands. This gangster behaviour can be explained by the existential fear the union officialdom has of workers educating ourselves and organizing independently.

If the UAW can go around making death threats, then the next time I make a critical statement about the way the Canada Post Corporation or the CUPW is moving forward, I need to be concerned for my own personal safety. Along with Brother Lehman, my own constitutionally protected rights to freedom of expression and freedom of association are called into question. Rolling over and accepting defeat will only encourage further attacks on workers.

The CUPW bureaucracy's conduct throughout the recent round of contract negotiations—spanning more than two years, two strikes, and culminating in the June 2026 ratification of deeply concessionary five-year agreements—has been marked by systematic gangsterism and antidemocratic methods directed against its own members. The union apparatus functioned not as a defender of postal workers but as an enforcer for Canada Post management and the Liberal government.

When a national strike broke out in response to Minister Lightbound's announcement of major cuts to the workforce in the fall of 2025, the CUPW bureaucracy sabotaged it by unilaterally imposing a bogus "rotating" strike confined to isolated rural locations, then declared an "agreement in principle" in November. This agreement did not achieve any of our demands, and was in reality a promise to not disrupt Christmas profits while workers laboured under a long-expired contract.

Finally in June 2026, the sellout tentative agreements were ratified under conditions where the union blackmailed workers into accepting it. We were threatened that rejection would lead to even worse outcomes with the claim, "these agreements are the best we can get". When we finally had the opportunity to vote, the union did not encourage democratic deliberation, instead opting to extort us and shut down opposing views.

The CUPW is a corporatist partner of management and the state. Its function is to police the working class, enforce the profit drive, and suppress any independent mobilization that could develop into a political challenge to capitalist rule.

The first is that this is not a sign of strength but a sure sign of weakness. If a leadership group was confident in its track record and could point to a way forward, it would not have to resort to these types of goonish tactics. The second is it is clear the UAW bureaucrats and Fain feel the threat from Will Lehman's campaign from below and how his message is starting to resonate with the rank and file. More power to Will, because for too long the demands of the rank and file in all unions have been excluded in favour of company-assisting compromises trying to "save jobs." The whole time we just keep getting poorer and poorer and more powerless. Lehman's on the right track and the UAW is scared of getting exposed. ... It's about time we did the same thing in the USW.

Dan emphasized the importance of going on the offensive in response to the death threat by expanding the struggle throughout the working class against the union apparatus. He said:

Rather than give up the fight under conditions where the UAW feels empowered to make death threats against their own members, Brother Lehman is using this experience to deepen his connection with his coworkers and explain in concrete terms what is at stake. Economic and safety demands are clearly involved with every collective agreement, and the union would like to end the struggle there. But political demands are the order of the day, and basic democratic rights are at stake.

The only way to rebuff the gangsterism of the union apparatus is to stand in solidarity with workers like Lehman who are under direct threat. Contact us below to add your voice to the denunciations of the death threats, and give an organizational form to your condemnations by forming a rank-and-file committee in your workplace today. Associated with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), we represent the only progressive alternative to the pro-corporate union bureaucracies found across North America and beyond. The alternative is submitting to union intimidation and the corporate management they defend.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

A.J. pointed to two important things revealed by Jensen's death threat: