

Health workers in Britain defend Will Lehman against violent threat by UAW bureaucracy

Our correspondent
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National Health Service (NHS) workers in Britain have defended Will Lehman against the public death threat made by high-ranking United Auto Workers (UAW) official Raymond L. Jensen Jr, adding to condemnation by workers internationally.

Jensen posted a violent graphic of Lehman on his campaign page for UAW President. Lehman is standing as a socialist calling for a rank-and-file insurgency to abolish the union bureaucracy, restore power to the shop floor, and wage a co-ordinated struggle across industries and national borders against decades of class collaboration.

The AI-generated image showed Lehman gagged and tied, overseen by a masked gunman with his rifle pointing at Lehman's back. Jensen's profile picture carried the logo "I support Sean Fain", the current UAW President standing for re-election. Fain won the 2023 election based on voter suppression and is currently facing a grand jury over corruption charges.

NHS FightBack, representing rank-and-file doctors, nurses and allied health professionals, e-mailed the following letter to the UAW to register their outrage and demand immediate action:

"To the United Auto Workers leadership,

"As healthcare workers, we are appalled by the AI-generated image posted by Raymond L. Jensen Jr., a senior UAW official, on the election campaign page of Will Lehman, a candidate for UAW President. The image depicts Lehman bound, gagged, and bleeding, with a masked gunman aiming a rifle at his back. This is a clear threat of violence against a rank-and-file candidate.

"The message is unmistakable: violence against Lehman is being encouraged by a leading representative of the UAW.

"NHS Fightback, representing healthcare workers, doctors, and nurses in Britain, finds this conduct abhorrent. We support the demand for a full investigation, a public repudiation by the UAW of the threat made against Lehman, accompanied by a formal apology, and a guarantee that the remainder of the 2026 election is conducted free from intimidation.

"Healthcare workers in Britain understand what intimidation means. Under the Labour government, doctors and nurses who opposed the Gaza genocide have faced suspension, removal from the medical register, and doxxing by far-right forces. The UAW appears to be adopting its own Trumpian tactics of intimidation against rank-and-file members. Last month, the federal Monitor found that President Shawn Fain had engaged in a 'recurring

pattern of retaliation,' including threats to 'slit' opponents' 'throats.'

"We can all see why this is happening. Lehman is being targeted for his prominent campaign to abolish the bureaucracy and build rank-and-file power. As he stated, 'This threat is not aimed at me alone. It is an act of intimidation directed against the entire rank-and-file opposition.' Addressing fellow autoworkers, he added, 'The apparatus resorts to intimidation because it fears you. The answer is not to retreat, but to organize.'

"NHS Fightback lends its wholehearted support to Lehman's campaign. We join UAW members and workers internationally in opposing this outrage. The fight to defend Will Lehman is the fight to defend the democratic rights of all workers.

"Ajitha Gunaratne (National Health Service nurse) on behalf of NHS FightBack."

No reply has been forthcoming. In fact, Fain spoke at an online meeting of candidates for UAW President last Thursday to normalise the criminal conduct. After Lehman insisted he stop avoiding the issue Fain replied, "If you're running for president, get ready, brother, because you'll be getting them every day."

These gangster methods are rooted in a deep fear of rank-and-file opposition. Lehman's campaign is resonating with UAW members because he speaks the language of class struggle after decades of sellouts and because he fights for socialism and the international unity of the working class. A summary of the candidates' debate with video excerpts of Lehman's remarks can be viewed in this *World Socialist Web Site* article.

The NHS FightBack letter has also been endorsed by letters sent in personally.

A **healthcare worker in north-west England** wrote, "I am writing strongly to condemn the death threat made against United Auto Workers (UAW) Presidential candidate, Will Lehman, by UAW official Raymond L. Jensen Jr.

"Will Lehman is a socialist and is standing for UAW president on a political platform calling for the abolition of the UAW bureaucratic apparatus—which sees UAW representatives earning six figure salaries—and for power to be transferred to the shop floor through the creation of democratic rank-and-file committees, answerable only to workers.

"Raymond L. Jensen Jr is a supporter of incumbent UAW president Shawn Fain. Fain is currently being federally

investigated for corruption whilst UAW president.

“The gangsterism and anticommunism expressed by Jensen is an echo of the Trump administration’s tactics towards its political opponents and is an expression of the undemocratic composition of those in senior positions within the UAW.

“UAW president Fain has sought to normalise an incident that has shocked and appalled workers globally, telling Will Lehman—in a live UAW presidential debate on YouTube—to ‘get used to it.’ Like a death threat from a Union official to a rank-and-file member is just an occupational hazard for someone running for that position and should be accepted without complaint!

“The death threat sent by Jensen and the response of Fain is an expression of the fear being felt within the UAW apparatus of the growing discontent and rebellion coming from UAW rank-and-file workers.

“It is this sentiment that Will Lehman articulates and gives direction to, and it is for this reason that the leadership of the UAW threaten him with violence. The death threats are intended to intimidate shop floor workers, and not just Will Lehman.

“I demand that Jensen be immediately suspended from his position within the UAW, and that Fain and the UAW leadership not only stop portraying a death threat towards a worker as normal practice, but repudiate this threat made by Jensen. The UAW leadership must immediately issue a full public apology to Will Lehman for this outrageous and disgusting action by one of its officials.

“I call on the federal government Monitor—currently overseeing the UAW apparatus—to immediately investigate the death threats made against Will Lehman and work to ensure that incidents of this nature will not happen again and must not be tolerated or normalised.

“The death threat against Will Lehman must also be investigated as a crime, as it is a clear incitement to violence against a UAW rank-and-file member.

“I support Will Lehman’s UAW presidential campaign for all power to the rank-and-file and for the dismantling of the UAW bureaucratic apparatus wholeheartedly. Lehman speaks in the interests not only of UAW workers but also workers globally.

“Any worker involved in struggles for better pay and working conditions knows that what Will says about the unions—that they defend the interests of the company and not those of the working class—is correct and that he speaks the truth.

“Workers are learning this through their daily experiences, and through seeing the struggles they wage betrayed by union bureaucrats time and time again. This is a global phenomenon and Will Lehman’s campaign demands will be recognised by the international working class and will resonate with them.

“This death threat cannot be allowed to go unnoticed and unpunished. It expresses the political outlook of a comfortable union bureaucracy that views its material interests bound up with the defence of the capitalist system. The threat made against Will is a threat to all workers internationally and is a wake-up call.

“All power to the rank-and-file!”

A nurse in south-west England wrote:

“As NHS workers in the UK, we have had our own negative experiences with different union bureaucracies over the past few

years.

“During the NHS winter dispute of 2022/23, healthcare workers staged intermittent strikes across 16 separate days. The separation of strike days rather than united continuous strike action was planned and used by the RCN, GMB and Unison leadership to wear the strike down and prevent united action between health care workers and other sections of the working class in Britain from coming into conflict with government austerity plans.

“The health unions negotiated a below inflation pay deal, agreed to in closed-door negotiations, behind the backs of the membership, and dressed this up as a victory for union members. The pressing issue of insufficient staffing levels, leading to poor safety on wards, wasn’t even addressed, nor were the creeping privatisation plans of consecutive governments.

“The resident doctors’ dispute that took place earlier this year met a similar fate thanks to the leadership of the BMA [British Medical Association] and its BMA Resident Doctors Committee (RDC) led by Jack Fletcher.

“Fletcher stated that the deal, a 3.5 pay uplift, should be viewed as ‘sufficient’ by the resident doctors, despite 47 percent (around 15,000) voting to reject the deal. Again, the deal was agreed with the government behind the backs of the membership.

“Workers are witnessing for themselves that the union leaderships that ostensibly represent their interests actually work to isolate, sabotage and betray their struggles, in combination with management.

“That’s why workers in Britain and around the world are watching the events of the UAW presidential election closely. We see that Will Lehman’s struggle against undemocratic and unanswerable union bureaucracies is our struggle too.”



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