

Union disciplinary charges recommended against Lindsay Dougherty, head of Teamsters Motion Picture Division, over 2024 assault

Marc Wells
21 September 2026

A memorandum issued September 15 by Independent Investigations Officer (IIO) Timothy S. Hillman recommends charges against three officials at Teamsters Local 399 in Hollywood over a violent assault at a union meeting that left member Franz Holzinger with multiple facial fractures.

Those named include Lindsay Dougherty, who serves as international vice president, director of the union's Motion Picture and Theatrical Trade Division and Secretary Treasurer and Principal Officer of Local 399, a heavily promoted "militant" leader of the union.

Holzinger, a movie-location driver who had been out of work for almost a year, said he came to the January 28, 2024 General Membership Meeting at the Burbank Airport Marriott to find out what was happening with work and approached Local 399 Business Agent and Political Coordinator Edward Duffy afterward with questions about taxes and production incentives.

Business Agent Calvin McDowell then asked Flint Hardman to "keep an eye" on Holzinger. Hardman is a member of the Hells Angels, which the US Justice Department classifies as an outlaw motorcycle gang involved in assault, extortion, homicide and other criminal activity. Hardman is charged with physically assaulting Holzinger. Dougherty, Local 399 secretary-treasurer and head of its Motion Picture and Theatrical Trade Division, and Kenneth Farnell, then Local 399 president, are charged not with participating in the assault but with breaching their fiduciary duties by failing to investigate it. Hardman had also been accused in 2016 of assaulting retired Teamster Ray Holmgren while Holmgren was distributing campaign literature for an opposition candidate in a Local 399 election.

Hardman acknowledged striking Holzinger. Medical records documented multiple displaced facial fractures, a nasal fracture and reported hearing problems. Hardman

claimed Holzinger had reached for a knife, but the IIO found serious problems with that account: Dougherty saw no knife, Vice President Joshua Staheli admitted that his "near certainty" Holzinger had drawn one was an assumption, and the only person who admitted carrying a knife was Hardman. Holzinger testified that Hardman struck him after he asked his name and that he produced a can of mace only afterward.

Dougherty heard the blow and chairs clattering and walked toward the incident, but never interviewed Holzinger, established what had happened or determined the extent of his injuries. Instead, she repeatedly spoke with Hardman and helped coordinate representatives for those later called to provide sworn statements. She did not speak with police at the scene and never returned a detective's call, claiming that she had not witnessed the fight. Dougherty later testified that she believed Holzinger was "on the spectrum" and described him as "mentally unstable." The IIO found no factual basis for either assertion and called the remarks "derogatory and dismissive."

Farnell likewise failed to investigate. When Holzinger contacted him the next day, Farnell told him he had 10 days to request charges, then admitted that no constitutional or bylaw provision established such a deadline and that he may have invented it to "quicken the process." The IIO concluded that the officials "failed to interview the injured member, failed to establish the extent of his injuries and failed to determine their own responsibilities under the Union's rules."

Dougherty's handling of the assault exposes the media image built around her as a new model of militant union leadership. The *Los Angeles Times* profiled Dougherty as "The writers' strike's top ally: an F-bomb-throwing Teamster with a Jimmy Hoffa tattoo." But this was manufactured around a career union official who has

collected nearly \$2.35 million in salary from workers' dues since 2014 and negotiated a measly 3 percent annual wage increase in 2021 that was promoted as a "victory" even as inflation rendered it a net pay cut.

A key role in embellishing Dougherty's reputation was played by Teamsters for a Democratic Union, the "reform" faction which supports and participates in the administration of Teamsters General President Sean O'Brien. Dougherty was a featured speaker at TDU's 2023 convention, alongside O'Brien.

That reputation was exposed during the 2023 writers' strike. A six-page Local 399 question-and-answer sheet told members that, whether working or not, they could not join WGA picket lines, carry signs, distribute WGA literature or walk near a picket line. Dougherty publicly claimed that Teamsters were not crossing the lines, while UPS deliveries continued into the studios after hours.

The same year, Teamsters officials engaged in far larger sabotage at UPS. After months of a "strike ready" campaign, the union reached a tentative agreement which preserved the low-paid part-time tier, kept new part-timers at a starting rate of \$21 an hour, maintained personal-vehicle delivery drivers and froze pension contributions for workers in the West, while O'Brien promoted it as "historic."

The Local 399 case has now been referred to O'Brien, a Trump supporter, whose own record includes punishment for threatening union opponents. In 2013, while O'Brien headed Boston Local 25 and New England Joint Council 10, the Independent Review Board charged him with threatening retaliation against members backing an opposition slate in Rhode Island after he declared that they "need to be punished." O'Brien accepted a 14-day suspension without pay.

On June 16 this year, O'Brien secured a second five-year term without a rank-and-file vote because no opposition candidate received the 5 percent of convention delegate votes required to reach the membership ballot. The next day, the Teamsters and Justice Department jointly moved to end the 37-year federal monitorship. On September 3, the court approved the termination, with O'Brien declaring that the union had developed a "culture of vigilance" and had proven it could "police our own."

The timing is especially significant because direct rank-and-file election of the union's top officers was one of the central changes imposed by the 1989 consent decree following the federal RICO suit over Mafia influence. Before the decree, international officers had been chosen by convention delegates; direct voting and independent discipline were presented as the machinery that would break organized crime's grip on the union. But changing the method of selection—and candidates for the "direct

elections" are still tightly controlled by the bureaucracy—did nothing to change the social interests of the apparatus itself as an agent of management.

Thirty-seven years later, the court has ended the federal disciplinary monitorship and returned primary responsibility for investigating corruption and disciplining officials to the Teamsters apparatus itself. Independent supervision of International elections remains in place, while the Independent Investigations Officer will remain only through the end of 2026 and the Independent Review Officer for another three years.

This exposes the purpose of the intervention all along had nothing to do with fighting "corruption," but with propping up a bureaucracy upon whom capitalism relies to police the class struggle, but which was severely discredited by decades of open criminality.

A similar operation is currently underway in the United Auto Workers. In July, UAW official Raymond Jensen Jr., a supporter of President Shawn Fain, posted an AI-generated image on rank-and-file presidential candidate Will Lehman's public Facebook page depicting Lehman bound and gagged, bleeding and facing a gunman. The UAW's court-appointed monitor found that Jensen violated election rules, suspended his union membership for two years and barred him from office and campaigning. However, it allowed the UAW to decide whether to keep him on the payroll to collect his \$200,000 union salary.

The persistence of these methods after 37 years of federal supervision demonstrates that the bureaucracy cannot be reformed. The intervention that began under RICO left the apparatus itself in place, and the state is now withdrawing supervision while that apparatus retains control over contracts, dues and internal discipline.

Workers must overthrow that control through rank-and-file committees in every workplace, independent of the union bureaucracy and all of its factions, including Teamsters for a Democratic Union and the pseudo-left organizations that have promoted figures such as O'Brien and Dougherty as militants. These committees must defend workers victimized for challenging officials and unite workers across workplaces, industries and national borders.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact