RESPONSE TO UAW MONITOR'S REQUEST FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ELECTION PROTEST



BY WILL LEHMAN
Mack Trucks worker and rank-and-file candidate for UAW president

On December 20, rank-and-file socialist candidate for UAW president Will Lehman filed a protest over the UAW bureaucracy's deliberate efforts to suppress the vote in the first ever direct election for national union officers. The Monitor has not substantively responded and is instead going forward with a second round between Ray Curry and Shawn Fain, two candidates who each received votes from less than 4 percent of eligible voters.

On January 23, the UAW Monitor sent an email asking Lehman for additional information, but only about a small element of Lehman's initial report. The Monitor's letter read, in part:

> ***As relayed to you in this prior correspondence, the Monitor's Office has received and is currently evaluating your protest and will issue our ruling when our review is complete. In connection with our evaluation of your protest, we are requesting additional information in support of some of your claims. Specifically: Regarding your claim on page 36 of your protest that "UAW officials called security to remove campaign volunteers engaged in protected election activity" at specific workplaces on various dates, please provide additional information regarding each incident so that we may fully evaluate this claim.***

Lehman's response, which was sent January 30, is as follows.

Mr. Barofsky,

This is my response to your January 23 email requesting information about my supporters being obstructed by UAW officials when they tried to campaign at workplaces, as well as about members at certain workplaces being misinformed about voting deadlines.

Your email is the only substantive response I have received so far to my December 19 protest to the first round of the elections. In that protest, I demonstrated that hundreds of thousands of members were intentionally disenfranchised by inadequate notice and by deliberate efforts to suppress the vote.

Without a doubt, the misconduct you are asking about was part of a deliberate effort to suppress the vote—not just in terms of preventing workers from finding out about my campaign, but in terms of preventing workers from finding out that an election was happening at all. In the hundreds of discussions I personally had with UAW members outside workplaces across the country as part of my campaign, I would estimate that only 10 or 15 percent had heard an election was taking place before I told them.

However, you are now pressing ahead with a second round of "runoff" elections despite all the issues I raised. It is clear from the narrow scope of your requests, as well as their adversarial tone, that you intend to overrule my protest and certify the election results.

As to your requests for information themselves, you are asking about issues that I first reported to you long before votes were cast in the election—when you still had plenty of time to do something about them. Your own election rules say that any "anti-democratic efforts or policies" will be "swiftly addressed and eradicated" (page 4). Now you are suggesting that you will look into these issues nearly two months after the ballots were already counted—which is hardly "swift."

At any rate, this response should be more than sufficient for you to investigate and hold accountable all the UAW officials involved, and it further underscores why the election needs to be re-done in its entirety. The two campaign volunteers who are most able to speak to these events are [Name Removed] and [Name Removed], they are both available to speak to you as soon as possible.

1. AUGUST 23 INTIMIDATION BY UAW DISTRICT COMMITTEEMAN SEAN MEACHEM AT NORTH PARKING LOT OF FLINT GM ASSEMBLY

On September 1, I wrote you an email that began:

> ***I am requesting that your office investigate an act of intimidation by the UAW which violates my "Freedom to Advocate" pursuant to Rule 4-4 of the election rules and constitutes discrimination by the UAW against my campaign under Rule 4-5. On August 23, I visited Flint GM Assembly plant with volunteers from my campaign. We went at shift change, in the afternoon, in order to speak to workers about my campaign and distribute leaflets with information about my program. We spent roughly an hour speaking to workers and handing out literature. After an hour, a UAW official who identified himself as Local 598 District Committeeman Sean Meachem began to intimidate us and the workers with whom we were speaking. Meachem told us he was calling General Motors to inform them of our presence and remove us from the premises to prevent us from distributing literature and speaking to workers. When we explained our Freedom to Advocate under Rule 4-4, Mr. Meachem continued to order us to leave. He then instructed a woman wearing a UAW shirt to begin taking photographs of me, my volunteers, as well as workers who were speaking to us. This was an attempt to intimidate workers from taking leaflets or holding discussions with me.***

In response to this email, you held a perfunctory meeting with me on September 9, and when my lawyer asked you whether that meeting constituted an "investigation" your representative said that it did not.

At that meeting, I provided all of the information that I had about this incident. I have nothing more to add. As I explained during that meeting, we did leave the plant as a result of this. You never told me what came of this meeting. If you took action against Mr. Meachem, you never told me about it. As a result of your inaction, the UAW bureaucrats felt emboldened to take the actions of intimidation that follow here.

2. NOVEMBER 5 INTIMIDATION BY UAW LOCAL 3047 OFFICIAL GARY PARR

On November 9, I wrote to you:

> ***Last week, workers at the Metalsa parts plant in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, were intimidated from speaking to my campaign volunteers by UAW Local 3047 official Gary Parr, who called company security and began taking photos of nearby license plates in an attempt to intimidate workers from learning about my campaign. A similar act of intimidation took place in August, when a UAW Local 598 official instructed someone to photograph workers who had been talking to me about my campaign at GM Assembly in Flint, Michigan.***

My volunteers stopped campaigning as a result of these actions. You never responded to this complaint until now. The exact date was November 5. The Metalsa plant has only one employee parking lot, located on the south side of the plant.

3. DECEMBER 17 THREAT OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE BY REGION 4 DIRECTOR BRANDON CAMPBELL

Region 4 Director Brandon Campbell made threats against my volunteers at a rally for CNH workers in Mount Pleasant, Wisconsin. Campbell began taking photos of my volunteers and suggested they read your (the Monitor's) election rules "for your safety." I already reported this to you. My volunteers felt that any attempt to stand their ground would have resulted in physical violence.

4. ADDITIONAL INCIDENTS OF MY CAMPAIGN BEING OBSTRUCTED AT WORKPLACES.

Here are the details of additional incidents of my campaign being obstructed at workplaces, some of which I reference in my December 19 protest:

- **August 20 obstruction of campaign volunteers at Sterling Heights Assembly Plant**

Campaign volunteers were in the south parking lot during the afternoon shift change distributing leaflets and telling workers about the election. A company security guard asked my volunteers who they were, and they responded that they were volunteers for my campaign. At this point the security guard told the volunteers they could not stay, and so they left.

- **September 21 security asked supporters to leave GM Fort Wayne in Fort Wayne, Indiana**

On September 21 at around 2:10 p.m., volunteers at GM Fort Wayne in Fort Wayne, Indiana were approached by security, who said that they would contact GM World HQ in Detroit for guidance about whether they could hand out leaflets. In this particular instance, the volunteers were actually able to stay by the turnstiles and finished distributing their leaflets before security ever got back to them.

- **October 14 obstruction by UAW official who refused to identify himself at Freightliner Truck Manufacturing Plant in Cleveland, Ohio**

At roughly 3:00 p.m., as my campaign volunteers were distributing leaflets and notifying members of the upcoming deadlines to request ballots and cast votes, a man who identified himself as a UAW official but who would not state his name approached my volunteers and told us, "You have to leave, I am calling security." My volunteers told him that under the Monitor's rules we had a right to be present to inform workers of their right to vote in the election, and the UAW official disregarded these appeals. Security arrived and a company security official said they were calling the police. They then escorted my volunteers out of the parking lot.

- **October 14 obstruction at Mack Avenue in Detroit, Michigan**

In the afternoon of October 14, campaign volunteers were distributing leaflets near the main gate of Mack Avenue in Detroit, Michigan. This incident took place by the flagpoles. A person who identified himself as head of security at the plant approached my volunteers and told them they had to leave immediately. He escorted them off the premises after threatening to call the police.

- **October 17 obstruction at Volvo plant in Dublin, Virginia**

At around 3:30 p.m., at the main entrance to the Volvo plant, a white woman who looked like she was in her 50s approached my campaign volunteers and said, “I am with the UAW, on whose authority are you here?” She then called security, and one guard came up to my volunteers and demanded that they leave, which they did.

- **October 19 obstruction at Ford Kansas City Assembly Plant**

On October 19, my supporters were located at turnstile about 30 feet southwest of the security booth at Ford Kansas City Assembly Plant. While campaigning, they saw two men, approximately in their 40s, both white, speaking to security. We were then approached by security guards who said we had to leave company property.

The security guard expressed exasperation over the fact that the union officials had not told us themselves. From this we understood that it was the union officials that had demanded that security ask us to leave.

- **October 20 obstruction at GM Fairfax Kansas City Plant**

My supporters were at the turnstile on the west side of the plant. At one point during the campaign, three UAW officials, two white men and one black woman, insisted that we leave because the factory gate was “company property.” They included UAW Local 31 plant chairman and “International Rep” Jerry Belucci (spelling not known). This video shows the incident. Please review.

- **October 27 obstruction at Dana Inc. parts plant in Toledo, Ohio**

An African American woman wearing an official UAW shirt with a large UAW Local 12 logo on it stood in the doorway to the plant as a corporate security guard removed my campaign team from the premises, even though my team was outside, in the parking lot. It was apparent that the UAW official instructed security to remove us. Volunteers were distributing leaflets with information about the campaign and informing workers that an election was taking place. The UAW official did not respond to requests that she provide her name, but she stood in the door to block workers from receiving leaflets about my campaign. When my campaigners told the UAW official that they had a right to inform workers about the election, the UAW official did not respond.

- **October 27 removal from Planters Peanut plant in Suffolk, Virginia**

Volunteers were standing in the middle of the parking lot between 1:30 and 2 p.m. with no problem, but when they moved toward the entrance to the lot, right across the street from the security guards’ station, a single guard approached them and told them to leave. They moved down the block a little, on a public street, and he approached them a second time and asked them to leave and they left. It is not known whether UAW officials were involved in this incident, but it is possible given the pattern of similar incidents.

- **October 28 removal from Jefferson North Assembly Plant, Detroit**

Campaign volunteers were distributing leaflets on a public sidewalk outside the plant’s drive-out gate, as they had been doing for many weeks in a row. Security guards came out on October 28 for the first time. This indicated that somebody had asked the company to remove us from the public space outside the plant.

- **November 19 volunteers removed from GM Arlington, Texas**

Volunteers were asked to leave the turnstiles at GM Arlington by security on Saturday, November 19 during the afternoon shift change between 1:30 and 2:30 p.m. They were leafleting near the entry turnstiles at Gate 3, where they had leafleted many times before. They do not know whether UAW

officials were involved, but the volunteers recall speaking with someone who may have been a UAW official shortly before being removed.

5. FALSE DEADLINE REPORTS AT GM ARLINGTON, TEXAS AND CENTERLINE, MICHIGAN

Regarding workers at GM Arlington (Texas) and Centerline (Michigan) reporting that they were being told the wrong information about deadlines, I already sent this information to you on November 9. I promptly reported to you what was reported to me and I asked you to investigate.

I wrote:

> ***Workers in at least two plants—GM Arlington in Texas and Mopar in Centerline, Michigan—are informing my campaign that UAW officials are telling eligible voters that the deadline to mail in their ballot was October 28, and that they need not send their ballots now because it is too late. This is not the correct deadline. If an investigation confirms what workers report, this would amount to a violation of federal law and of workers' right to vote.***

In both cases, I was relaying to you what workers had told my campaign, including multiple workers at the turnstiles at GM Arlington. I specifically asked you to investigate these reports to determine the scope of the problem and take appropriate action. Based on your email last week, it is clear you never investigated these reports. It was your obligation to do so under the rules, not mine. However, since you failed to do it, I am now working to reach workers at both facilities and will provide a supplemental response about what I discover.

CONCLUSION

The information I provided previously and in this letter should be sufficient for you to conduct your own investigation to hold accountable all of the UAW officials involved.

However, my protest exposed more than just the misconduct of a few "bad apples." There was a systematic effort by the entrenched bureaucracy across the board to cling to power by suppressing the vote, which resulted in an election that had such low turnout that it was not meaningful in any fundamental democratic sense. The only way to make this right is to conduct a do-over of the election with adequate notice and with the names of all duly nominated candidates on the ballot.

Best, Will Lehman

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