

“The UAW leadership has been bending over to the company”: Kentucky Truck workers speak with UAW presidential candidate Will Lehman

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The WSWS has endorsed Will Lehman's campaign for UAW president. On Sunday, September 11, at 2 p.m. Eastern, Lehman will be hosting a live Q&A on Zoom. Learn more and register here.

For more information on Lehman's campaign, visit WillForUAWPresident.org.

During his recent tour of auto plants in the US Midwest, UAW presidential candidate Will Lehman spoke with hundreds of workers about his campaign. Lehman received a powerful response at Ford's Kentucky Truck Plant, where over a hundred workers signed up to receive more information.

“In the trash room where we're mainly located,” one worker in UAW Local 862 said, “we've been there seven years, and we don't have any fans in there. They treat us like bottom feeders.”

“It's a low, low-paying job,” he added. “They start now at \$14 an hour. I'm a team leader, and I make more money than anybody who has topped-out after a year and a half, and that's only \$16.83 an hour.”

Lehman explained that his campaign is fighting to abolish the multi-tier system, but that this is only possible as part of an international movement of the working class.

“I'm for abolishing the whole bureaucracy at the UAW International,” Lehman said. “It should be workers deciding how to carry out the fight.”

“The workers need to take the power back,” Lehman said to another worker at the same plant. “And it's not just going to be done through an election. I'm talking about building [rank-and-file] committees on the shop floor.”

A worker explained, “I was thrown out of a union meeting here for questioning them [the UAW officials].” He added, “I was hoping things were going to change with the government oversight.”

The UAW convention this summer, he said, first voted to increase strike pay and then they voted to take it back down. “They gave themselves a 3 percent raise again. It is the same s**t every year that goes on up there. Nothing changes.”

Another worker told Will, “The leadership we have right now has been bending over to the company and taking everything they can. We lost COLA. We lost some of our pay. The two-tier system they have now, we are doing the same work, why aren't we making the same pay?”

“I was outraged when they voted to lower our strike pay back right after they increased it, and then they turn around and give themselves a raise. Why are you giving yourself a raise when you just bent over again?”

Lehman replied, “I'm talking about abolishing that whole bureaucracy. The decision-making needs to be carried out by the workers.”

After listening to another worker describe conditions of extreme exploitation as the companies profit, Lehman replied, “I'm a socialist. I want our labor and everything we do be to be controlled by us. We are the workers. We generate the wealth. It should be up to us to decide how we distribute that wealth.”

For more information on Will Lehman's campaign, visit WillForUAWPresident.org.



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