

Will Lehman replies to Steven Greenhouse on the falsification of his position during UAW presidential debate

Will Lehman
26 September 2022

The following letter was sent by United Auto Worker presidential candidate Will Lehman to Steven Greenhouse, the former New York Times reporter who moderated the presidential candidates debate on Thursday, September 22.

Lehman sent an earlier letter to Greenhouse protesting the falsification of his positions during the debate. Greenhouse's reply to this letter is included below Lehman's response.

The full video of the debate can be viewed at willforuawpresident.org/debate.

Dear Mr. Greenhouse,

Your reply to my email raises more concerns than it answers.

First, you suggest that the quote you used may have in fact been accurate, despite my objections, and that I might have misspoken in the meeting. To dispel all doubt on this, I was able to locate the audio recording of the meeting, which was not public. The relevant portion is here.

Second, you write that when you read the article, "it appeared to me that it was written by a supporter of yours" and that the author would "take pains to make sure that the quotations from your remarks were accurate."

To be frank, this is not believable. The "article" includes supposed quotations from me such as: "I am running for the presidency of the United Auto Workers party (?); "I would like to warn the staff (?) that the Union of International Employee Implementation Committees (?) can develop greater capacity (?); and "I want to show workers the way forward by sending (?) a global fight." The "article" is littered with such nonsensical statements. How could you, with thirty years of experience as a journalist for the *New York Times*, read this article and think it was produced by someone who

was "taking pains" to make sure anything was accurate?

Third, you do not answer any of the points I made about the obvious lack of credibility of the "Sasa Times." From your reply, you make clear that *you* sought out this source, rather than it being submitted by someone else. Did you make no effort to determine its legitimacy? Did you look at the "about page" or investigate who is behind the publication? Why did you choose a clearly non-credible source rather than my own statements, my website, or the *World Socialist Web Site*, which has been covering my campaign?

You seem to have searched out a quote from the depths of the internet specifically designed to discredit my campaign and present my call for the abolition of the UAW bureaucracy in a negative light. It is also evident that one of your main criteria for selecting the "Sasa Times" is that you wanted to avoid any mention of the *World Socialist Web Site*, which is followed widely by autoworkers for exposing the betrayals of the UAW. If you were searching for articles about my campaign, including my meeting with German and Indian workers, you would certainly have first come across reports from the WSWs, which accurately quoted my remarks. You would have quickly been able to determine that the "Sasa Times" article is a mangled reproduction, to the point of being semi-coherent, of the WSWs article.

Fourth, you state that I had "two full minutes to respond" to the question and that you are therefore "baffled" that I would demand that you issue a correction. Excuse me, Mr. Greenhouse, but you attributed an "exact quote" to me in the first question directed toward me. This "exact quote" turned out to be false, taken from an illegitimate source. I therefore had to spend the limited time I had clarifying this error.

My ability to respond, moreover, does not change the

fact that you read a quote attributed to me that I never said, which opponents of my campaign will and already are using to attempt to discredit me. The only way to stop this is by making a formal statement correcting the record.

There is no question that if you had made a similar mistake in posing a question to Ray Curry or Shawn Fain, you would not hesitate to make such a correction, and, moreover, you would have exercised greater responsibility in selecting the question in the first place. However, since I am a rank-and-file worker and opponent of the apparatus, you feel you have no such obligation.

Finally, you say that as a “journalist and a writer,” you are “unaccustomed to—and very uncomfortable with—people issuing formal demands to me.” People, you write, should not make “stern demands” to “fellow human beings.”

I am sorry, Mr. Greenhouse, but you are not the wounded party here, and you are not just a journalist and a writer. You were chosen as the moderator of the official debates for the executive offices of the United Auto Workers, debates that could be decisive in the outcome of the elections and indeed the future of the labor movement in the United States. You and you alone, as you stressed, were responsible for selecting questions and being “scrupulously neutral” in these debates. You misquoted me in a manner that falsified my position. You made a serious error. And you are “uncomfortable” with my insistence that you issue a statement acknowledging this fact?

Frankly, you seem to be placing more importance on your own offended feelings than the clarification of this issue for the hundreds of thousands of workers who will be voting in this election.

Sincerely,
Will Lehman

Greenhouse’s letter to Will Lehman:

Mr. Lehman,

I am sorry that you are upset about the quotation I used from an article in the Sasa Times.

When I read the Sasa Times article, it appeared to me that it was written by a supporter of yours, someone knowledgeable, someone who was eager to promote your point of view to the world—and to UAW members who might look at the Sasa Times. And that made me think in turn that the article’s pro-Lehman author would take pains to make sure that the quotations from your remarks were accurate.

I very much thought that the article’s lengthy quotations

of your remarks were taken from an audio recording. Indeed, when I read that article, it read like one of many articles I have read over the years that relied heavily on audio recordings.

You write that the Sasa Times article misquoted you. As I said, I believe the Sasa Times article relied on an audio recording, and it is certainly possible that in your remarks, you unintentionally called for “the complete abolition of unions,” when you had instead intended to call for “the complete abolition of the union bureaucracy.” All of us are human, all of us err, and many of us have at times mistakenly omitted words while giving speeches, and that might have happened in your case here.

Second, you had two full minutes to respond to that question, and in those two minutes, you vigorously made the case that what you had said in those remarks was “My campaign advances the call for the complete abolition of the union bureaucracy,” and not, as my question stated, “My campaign supports the call for a complete abolition of trade unions.” I’m sure that your response to that question was heard loud and clear by everyone who watched the debate live or watched a recording of it.

In truth, because you gave such an emphatic and detailed response to my question, I am somewhat baffled why you are “demanding” such an extraordinary type of correction.

I am a journalist and a writer. Like other journalists and writers, I am unaccustomed to—and very uncomfortable with—people issuing formal demands to me, as you did in your letter to me. I am not General Motors, Ford, Mack Trucks or a powerful CEO. If you want to make demands to them, fine. In the world I live in, one doesn’t speak that way—one doesn’t issue stern demands—to fellow human beings.

Sincerely,
Steven Greenhouse



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact