

“This campaign is not just for me, it’s for all of the people who come after me”: Stellantis worker urges support for Will Lehman

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An autoworker at the Stellantis Sterling Heights Assembly Plant (SHAP) in the metro Detroit area recently spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* about his support for Will Lehman’s campaign for president of the United Auto Workers. Lehman is a Mack Trucks worker and a socialist, and is calling for a rank-and-file rebellion to abolish the UAW bureaucracy and bring power to workers on the shop floor.

Mail ballots for the UAW go out this week in the historic election, the first direct-rank and-file election of officers in the history of the union.

Speaking about the significance of the campaign, the worker said, “I feel like this campaign is not just for me it’s for all of the people who come after me. Right now, we have TPTs [temporary part time workers] at my plant who have been temps for over a year and a half, and that’s not fair. I was a TPT for two years before I got rolled over. Whatever changes that people want to see happen in our plant or in the UAW as a whole, then we need to vote for change. And this is the face of change.

“The people just need to read and know about Will and how important this election is. I want to see change, I want to see corruption cease, I want to see us get our fair due diligence. Because we’re not asking for much and the success of the company comes from the sweat off our backs.

“The UAW is now coming in with what they call this ‘historic election’ but I heard that he [incumbent UAW President Ray Curry] didn’t even want there to be direct elections. He didn’t get elected, he got appointed. How can you be up for re-election when you were appointed?

“They’re not telling us about any of the candidates,

they’re not saying anything about it. If it wasn’t for me getting the emails from the WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* and coming out of work and running into y’all at the turnstile I wouldn’t know about the candidates or Will. There’s one poster on the front door when we come in and it’s not even a candidate for president.

The worker explained what attracted him to Will’s message. “He [Will] is the only one trying to stand up for us because he’s the only one who works on the line like me every day. Everything we’ve gone through, I’m sure he’s gone through as well.”

He continued, “The International has to be cleaned up. I don’t know if he’s able to come in there with his administration and replace the people who are there—I don’t know how that works. In my opinion if he can, he should just get rid of everybody because they’re all corrupt. Anybody that’s in there has been around for the corruption.”

The worker noted that he had previously considered leaving the union because “they don’t do anything for us. This is going back to last summer, we would come in the plant and coming in and going out you would see all the stewards from the shift before yours and your steward and the steward after your shift. Now we don’t see any stewards at all. You call them, you text, they don’t answer. You do text they text you back days later; they’re never on the floor.

“To me, paying union dues is like paying car insurance. Sometimes you’re going to need it and sometimes you might pay, pay, pay and never use it. It’s like I’m paying a lawyer retaining fee. I’ve been paying union fees for eight years now and I can count on one hand how many times I needed the union. And

the times that I did need them they weren't even there!

"My granddaddy, rest in peace, worked for Chrysler for 30 years, he retired from there. It's not the same as when he was there; it's nowhere near the same. Over all the decades the union has transitioned into something else. At this point I feel like working at McDonald's is better than working in a plant. At least the things they need they're able to get it and then here we are, building these vehicles and when we need small things, we can't even get it, like the tools to put out a decent vehicle.

"So, what am I paying [union dues] for? A big Christmas party at the end of the year that I might not even attend?"

He expressed concern about the possibility of vote rigging on the part of the UAW bureaucracy in the upcoming vote.

"We're concerned about how the ballots get counted—that's our main concern. Are we guaranteed that our ballots are going to get counted? The way we see it, he [Will] should win by a landslide. We know that Curry is out of there, and he knows that he's out of there. He doesn't care who gets in as long as it's not Will," he said, pointing to a Will Lehman leaflet.

"You know what you're getting with the guys who have already been there. We want Will to have a chance.

"Everybody who comes through the turnstile, everyone I come across I'm going to pass this [Will Lehman leaflets] out to. Whatever time I do have I'm willing to dedicate to make sure that he gets the seat that he deserves."

In a discussion about the broader significance of the campaign, the worker pointed out the enormous power that workers have as the prime actors in the functioning of the economy. "Without teachers they just have a building with a bunch of books and desks and kids in there waiting for somebody to teach them something. And in hospitals, if there's no nurses, people will just be laying there without anyone to provide them with care. It's all across the board."



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