

# “It’s almost like we are in a civil war between the rich and the poor”: Autoworkers respond to Will Lehman’s *Newsweek* op-ed

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20 September 2023

Autoworkers have responded with enthusiasm to the editorial written by Will Lehman, titled, “The battle against the automakers is more than a strike, it’s class warfare,” which was published by *Newsweek* on Monday. In the article, the Pennsylvania Mack Trucks worker who ran as a socialist candidate for president of the United Auto Workers details the historical level of social inequality in America that is fueling the militant struggle by GM, Ford and Stellantis workers.

Lehman notes that wages have declined dramatically over the last 50 years, with new GM workers making less than half of what an autoworker in 1973 was making. At the same time, GM CEO Mary Barra received a \$28.9 million compensation package in 2022. Lehman noted, “It would take a temporary worker making the maximum \$20 an hour almost three years to make as much as Barra does in a single day.”

Biden, Trump and UAW President Shawn Fain, Lehman concludes, “all fear that inequality is driving the working class towards socialist politics—that is, a political perspective based upon workers’ independent class interests.”

The *Newsweek* editorial has been widely circulated among autoworkers. A temporary worker at GM’s Flint Assembly plant asked, “Why does GM’s CEO need that much money a day or month or a year? What kind of lifestyle is she living? Barra probably has a bed set that costs more than my house. She’s sleeping very comfortably while we have to wake up and budget pennies.

“It makes me feel uncomfortable because they’re still making money while we’re on a so-called strike. My plant is one of the big money plants, and we’re seriously still going into work right now while we’re

on strike. What we are doing is just irritating them and not making them take us seriously.”

A Stellantis MOPAR worker said Lehman “brought out all of the points that need to be highlighted. The fact that one person is getting paid more than what UAW members can’t even make in four lifetimes is very unfair. It’s been driving and dividing this country down, and it is time that things change. I feel we need to fight this corporate greed. It’s almost like we are in a civil war between the rich and the poor.”

A Stellantis worker at the Warren Truck plant in suburban Detroit said, “I’m a TPT and all I would get in this contract is \$20 an hour. It’s BS that I’m struggling to raise my three kids on that when the CEOs are making \$13,800 every hour. It’s unequal. We have families to feed and we’re hot as hell in the plant because the companies won’t even put air conditioning in there.”

A worker at the Toledo Jeep Complex, one of only three plants called out on strike by the UAW, said, “I think Will’s talking points are extremely important, and the examples he used were perfect. More importantly, though, he presented it in a manner perfect for a mainstream publication. Speaking of which, *Newsweek*?! How cool is that? This has the potential to reach millions of readers.

“Will did an excellent job of exposing the parallels between our government and the UAW. Both groups are elected to represent their constituents but only have their own interests at heart. As long as the government and the UAW are beholden to corporations, the war on the working class will continue to rage on.”

Another Jeep worker said, “Great article! I’m happy to see sort of this grassroots movement trying to take

hold. It's obvious that Will has socialist views and that makes some people scared because all they know is the Democrats and Republicans. But I've been in the auto industry my whole life and I don't know anyone who is happy with the UAW. We've taken countless concessions and that's how the companies got their record profits.

"I understand the inequality. The government says there's no money to help the elderly or to provide air conditioning in Toledo schools, which had to close because of the heat. But they can spend billions on a proxy war in Ukraine and to put hundreds of tanks on trains to bring them to California to play war games, before shipping them off to Eastern Europe."



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