TOLEDO JEEP WORKER TO WILL LEHMAN: “NONE OF THE LEADERS UP THERE ARE DOING WHAT THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO BE DOING”

A REPORT FROM THE WILL LEHMAN CAMPAIGN

Watch the video: youtu.be/fkQogCewgKg

Will Lehman campaigned at the Stellantis Toledo Assembly Complex on September 2. Since the sellout of the 2023 contract fight by Fain and Boyer, one worker, Antonio Gaston, was crushed to death, and injuries have spiked due to job cuts and the forced overtime the company has imposed with the blessing of the UAW bureaucracy.

Lehman spoke with a veteran worker about conditions and his fight to establish rank-and-file committees to put shop floor workers in control of workplace safety.

“I’m the fifth generation of a UAW worker, and if I knew what I know now, I never would have taken this job. This isn’t a union. I can tell you that. It makes absolutely no sense that we got Detroit people driving to Toledo and people living in Toledo driving to Detroit. Everything is set up for us to go against each other. Nothing is for us to work together.”

Lehman replied, “I say that on my website that it’s a union in name only. What we need is to abolish the layer that keeps blocking us. That’s the reps that are detached from the shop.”

Referring to Gaston and other workers who have lost their lives in the plant, she said, “We’re losing too many men and women in accidents. It’s just not acceptable. Things are not in place where they’re supposed to be. They force us in here. People are tired. People are overworked.”

She referred to the action workers took in March 2020 when Covid-19 was spreading throughout the plant. “I was there when people were throwing up. It was horrible. They were fainting, falling, and they were telling us, ‘Work, work, work.’ Finally, some girls, some young people who are mothers that can’t go home like, they stormed into the UAW office and demanded they shut the plant. ‘We’re not taking this home to our children,’ they said.

“I heard them on the news later [saying they closed the plant] because we love you guys, and we let them go. That is not what happened. It was a walkout and it was the workers who forced that. They just didn’t care.”

She added, “All the leaders up that are up there, wherever they are, none of them are doing what they are supposed to do. There’s too much lying, cheating, and stealing. If it was up to me, the first thing I’d do is just fire everybody. To be honest, I would just get rid of every single soul. I would go on my floor, and I would start talking to my people who work in here who know how to do the jobs. And that’s where I would start with my team.”

Lehman agreed, saying the walkout over Covid was an “action led by the workers. We need organization and leadership. That is what I am saying about establishing what I call rank-and-file committees. It’s about leading from the floor.”

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