SUPPORT THE STRIKE BY THE MASS MOCA WORKERS! FIGHT FOR GOOD WAGES AND THE RIGHT TO ART AND CULTURE FOR ALL!



BY WILL LEHMAN
Mack Trucks worker and rank-and-file candidate for UAW president

This statement was issued by UAW presidential candidate Will Lehman in support of a one-day strike by workers at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA).

As candidate for president of the United Auto Workers, I fully support the fight by workers at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA), who are members of the UAW, for family-sustaining wages and benefits.

In one of the most expensive states in the country, and with inflation raging at 8.5 percent, the museum's insulting offer of $16 an hour would leave workers in abject poverty. The MIT living wage calculator estimates that a worker living near the museum with an unemployed partner and no children needs an hourly wage of $26.66 to survive. A single worker with one child needs an hourly wage of $37.65.

According to the museum's director, MASS MoCA "cannot agree to terms that will diminish our operational sustainability, upend vital partnerships, reduce our public programs or fundamentally change our creative workplace culture." But the museum's Board of Trustees, which is wagging its fingers at workers for striking, is packed with multi-millionaire bankers, venture capitalists and business executives. Several of them could write a personal check that could significantly raise workers' wages.

All over the country and across the world, workers are fighting to protect their living standards against raging price increases, intolerable working conditions and the continuing sacrifice of workers' lives and health in the ongoing pandemic. Tens of thousands of railroad workers, nurses and others have voted to strike or are striking. These struggles must be united into a common fight against the corporate and financial oligarchy that has enriched itself at the expense of the working class.

But the biggest obstacle to mobilizing the immense strength of workers is the bloated trade union apparatus which is opposed to the type of battle necessary to substantially improve our living standards. Workers at MASS MoCA joined the UAW last year to fight, not to be kept waiting around for the outcome of behind-the-scenes maneuvers that exclude them.

I am a Mack Trucks worker from Macungie, Pennsylvania and a member of the UAW. I am running to abolish the UAW bureaucracy and put power into the hands of the rank and file. I am fighting for workers to form rank-and-file committees in every workplace to fight for what workers need and not what the corporate executives, politicians and union bureaucrats say is affordable.

These committees must unite all UAW members—in the factories, at the universities, at the Guggenheim, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Whitney as well as publisher HarperCollins—in a common fight.

A one-day strike and maneuvers behind the scenes by UAW officials are not going to win this fight. Instead, the strike fund, which has been built up by workers' dues, should be used to pay our full wages so we can conduct real fights. The strike fund

belongs to workers, not corrupt UAW officials who want to use it for their lavish dinners and golf trips to Palm Springs.

At the same time, workers confront a political struggle. Massachusetts is dominated by the Democratic Party. Biden and the Democrats speak for the corporate and financial oligarchy just as much as Trump and the Republicans.

Biden's hand-picked Presidential Executive Board has just come down on the side of the railroads and their billionaire owners like Warren Buffett against 115,000 railroad workers who have not had a national contract for nearly three years. Biden is backing the railroads, the most profitable business in America, and let workers swallow below inflation rate raises, unlimited increases in health care expenses and punishing attendance and scheduling policies.

The fight at MASS MoCA is not just for good wages but to defend the right to art and culture for everyone. Support for museums, libraries and orchestras has been cut to the bone or eliminated while art programs in schools have been the first on the chopping block to free up funds for tax handouts to the super rich.

Museums should not depend on foundations and wealthy donors. They should be fully funded by the government and free to the public. The right to the vast cultural heritage of mankind is not a luxury, but a necessity for the development of fully rounded and functional human beings.

Billions are squandered on reckless wars against Russia and China which threaten to provoke World War III and to subsidize the super-rich. This must end. The resources that we workers produce with our labor must be used to raise the material and cultural level of society.

I stand with you in this fight and call on all workers to support your struggle.

JOIN THE FIGHT FOR WORKERS' POWER!

Get involved with the rank-and-file campaign in the UAW elections.

willforuawpresident.org/get-involved