

An open letter to UAW President Bob King.

Dear Bob King,

Rumor has it that in a few days you will issue a statement, probably imploring your membership to return peaceably to the fold. I am writing to implore you to return the union to its membership. Once, American Autoworkers had a say in their own fate. Walter Reuther's founding principle was the establishment of labor and living standards through representation. Reuther's legacy was secured when his generation's standards were the envy of the world.

Today, auto company executives compete to chip away at Reuther's legacy. The spoils are ever growing piles of play money. It is a game to them, and we are the pawns. Like a game of chess where an opponent has cleverly cornered you, every move decreases your position. As long as you continue to play, you continue to loose. Reason dictates that you stop playing.

Put the power back in the hands of the rank and file. As long as you continue to shut us out and call the shots yourself, the Union will continue to decline. Reuther's legacy is rooted in the democratic nature of organized labor. So can yours as well.

The corporate game has split the solidarity that this Union once enjoyed into tiers of grief. Inequality and injustice are now hallmarks of labor and living standards. Two separate tiers of employees doing the same job, is inherently unjust and unequal. Walter Reuther and Martin Luther King would be rolling in their graves if they knew what has happened. The tier II plant status is nothing more than segregation.

As Walter Reuther marched to end segregation, we will march to end the tier II. Desegregation should begin at the Orion Assembly Plant. Follow Ford's lead and "innovate" through "other efficiencies." Wage cuts are not innovation!

This Saturday at noon, Orion Assembly workers will be joined by the vast UAW membership in a symbolic picket of Solidarity House. I implore you to show your good will and leave the gates unlocked, and the grounds open to peaceful protest. We will gather as one united group and scream at the top of our lungs, "DO YOU HEAR US NOW." We will air our grievances on home-made signs, and vent our frustrations to others. This is a healing process, not a tearing apart process for the UAW. We are coming to give you some tough love. You are going to hear things you don't want to hear. My only hope in all this, is that maybe somebody in the top ranks of the UAW will feel embarrassed that it has come to this; that Autoworkers must picket their own union to have their voices heard.

In Solidarity,
Nick Waun