

UAW

- No Tiers
- Reindustrialization
- Black Liberation!

One Out, All Out!

The bosses gutted the auto industry and left the workforce to die. For decades, once major industrial hubs have seen populations plummet and poverty rates soar. Remaining workers live in crumbling cities, working longer shifts in more dangerous conditions, while real wages stagnate and fall. Job loss and deindustrialization destroyed Midwest metropolises like Detroit and Flint and made life a living hell for their majority-black populations.

Now the UAW contract has expired, and a strike is underway to fight for what UAW president Shawn Fain calls “audacious” demands. He says he wants an end to tiers, restored benefits, a huge pay raise and lots of other things workers desperately need...but he’s already backtracking. He lowered the wage demands, and now has shut down only a few plants. This “strategy” is a dive

that weakens the strike, minimizing the impact on the bosses. The question is: What strategy *is necessary to win* and *why* is Fain backing down?

What Fain said he’d fight for sounds good, and if the UAW wins it, it’ll be a victory for workers everywhere. But winning the things Fain promised will require a hard battle that strikes at the core of the American economy while the U.S. ruling class is desperately trying to restore its economic dominance, and the car companies are struggling to compete internationally. The bosses won’t give up easily. In this context, the fight to significantly improve workers’ living standards must be organized for what it is: a fundamental clash of class interests.

Biden and Trump bicker over EVs in the lead-up to the elections, trying to dupe voters in industrial swing

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states. Neither will do anything to make things better for workers. Their job is to make sure the bosses can compete by squeezing workers and sending jobs to the “open shop” South. Fain believes the companies and the workers can mutually prosper. He shares the bosses’ goal of improving U.S. competitiveness, and takes a side with one of their parties—the Democrats—on how to do it. This class collaboration is at the core of Fain’s capitulation. Contrary to his outlook, it is the success of American business on the backs of workers that led to today’s crisis.

The issue isn’t just that politicians are unreliable or corporations greedy, as Fain says, although they are. The problem isn’t just that companies price gouge and refuse workers their “fair share,” although they do. It’s not moral failing or mistaken policy. The bosses aren’t just greedy, malicious and dumb. They’re doing what they’re doing because capitalism requires it as the international situation gets more unstable. The acute pains felt by workers today are the sharpening class antagonisms of capitalism in decline. Fain builds illusions in reviving the “American Dream” and clings to a strategy that got us here in the first place. Instead, we need a leadership to organize struggles knowing the ultimate goal is workers rule and a planned economy—not the preservation of this irrational system.

The only way workers are going to get Fain’s demands in America’s sinking, uncompetitive economy is through a major confrontation with capitalist interests. But Fain’s perspective is to negotiate within the limits set by capitalism. Rather than strike hard at the core of the bosses’ power, he just seeks to re-balance the scales between the workers and the bosses.

To land the type of blow necessary to wrest concessions in this strike requires working-class political unity against the bosses. But the bosses intentionally sow disunity, fueling the racially charged climate that defines U.S. politics. To overcome racial and other divisions

and forge genuine unity within the working class, the workers movement must fight against segregation and all manifestations of racial oppression.

However, Fain has avoided racial topics in the strike mobilization, for fear of being divisive. But the working class is already deeply divided along racial and political lines. By not taking on black oppression, Fain implicitly stands with the status quo, thus weakening both the labor movement and the strike. Either the union will cut through the racial and political divisions in the working class or the bosses will use those divisions to cut through the union.

To win, the UAW must organize the strike to provide a beacon for the whole working class to: *End tiers! Reindustrialize the country! Fight for black liberation!*

Racial Divisions and the Strike

For the bosses, oppressing black people isn’t just about profits—it’s also about power. The ruling class relies on racial divisions to maintain its political stability. This is obvious in the circus around Trump. Working-class misleaders endorse Democrats, which proves a rotten deal. The open bigot makes appeals to white workers fed up with empty promises from liberals who screw them. Then, Biden pretends to defend black people and minorities, with nothing to offer but platitudes. Workers see no alternative that corresponds to their class interests, so they end up divided, supporting one or the other of the bosses’ parties. Neither one advances the interests of workers or black people—they represent the bosses who need both economic and racist oppression. The cycle of “lesser evilism” only deepens the divisions among the oppressed.

While Fain has been reluctant to officially endorse Biden, he is currently sharing the stage with Bernie Sanders. This “progressive” has done nothing for workers all the years he’s been in office—except rope them back into the Democratic Party. Like Trump and Biden, Sanders works for the bosses. The instant the bosses feel that the union has gone too far and is encroaching on their profits (which is necessary to obtain any of its demands), Sanders will try to limit the struggle to what is acceptable to the bosses, no matter how “pro-worker” he may talk. In contrast, workers need to be trained in the methods of class struggle and the principle of class independence.

If there is a major confrontation that costs the auto bosses billions and jeopardizes Biden’s electoral bid, the pressure on the union to submit will be intense, for fear of the racist Trump getting back in office. Liberals will say the most important thing for black people and minorities is to keep Trump out, and that the strike isn’t worth it. They’ll admit that Biden isn’t the best, but argue he’s “less evil.” They’ll blame white working-class Trump supporters for racial oppression. Some workers will be swayed by the liberal argument, while others

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will be repelled by being baited as racist. A leadership like Fain’s will fold in the face of this pressure. His current backpedaling is just a taste.

The *only* way to improve things for workers and black people is to fight on the basis that the struggle for black equality is inseparable from the struggle for workers emancipation. Combating homelessness and unemployment requires: massive public works projects to build integrated housing and infrastructure, massive union hiring drives, organizing the unorganized, training and hiring programs that spread the available work among all and massive reindustrialization under workers’ control. The black community and workers need lots of the same things, and they all go against the capitalists’ interests. This will provide a much stronger basis for working-class unity than economic struggle alone.

Fighting for black people without a class-independent program leaves white workers fearful of liberal crusades that claim to “help” black people at their expense. Fighting for higher wages without fighting to improve the situation of black people leaves black workers at the bottom and ignores the need for real social change. White workers must have the understanding that, in order to advance their own interests, they must destroy the bosses’ most prized “divide-and-rule” scheme: keeping black people segregated at the bottom. Black workers must be won to the understanding that in order to get social, economic and political equality they need to unite with white workers to carry out this struggle.

Rust, Race and Tiers

The material foundation of black oppression in the U.S. remains segregation. The ruling class keeps black people ground down and separated in every aspect of their lives to more easily undermine workers struggle. The entire auto industry—the backbone of American capitalism—is built on racial segregation from the shop floor, to where workers live, to the “open shop” South. The horrors of the crumbling ghettos demoralize black workers and minimize the mixing between black and white.

The tier system is one way the bosses maintain segregation in the workplace. To abolish tiers requires taking on segregation by challenging the bosses’ right to hire and fire as they please. We must fight for union control of hiring and training and for programs that target chronic unemployment in the black ghettos! In

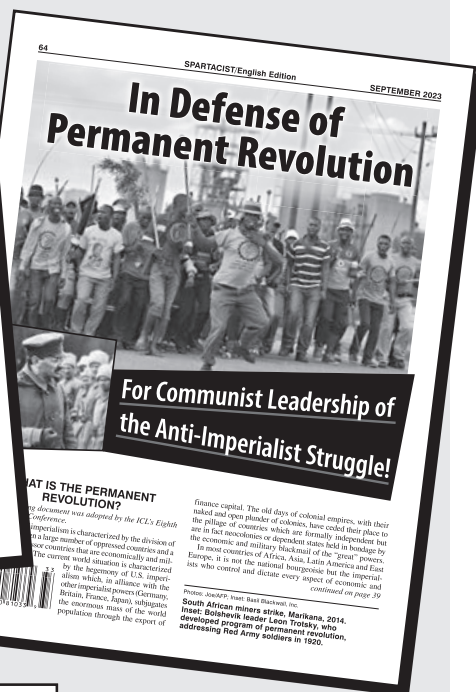
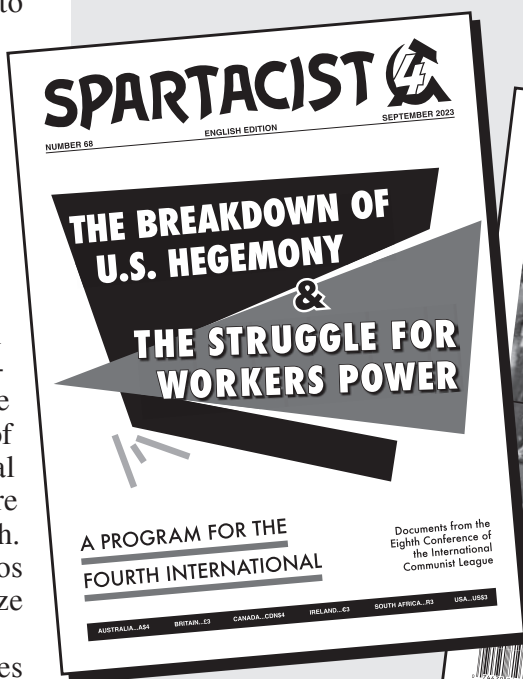
contrast, Fain’s silence on segregation and acceptance of capitalist property undermine the fight against the tier system.

The bosses move production to the South because the workers there aren’t organized, and the reason they aren’t is because labor leaders won’t fight black oppression head on. Anti-union forces in the South make a practice of whipping up reaction against the UAW by portraying it as a force that will leave white workers worse off. The only way for the union to cut through this reaction is to unfurl the banner of integration as part of union organizing battles, while making clear that white workers have every reason to back the union as a fighting force for *all* workers against the bosses. The existential threat to the union in the “open shop” South should be reason enough for any decent trade unionist to fight for black liberation.

The UAW bureaucracy’s record of dismal failures in organizing the unorganized is a direct reflection of its

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losing class-collaborationist program, which has led to endless givebacks in recent years. Who wants to join a union that goes backward? On the other hand, a powerful and victorious strike now would lead hundreds of thousands of unorganized workers at Tesla, the battery plants and foreign automakers to want to join the UAW.

The workers movement must fight for black equality off the job as well. Black people are harassed, tortured and murdered by the cops every day. Liberal moral appeals to the bosses, their politicians and their cops to “care” about black people do nothing. The racist crimes of the cops must be exposed to all. The UAW and other unions must demand that the police archives be opened as a basic measure of self-defense not only for black people but also workers. These very same cops will be the companies’ strikebreaking thugs if the battle heats up. Fain does not see the capitalist courts and cops as a tool of class domination, and he is not preparing the strike with this understanding.

The UAW taking up the cause of the besieged black population would be a powerful lever to improve the situation for all working people. A union fight to force the auto bosses to fund quality, low-cost integrated neighborhoods could get decent housing for everyone from the homeless to UAW members. Such a struggle would not end black oppression, but it would begin to break down the walls of residential segregation. Workers should also seize the vast amounts of empty luxury real estate and office space for housing. These things all require major inroads against segregation and capitalist profits.

The standard of living in this country cannot be significantly improved through a militant negotiation with the bosses—which is Fain’s strategy. The bosses have

hollowed out manufacturing and built an economy that is a debt-riddled house of cards. Back when they were economically strong, the bosses sought even higher profits abroad, and their offshoring devastated communities. This led them to slash social services, health care and education, which they saw as superfluous. The bosses poisoned Flint and destroyed Detroit when they no longer needed those workers.

Workers must fight to reindustrialize the economy in order to have good jobs with good pay instead of fighting over crumbs. To expand industry to its benefit, the working class must fight as one with the aim of taking over industry itself. The fights for industrialization and against racial oppression are inseparably bound up in the fabric of American capitalism today. The working class must confront them as intertwined in order to advance its interests.

Black oppression has crippled the workers movement since the beginning—“Labour cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded” (Karl Marx). If it is to find a way forward, labor must put the fight for black freedom at the center of its struggles, which requires a leap in consciousness. That means there must be a leadership to bring this about—a revolutionary leadership. In order to be able to unite the class and win the UAW strike, we put forward the following program for auto and all other workers to fight for:

- **One Out, All Out!**
- **No Tiers!**
- **Organize the South!**
- **Reindustrialization!**
- **Black Liberation!**

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