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Dear Mr. Kalanick, dear Mr. Weaver, dear Ms. Steger, dear Dr. Kapor Klein, dear Mr. Kapor:

We were saddened to read in *BuzzFeed*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *Quartz* last month about the deceptive tactics Uber is using to try to dissuade its Seattle drivers from unionizing. On reflection, however, these tactics seem — sadly — consistent with other reports on Uber's corporate culture.

From outside, one possible view of the situation is that Uber leadership lacks a coherent vision for Uber's role in developing a future in which technology contributes to the economic and social well-being of all. While Uber's technology is innovative, bad working conditions are not innovative. We believe that Uber leadership, investors, and employees all want to make the world a better place, but this cannot be done with technology alone. Unions and policy makers are grappling with the new possibilities for the organization of work afforded by information technology. Similarly, Uber leadership and investors must engage earnestly with questions of working conditions and worker representation — for employees *and* drivers — if their claims about wanting to make the world a better place are to be taken seriously. While Silicon Valley is home to expert technologists, expertise in good working conditions is located, for the most part, elsewhere — among other places, in unions.

We envision a future in which workers and worker organizations, customers and other users, platform operators and other entrepreneurs, researchers and policy makers, and other experts and stakeholders work together to ensure that technological innovations benefit everyone in society — the poor as well as the rich, the self-employed as well as employees, and the historically underserved as well the well-connected. In Germany, unions are working with platforms — whose businesses rely on self-employed workers — to realize this vision. We have hosted several day-long workshops with platform

management and workers. In these workshops, workers and management have discussed topics such as pay, work processes, work evaluation and worker qualification, platform design, and worker representation — honestly, respectfully, and productively. The most common complaint from participants has been, “We wish we had had more time.” And we are supporting the efforts of German platform operators to establish fair, sustainable standards for their business models, in particular in our advisory role in the evolution and implementation of the “Crowdsourcing Code of Conduct.”

These developments show that a cooperative relationship between platforms and unions is possible. This cooperation is made possible by a shared goal: developing innovative, financially successful businesses with good working conditions. This shared goal has long animated the relationship between workers, unions, and corporate management in Germany, and played a major role in Germany’s ability to weather comparatively well, and recover comparatively quickly from, the 2008 financial crisis.

We live in a time in which the risk grows ever clearer that new technologies will lead not mainly to more economic opportunity and more robust democracies but instead mainly to low-wage, dead-end jobs with little worker voice; to greater political polarization; and, ultimately, to greater concentration of wealth and power and the erosion of democracy. In this context, fact-based, good faith dialogue between corporate management and workers and their representatives — a tradition referred to in Europe as “social dialogue” — is more crucial than ever. We expect that our trade union colleagues at the Teamsters in Seattle do not at all intend to reduce drivers’ freedom or flexibility, as Uber’s in-app warning and podcast on collective bargaining claim. We expect rather that they seek to create a forum through which drivers can express their needs and desires for a sustainable, mutually beneficial working relationship — a true partnership — with Uber management. From a European perspective, Uber management’s aggressive response to organizing activities in Seattle is perplexing. Collective bargaining and social dialogue generally are time-tested mechanisms for ensuring the long-term success of all stakeholders in an enterprise — workers, managers, *and* investors.

We therefore call on Uber management to cease its deceptive responses to driver organizing efforts and, when the time comes, to negotiate with drivers and their representatives in good faith. The German experience suggests that it is in investors’ financial interests to encourage management to take these steps. A collective agreement that meets the needs of Uber management *and* drivers for a just and sustainable partnership will not only be good for drivers, customers, management, and investors; it will be a worldwide first — and a social achievement worthy of the long and impressive tradition of innovation for which American industry is rightfully famous. The future of the American economy and America’s famous democratic traditions may, in the long run, depend on just such a partnership.

We look forward to good news from America.

Best regards,



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