

Message to fighting Manroland workers

“Workers must unite internationally”

Gustav Kemper
10 December 2011

Dear Colleagues,

I send my solidarity greetings to your meeting tonight where you are discussing how to extend the struggle to protect your jobs at Manroland.

As an employee of Goss International, which also manufactures printing machines, I am hit by the very same crisis. In January 2011 half the workforce was sacked at our factory in Montataire, near Paris, and hundreds have lost their jobs in Durham, [New Hampshire], near Boston (US), while production is being stepped up at a manufacturing facility in Shanghai.

As you know, mass layoffs have also taken place at KBA and Heidelberg.

Unlike years ago when typewriters were replaced by computers, lead set printing by photocomposition, book print by offset printing, it is not just a question today of replacing one technology with another. At that time conditions of economic growth made it possible to find alternative work in other areas. In today's crisis this is no longer the case.

What the financial pundits describe as a “healthy” war of competition has turned into a war of extermination. The whole policy of social partnership, i.e., participation on company boards by the trade unions, etc., is showing its true face today: social partnership and participation were the way in which shareholders were able to secure relative calm on the workplace floor in order to maximize their profits. Far from being any sort of real participation in the factory management it was in fact a method to control and contain the workforce, which was written into law in

Germany.

The “right to property,” claimed by the employers and the owners of capital, is the right to destroy jobs. It is incompatible with the right of workers to a job with good pay.

The struggle to defend our jobs and livelihoods can therefore only be successful if we understand that the current conflict is rooted in a crisis of the capitalist system, a system that has already resulted in two world wars and is rushing into new wars.

Only the working class is able to unite internationally in solidarity and create a future society based on the satisfaction of social needs rather than naked profit. We must unite on the basis of this perspective, and aim to take control over the major companies and banks.

To this end it is necessary to build new factory committees, which function independently of the institutions of social partnership and participation, and strive to establish workers' government at an international level.

There is much more to be said which I cannot address in these greetings. In any event, I am ready to support you and will seek to mobilise my fellow workers on your behalf.

In solidarity,
Gustav Kemper



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