

# Network of Action Committees for Safe Education in Germany adopts resolution in defence of David O'Sullivan

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30 May 2021

The Network of Action Committees for Safe Education met last week against the backdrop of a nationwide campaign in Germany to reopen the economy, which threatens the lives and health of countless students and their families.

With their announcements to return to face-to-face teaching and regular classes at schools as soon as possible, the federal and state education ministers are threatening to sabotage the temporary drop in the number of coronavirus cases in Germany.

The infection incidence rate is still at a much higher level than at the peak of the first wave. Educators, teachers, and parents are predominantly unvaccinated, while there is virtually no vaccine available for children and adolescents.

Anyone who stands up against this policy of deliberate contagion faces consequences ranging up to dismissal. This is illustrated by the fate of London bus driver David O'Sullivan, a founder of the London Bus Rank-and-File Committee. He was sacked by his employer Metroline, with the help of the Unite union, after he informed and warned his colleagues about the risk of infection in the Cricklewood depot.

In David O'Sullivan's defence, the Network of Action Committees for Safe Education unanimously passed the following resolution, calling for his immediate reinstatement:

The Network of Action Committees for Safe Education strongly condemns the sacking of London bus driver David O'Sullivan by Metroline with the assistance of the Unite union. David O'Sullivan was sacked for courageously fighting to mobilise his colleagues against the risk of infection on the buses. By the time the London Bus Rank-and-File Committee called a walkout at Cricklewood in January, London's 26,000 bus drivers had already suffered 45 dead drivers and hundreds of infected TFL workers.

The struggle for safe education is inextricably linked to the struggles of bus and train drivers. Like the TUC in Britain, unions like the GEW in Germany have done everything they can to block resistance to the profit-

driven herd immunity policy. We, therefore, stand in solidarity with the brave bus drivers in London and demand that David O' Sullivan be reinstated immediately and receive full compensation. We will do all we can to support the campaign in his defence and publicise it among teachers, students, and parents. Send us messages of solidarity and join in building the action committees for safe jobs and education.

The adoption of the resolution was preceded by a lively discussion centred on the perspective of an independent movement of the international working class against the global pandemic and its profiteers.

In her introductory speech, Katja Selin of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) emphasised that the number of new infections had decreased mainly due to closed schools and vaccinations. However, she said, this development was being jeopardised by the reopening orgy being pushed by all the establishment parties. For example, the federal state of Thuringia, which is governed by the Left Party, has presented a draft for an amended pandemic regulation stipulating that restaurants, pubs and bars may also open their indoor rooms if the incidence rate is below 50 per 100,000. In addition, hotels, saunas, gyms, and swimming pools are to be allowed to resume operations. Several states want to fully reopen their schools before the summer holidays.

Selin said, "As has been the case throughout the pandemic, the current reopening policy of the ruling class aims to increase the profits of big business at the expense of the health and lives of tens of thousands of families. The 15 months of the pandemic so far have proved one thing: What has meant death and misery for workers and their families has provided a bonanza for a small elite at the top of society. The billionaires have increased their fortunes by more than 60 percent worldwide. For them, the pandemic is good business. As the *World Socialist Web Site* has aptly explained, the DAX and Wall Street are getting fat on death."

Next to speak was Thomas Scripps, assistant national

secretary of the Socialist Equality Party in Britain and a writer for the *World Socialist Web Site*. He said that the European working class is “at a decisive point in the pandemic.

“While only 15 percent of Europeans are fully vaccinated, European governments are cancelling the most basic hygiene measures. This is having disastrous consequences. In the UK, the number of cases linked to the so-called ‘Indian’ variant rose by 160 percent in one week and is now arguably the dominant strain of the virus in this country.”

He added, “The mutation of a virus is indeed a natural, biological process. But it is the political decisions of the British ruling class and other governments around the world that have enabled the virus to evolve; that have allowed it to spread across the planet; and that are now allowing it to spread unhindered within certain social groups at a great rate.”

The two speakers concluded that only intervention by the international working class based on a socialist programme would be able to put an end to the pandemic. To implement a rational and internationally coordinated health policy, a political struggle against the ruling class and capitalism was necessary in every country.

Many other participants spoke about the social devastation of the government’s pandemic policy, the importance of the resolution and the need for action united on a class basis.

Nadine from Lower Saxony reported on the enormous pressure being put on parents to send students back to schools. Parents who tried to protect their children were “prevented from doing so by all possible means.” Despite citing “numbers, data, studies and legal paragraphs,” she said she had only managed to get her vulnerable children out of attending classes in person with the greatest of efforts. Despite this, her son has now received a citation because of “absences.” Since December, Nadine says, she has had to carry out her children’s lessons herself, as the school’s technical equipment was not adequate for online instruction.

Beatrix, who also lives in Lower Saxony, shared this experience and assured the previous speaker that she was not alone in her situation. The future of countless children, she noted, was being destroyed by the consequences of the ruling class’ coronavirus policy. According to a British study, about 7 percent of all underage infected children had developed so-called “Long COVID” symptoms. In Germany, a total of 1,522 children and young people under the age of 20 had to be hospitalised because of Long COVID by May 16, 2021, and five percent had to receive intensive medical treatment.

During the discussion, several young people stressed the importance of action committees at schools. Students, they reported, were being blackmailed into coming to school by maintaining pressure to perform. For example, high school graduates received little support outside of face-to-face classes to prepare for their final exams.

Other participants stressed that the crisis was far from over. This was shown by the events in Britain, where the B.1.617

variant is spreading rapidly despite a high vaccination rate. The current elimination of protective measures would also lead to the more infectious virus strains spreading further on a global scale.

In his concluding speech, SGP member K. Nesan referred to the resolution again and explained the role of action committees in the international class struggle. “It is a strategic issue for the international working class to campaign for the unconditional rehiring of O’Sullivan.” Nesan, who is also a founding member of the Network of Action Committees for Safe Workplaces, noted that the pandemic was a global problem to which there could be no individual response.

“The importance of the committees is to offer a perspective to all workers who feel isolated. The problems reported by the previous speakers reflect the problems of millions of people worldwide. The majority of workers are against the policies of their governments—but the trade unions are the main support of every government.” He said it was therefore crucial to expose the reactionary role of the trade unions, which had been shown in Germany, particularly in the struggle of WISAG workers at Frankfurt Airport against dismissals and wage theft.

“These are developments that are taking place worldwide. In Sri Lanka, plantation workers have formed several action committees and pushed through their demands. In the US, in the last few weeks, rank-and-file committees of Volvo workers have written an open letter to the United Auto Workers union saying they are no longer willing to accept the union’s policies.”

Nesan explained that the trade unions also played a central and despicable role in the threat of war. “The strategy of the bourgeoisie is to wage war against its competitors. The USA is preparing a war against China and Russia. In Germany, all the establishment parties are planning how to continue and intensify the war course after the elections. As in past and future class struggles, the trade unions have the task of sabotaging the growing resistance of the working class. The action committees serve to give workers their own voice to defend their interests. Armed with a socialist perspective, workers and youth must begin to take action themselves.”

**Visit here to find out more and join the campaign for David O’Sullivan’s reinstatement. You can donate to O’Sullivan’s legal defence here.**



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