

German workers' action committees: Support striking Volvo workers in Virginia!

Network of Action Committees for Safe Workplaces in Germany
11 June 2021

Since Monday, some 3000 Volvo Trucks workers in Virginia have been on strike after rejecting for the second time a collective bargaining agreement agreed to by the UAW. We are publishing here a solidarity statement from the Network of Action Committees for Safe Workplaces in Germany.

Dear colleagues from Volvo Trucks in Dublin, Virginia,

We, the workers in the Network of Action Committees for Safe Workplaces in Germany, welcome your industrial action and the resumption of the strike at the New River Valley Volvo plant.

Your struggle is of great international significance. Your determination to fight and your resistance to the trade union bureaucrats is sending a signal around the globe that workers are taking a new road. Workers everywhere face similar problems.

We have already started to publicise your struggle among workers in Germany and we are mobilising support for your strike.

Here, too, the trade unions play a despicable role. They work hand in hand with the company management. Their top representatives sit on the supervisory boards, pocket millions in salaries and call themselves “co-managers.” In the past year and a half of the coronavirus pandemic, union officials and their works council representatives have kept production going despite the risk of infection and abysmal health and safety measures. The infection figures in the factories were kept strictly secret, even by the works council representatives.

Now, the pandemic is being used as a pretext to push through mass layoffs and massive social cuts in the auto and supplier industries and many other industries and offices. Often, the plans for cuts are drawn up

directly by the auto union in Germany, IG Metall, and the other trade unions, and pushed through against the resistance of the workers.

We founded our action committee at the beginning of the year to organise ourselves independently and to make contact with colleagues in other countries. To the nationalist politics of the trade unions—which always start from the defence of national production locations and play workers off against each other and provoke them—we counterpose international solidarity and worldwide cooperation. For us, what the early socialists in Germany always said applies: Workers have no fatherland and can only defend their rights in a common international struggle.

Members of our committee include colleagues from Ford Cologne and Thyssenkrupp and other steel plants where layoffs are taking place worldwide. We learned about your courageous struggle through the *World Socialist Web Site*, and we are very interested in working with you in building the International Workers' Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC). This is an important step to unite and coordinate workers' struggles worldwide.

Here in Germany, not a day goes by without announcements of layoffs and austerity programmes. In the auto industry alone, at least 180,000 workers are expected to lose their jobs in the near future.

The German car manufacturers Volkswagen, Daimler and BMW are increasing their profits despite falling sales and handing over billions to shareholders and executives. These exorbitant profits were made possible by mass layoffs and austerity programmes negotiated by union bureaucrats behind the backs of the workers, as at Volvo.

Martin Baum, a board member of the German truck manufacturer Daimler Truck, praised IG Metall and the

works council representatives, saying it was only the close collaboration with them had made it possible to cut 10,000 jobs at the company.

One of the world's largest automotive suppliers, Continental, has announced it will eliminate 30,000 jobs internationally, 13,000 of them here in Germany. The union is strictly refusing to organise a common struggle of all Continental workers, instead playing the workforces at different plants off against each other and pushing through the closure of one site after another.

Our Network of Action Committees for Safe Workplaces has called on Continental workers to resist IG Metall's blackmail, and we have reported on your struggle against the UAW bureaucracy.

More and more, a rebellion is also developing here against the corrupt trade unions, which are completely on the side of the corporations. In the spring, two dozen WISAG ground workers went on hunger strike at Frankfurt Airport because the service workers union Verdi refused to support their struggle to defend their jobs. In March, WISAG workers laid a funeral wreath in front of Verdi headquarters in Frankfurt, symbolising that the union was dead as far as the working class was concerned.

Dear colleagues at Volvo Truck, we assure you of our solidarity. You are not alone! Your courageous struggle is part of a growing international movement of the working class. Together we have the strength to beat back the corporate attacks and defend our rights. Long live international workers solidarity!



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