

Defend all jobs at all locations!

Stop the intra-company bidding war at Ford! No concessions—neither in Saarlouis nor in Valencia

Ford Workers Rank-and-File Committee
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The following statement, originally published in German, was issued by a rank-and-file committee of Ford workers in Europe which is organizing a struggle against concessions.

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To Ford workers in Saarlouis, Germany; Valencia, Spain; and all other locations:

We are a group of Ford workers who are no longer prepared to accept the systematic sellout of our jobs and the constant deterioration of our wages and working conditions without a fight.

On Thursday, plant management in Saarlouis and Valencia handed over their plans for cuts to Ford of Europe headquarters in Cologne. They have been working out these cuts with the union-dominated works councils over the previous weeks. All this has happened behind our backs. We have not been consulted, and we firmly reject these concessions.

Concessions do not save jobs! That is the bitter experience of the recent years. All our concessions in the past and all the concessions already made at all Ford locations count for nothing today. The trade unions and works councils claim the opposite. But it is their cowardly subordination to the profit interests of management that has created the misery we find ourselves in today.

On principle, we reject the blackmail and brutal competition being instigated between us and workers at other plants. Playing one off against the other leads to disaster, because it would not be long before the so-called winner would then have to compete against lower wages in Romania or Turkey. There is no end to

this downward spiral.

It must end! We are workers, not slaves. We have rights!

We demand an immediate end to the secret negotiations by works councils and management at all worksites and call for the immediate publication of the offers made and all agreements concluded.

We strongly reject claims by the works councils that there is no alternative to the blackmail of the intra-company bidding war and to wage and social cuts. In reality, all the rights and social achievements won by workers—be it the eight-hour day, the regulated wage system, paid holidays, sick pay, safety at work and much more—were fought for in the common struggle of all workers against the capitalists. The terms “workers’ solidarity” and “international cooperation” are deeply embedded in workers’ collective consciousness because of fierce and often bloody class battles.

But the lackeys of the corporate masters in the union halls and works council offices only recognise the arguments of the managers and act like social demolition contractors. They play the different factories off against each other and suppress any common struggle to defend jobs, wages, and social standards in principle.

The two works council chairmen—Markus Thal (Saarlouis) and José Luís Parra (Valencia)—know each other very well through the joint European Ford works council, which has so far been led by the German General Works Council Chairman Martin Hennig. They belong to Germany’s IG Metall union and Spain’s social democratic majority union UGT (the General

Union of Workers) respectively, both of which are members of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). But they are not using these international links to unite workers but to pit them against each other and divide them in the interests of the corporation.

That is why it is important that we organise ourselves in independent rank-and-file committees and prepare joint, coordinated struggle actions at all plants.

We are not alone. Everywhere, resistance is growing against increasingly brutal forms of exploitation, mass layoffs, plant closures and social attacks. Our struggle at Ford is part of the worldwide crisis of the capitalist system. The coronavirus pandemic has clearly accelerated and intensified this crisis.

The same inhumane approach of the intra-company bidding war at Ford also characterises the criminal policy of deliberate mass infection in all workplaces. Without regard for the growing risk of infection, production is being maintained—even in those workplaces and departments where it is impossible to maintain safety measures and hygiene standards. Schools and kindergartens are kept open so that parents can work, without the slightest consideration for the disastrous consequences.

The defence of jobs therefore goes hand in hand with the fight against mass infection. We demand accurate information about sick leave and infection levels in every workplace and department.

The attacks on jobs, wages, working conditions and health are the result of an unrestrained pursuit of profit. The top managers and shareholders at Ford—the second largest carmaker in the US—are part of a financial aristocracy that is completely out of control and bases all its decisions on personal enrichment. Last summer, the Ford group reported a surprising profit explosion and announced a profit of between \$9-10 billion for 2021. That was about \$3.5 billion more than had been forecast at the beginning of the year.

Since then, the orgy of enrichment has increased. A few days ago, the British aid and development organisation Oxfam published a report saying: “A new billionaire has been created every 26 hours since the pandemic began. The world’s 10 richest men have doubled their fortunes, while over 160 million people are projected to have been pushed into poverty.”

All talk by the works council representatives and trade union officials that there is no money and therefore drastic savings measures must be accepted is just lies and deceit.

More and more workers in many countries are breaking through the grip of union control and organising independently. In the US, there was a significant growth of strikes and other struggles last year. At truck and bus manufacturer Volvo Trucks, auto parts supplier Dana Inc. and agricultural machinery maker John Deere, tens of thousands of workers voted down concessions contracts agreed to by the United Auto Workers union and voted to strike. Metalworkers went on strike in South Africa, health care workers in Sri Lanka, and in Turkey, workers occupied a factory of auto parts supplier Mitsuba and organised spontaneous strikes in mines and engineering plants.

Time is short. It is important to take action now!

The decision on which Ford plant will produce a new electric vehicle is to be made in the summer. Before then, the initiative must be taken out of the hands of the works councils and trade unions.

To resist the blackmail of management and the works councils, a new political orientation is necessary, which starts from the common interests of all workers at all locations and opposes the logic of the capitalist profit system.

We call on Ford workers at all locations to support and spread this call.

We demand:

- Stop the intra-company bidding war!
- No concessions—neither in Saarlouis nor in Valencia.
- Defend all jobs at all locations!

Get in touch with us. Send a WhatsApp message to the following number: +491633378340

Register here to participate anonymously in our meeting next Saturday, February 5, at 6:00 p.m. Central European Time. And sign up to join us in building rank-and-file committees at all workplaces and companies.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)