

German politicians and media attack students opposing herd immunity COVID policies

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A petition calling the German government's current herd immunity COVID plan "irresponsible and lacking solidarity" has received more than 126,000 signatures in less than a week. Under the slogan #WirWerdenLaut (#We'reGettingLoud), hundreds of thousands of students, teachers and parents—supported by scientists, journalists and over 100 student representatives—are demanding an immediate end to the "profits before lives" policy that has already cost millions of lives and led to the emergence of new and more dangerous coronavirus strains.

"As a teacher, I am on the front line every day," writes Martina N. from Fulda in support of her signature. "The situation in schools has remained unchanged for two years, this is one of the biggest sins against the young generation." Sandra K. from Freiburg explains, "I understand the fear and worries of pupils. There is enough money for so many things. However, schools, our children and teachers are being let down. It is unbelievable."

Sandrine H. writes, "It was deliberately decided to infect families, teachers, educators and caregivers. We send our children to kindergartens and schools and count the days until infection." Stefanie S. adds, "I signed to protect my child (at-risk patient) from arbitrary infection."

Satirist Jan Böhmermann also supported the petition, stating, "Big business demands that parents put their children in schools and kindergartens."

Politicians from all parties and media representatives, on the other hand, have launched a foul campaign against the petition and its initiators, because they fear the growing opposition to their policy of deliberate mass infection like the devil fears holy water. *Die Welt* editor-in-chief Ulf Poschardt, who is notorious for his reactionary fits of rage, compared the critical students

to "climate apocalypics." Poschardt denigrated the signatories of the petition as "young fear-mongers and state nerds ... acting out their passive-aggression against the freedom-loving majority of young people."

The president of the Standing Conference of the State Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK), Karin Prien (Christian Democratic Union, CDU), initially feigned willingness to talk in view of the response to the petition on Twitter, but at the same time supported a comment that accused the signatories of making common cause with scientists who advocate a "no-covid" strategy—as if an orientation towards science were something objectionable.

In an interview with private broadcaster RTL, Prien even tried to turn the demands of the petition on their head and misuse the young people to support a call to infect even vulnerable groups: "That children and young people are now becoming louder," after politicians had taken notice of "the interests of adults, and here especially of vulnerable groups," she could "understand very well." Prien and the other education ministers have played a central role in sacrificing the health of children and vulnerable groups alike to corporate profit.

Particularly foul is a commentary by Katharina Riehl that appeared in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* last Friday. Riehl attacks all those pupils, parents and teachers who criticise "the supposedly politically intended infection of children." The author claims that it was "a fable" that children are forced to go to school "despite daily new record incidences, so that mummy and daddy can go to work and the assembly lines and cash registers in Germany don't stand still."

Those who declared that children were being "fed to the lions of evil capitalism" and criticised that schools were being misused as "care centres for the offspring of

its workforce” are spreading a “fairy tale” from the “left-liberal milieu,” she declared. Describing enforced in-person classes in the midst of the pandemic as the “vicarious actions of a capitalist society” and invoking a “politically imposed herd immunity strategy for the benefit of the economy” was “polemical nonsense.”

Dieter Janecek, who as a member of the Bundestag (federal parliament) and economic policy spokesperson for the Greens has always aggressively advocated the removal of important protective measures in schools, also denied on Twitter that there was a “planned infection” of society. Janecek equated the “thesis that schools were being kept open because of the economy” with the right-wing extremist “conspiracy theories” of QAnon types.

But Federal Health Minister Karl Lauterbach (Social Democratic Party, SPD) has repeatedly made it clear that the infection of society with Omicron is based on a precisely worked out plan. At a press conference at the end of January, Lauterbach explained that “the plan” was that “the older population groups” should not be “disproportionately” affected by Covid-19: “It’s going about as we imagined.” He said a conscious decision had been made not to “reduce contacts too much now.”

A KMK paper headlined “Ensuring attendance at schools despite Omicron” states quite bluntly that “maintaining school operations” was “relevant to the system and, moreover, a basis for ensuring the ability to work.”

Defaming critical students, parents and teachers who oppose this herd immunity policy as scaremongers and even conspiracy theorists is the latest chapter in a media campaign that attempts to silence justified criticism of the “profits before lives” strategy. It must be rejected in the strongest possible terms and the courageous young people defended.

To counter the phalanx of establishment political parties and the media, students must unite with workers internationally and develop a global movement to eliminate the virus.

In its recent statement, the IYSSE calls for the building of Rank-and-File Committees for Safe Education to take the fight into their own hands and enforce the necessary safeguards. The only way to stop the policy of deliberate mass infection is to fight internationally for “Zero Covid.” This requires a socialist programme that places the lives and health of

the people before the financial interests of corporations.

It is important that the #WirWerdenLaut petition is used as a starting point to organise further protests and strikes. The youth organisation “Fridays for Future Frankfurt am Main” yesterday called on all students and supporters “to join the school strike on 11.02. at 14:00 at the Alte Oper.”

“For two years of the pandemic, schools have been neglected while Lufthansa is saved with billions of euros and everything is done to keep the economy going,” the organisation wrote on Twitter. “In schools, however, it is apparently not even possible to purchase air filters across the board. People are getting infected every day in our classrooms and in our environment—how long are we going to put up with this? Is education even possible under the constant fear of infection? We say enough is enough!”



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