

Ford Saarlouis: Instead of a bidding war and blackmail—fight to defend all jobs at all plants!

Ford Workers Rank-and-File Action Committee (Germany)
6 April 2022

Dear colleagues,

We call on you to build the struggle against the bidding war between the Ford plants in Saarlouis and Valencia and the systematic blackmail by management and the works council:

- Register with the action committee! (See below.)
- Spread this call via Facebook, WhatsApp etc., and as a flyer!
- Support united action with the colleagues in Valencia and at all other locations!

Every day brings new bad news. Since the beginning of the Ukraine war and the insane economic sanctions being imposed by the German government, energy and food prices are skyrocketing. Constant short-time working has already led to heavy financial losses. How are we supposed to pay for fuel, rent, loans and living expenses in the future?

Works council leader Markus Thal's answer is—through cuts in wages and social benefits and unpaid overtime. According to his own statements, he travels to Ford HQ in Cologne twice a week with his closest confidants to negotiate exactly this with the European management. In these talks, he repeatedly signals to management that he is prepared to undercut any downgrading offers from his union colleagues in Valencia as part of the bidding war between the two plants.

For Thal, the downward spiral has no limit. It is not his skin he might lose. He is highly remunerated as head of the works council and collects fat supervisory board bonuses on top of that.

At the last factory meeting, Thal repeatedly claimed there was no alternative to these negotiations on wage and social cuts.

But this is only because these works council bureaucrats have never done anything else, and cannot imagine anything else, than repeating what the bosses and their managers want and working out the savings and cuts on the supervisory board, economic committee and works council. Invariably, they push them through with the slogan “there is no alternative” against any resistance from the workers.

Because Thal and his confidants know very well how hated this cowardly submission to the dictates of management is, they try desperately to keep all details of the negotiations secret.

Works council election: The result stinks!

Since the works council election, Thal has been droning on that the result of the vote was a “clear vote of confidence” for him personally and the IG Metall union list. This is sheer mockery! Anyone who followed the election knows that the result stinks.

Before and during the vote, IG Metall built up enormous pressure in the factory to get the result it wanted.

At the factory meeting at the beginning of election week, Thal had said he wanted to see a 100 percent turnout. Thereupon his helpers pulled out all the stops to make this election result possible for their leader, which is reminiscent of election results under authoritarian and dictatorial regimes.

IG Metall representatives then took postal ballot papers to colleagues' homes during election week and

then waited until they were filled in to take them back to the factory. And as we all know, during election week, works council reps walked the production lines, personally approaching workers to ask them to vote for the IG Metall list.

In any case, the election and its result were not a vote of confidence in Thal & Co. but part of the works council conspiracy against us. Above all, the election made it clear once again that it is not possible to represent our rights and interests through the works council. This is not possible with the works council but only against it.

That is why it is so important to actively expand and build up the action committee.

Instead of wage and social cuts, international cooperation to defend all jobs

The Action Committee takes the exact opposite stand to the works council and IG Metall.

In a few weeks it will be May Day, the traditional day of struggle of the international working class. We recall that all the rights and achievements of the workers' movement—from the eight-hour day, regulated wages, holidays, and social standards to sick pay—were fought for in joint international struggles by workers against the capitalists and their works council lackeys.

We counterpose the programme of international workers' solidarity to the profits-above-all-else programme of the bosses and the unrestrained enrichment of those at the top of the corporation.

We refuse to allow a handful of super-rich managers and shareholders at the top of the corporation in the US to decide the future and welfare of our families.

As an independent Action Committee, we have no confidence in the works council and demand that the wording of the cutback plan submitted to Ford's European headquarters in Cologne at the end of January be made public. Only then can every worker see what conspiracy is taking place and act against it.

Against the works council conspiracy and secret negotiations, we counterpose workers' democracy and the disclosure of all information.

This includes information from a translated article on

the Spanish website *Economía Digital*, which is circulating in the factory. It describes a scenario in which half the workforce at the Spanish plant in Almussafes (Valencia) will lose their jobs, and our plant in Saarlouis apparently has no future.

The website reports that the plant in Almussafes will build the E-Mustang from 2026. However, about 40 percent of the current production (Mondeo, S-Max, Galaxy and Transit Connect) will be eliminated by the end of 2023, beginning 2024. According to the article, 3,000 jobs, almost half the workforce, will be in jeopardy. The production of the E-Mustang, in addition to the production of the Kuga, which will still be built until 2029, will not make up for these job losses. The production of electric vehicles requires fewer workers.

Here, too, we are being taken for fools. The IG Metall shop stewards in Saarlouis are trying to reassure us and claim that the article is “most likely fake news.” We do not share this view. Thal and Co. know more than they are saying! We will find out the facts with the help of our contacts in the Ford plant in Valencia and make them known. A colleague from Valencia has told us that this news was neither confirmed by management there nor by the trade unions.

It is high time to take action! We must stop the bidding war! To do this, join the Ford Action Committee and participate in its construction to prepare the struggle to defend all jobs.

The company acts internationally and plays off the individual plants against each other. We Ford workers must also act internationally. The plants in Saarlouis and Almussafes can only be saved if we unite with our colleagues in Valencia, Cologne and all our other European as well as the American colleagues.

Get active and contact us! Send a Whatsapp message to the following number: +491633378340



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact