

Stop the closure of the Ford Saarlouis plant! Stop the works council manoeuvres! No step- by-step job reductions! For the international unity of all Ford workers in defence of all jobs!

Ford Action Committee
29 June 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The decision to close down the Ford plant here in Saarlouis by 2025 at the latest and destroy the livelihood of our families heralds a new stage in our struggle. Now it is time to take stock and draw the necessary conclusions.

What we have been warning about for half a year has come to pass. A few days after the cutback plans were submitted at the end of January to Ford's European headquarters in Cologne, we wrote:

Concessions do not save jobs! All our concessions in the past and all the concessions already made at all Ford locations count for nothing 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.

We demanded an immediate end to the secret negotiations between the works councils and management at all sites.

Many colleagues we speak to also think there should never have been any participation in the intra-company bidding competition. But both our works council in Saarlouis under Markus Thal and the Spanish works council under José Luis Parra insisted on it.

Both were solidly convinced that they could demand greater sacrifices from "their" workforce and thus win the bid. To this day, Thal and Co. have kept quiet about what cuts they have offered. The confidentiality agreement they signed was mainly to avoid having to tell us workers

anything, because most of us would certainly not have agreed.

Thal and his works council representatives constantly claim they are fighting. Even in its latest leaflet, the works council declares: "It is now a matter of fighting with all our might to preserve our site and for as many jobs as possible." But to fight, "we need robust answers from Ford." In other words, if Ford does not tell us what to expect, we cannot fight.

For the works council, it is never the right time to fight! The only thing the works council representatives understand by this is grovelling before the company and begging for handouts. We are supposed to keep quiet in order not to endanger this "fight" on our knees.

The only aim of the IG Metall union and the works council is to prevent us waging a real struggle. The protest rally last week was deliberately held far away from the company premises--for fear that angry Ford workers might take the initiative, organise a spontaneous occupation of the company gates and launch a strike.

One worker summed up the widespread sentiment: "They should have blocked the gatehouse and all the gates immediately and not let anyone in or out." Another said, "Not a single vehicle should be allowed out."

The currently organised question times and departmental meetings do not amount to industrial action. Their purpose is to prevent such action. The small amount of lost time due to these Q&A sessions will be easily made up in the coming weeks. After all, the works council rejected short-time working. Even working during the factory holidays will not be prevented. Parts for other factories are supposed to come off the production line in the press shop.

Works council representatives accuse the company of having broken the “trusting cooperation” provided for in the Works Constitution Act. However, they constantly affirm that they are slavishly subordinate to the Works Constitution Act.

The works council and IG Metall have not been betrayed by the Ford group. They have deceived us jointly with top management. And this deception is set to continue. Like sheep on the way to the slaughterhouse, we are to surrender to our fate. The works council’s announcement that it wants to negotiate for “the preservation of our plant and as many jobs as possible” shows that it has already given its blessing to job cuts.

What the future will look like if the works council has its way is clear. Currently, an audio file is being distributed among us via WhatsApp in which Armin Gehl, managing director of Autoregion, an association of the transnational auto industry in the tri-border region of Luxembourg, France and Germany, explains how the companies envisage the next three years.

He sees a great opportunity for the Saarlouis press plant, which will then employ around 1,200, to remain in existence and work alongside other European Ford plants—the plants in Cologne, Craiova (Romania) and Valencia. This would mean that “only” about 3,000 of the 4,200 employees remaining in three years would lose their jobs. Of the more than 1,500 employees in the supplier park, “only” 1,000 would have to be “laid off.”

Gehl said he had heard from Ford that most of the more than 3,000 workers who will lose their jobs will go through a severance programme. This is what IG Metall is currently negotiating in close cooperation with the works council: the press shop would preserve the site and “as many jobs as possible.”

We repeat: The defence of our plant and our jobs is only possible in a struggle against the IG Metall and its works council representatives, not with them!

If we do not act now, the plant that our fathers and grandfathers built up over 50 years will be closed down.

We propose to prepare real actions of struggle: Strikes, actions to prevent the dismantling and removal of machinery, the dispatch of delegations to other sites and companies. Our closest allies are our Ford brothers and sisters in Valencia (Spain), Cologne (Germany), Craiova (Romania), Turkey, the USA, and, above all, India.

Our colleagues in Valencia are paying for the promise to continue production there with massive wage cuts, job losses and the deterioration of their working conditions. Workers in Cologne, Romania and Turkey must also expect renewed attacks. The division of the Ford group into a combustion engine division and an e-division is linked to demands for a

profit margin of 10 percent!

In India, Ford has announced it will close two plants. One plant has been sold to Tata Motors, the other was supposed to close its doors for good on Friday. But our colleagues in India started a strike and occupation of the factory gates more than four weeks ago.

At first, Ford tried to fight back against the industrial action by using strike-breakers, among other things, but then it was forced to increase its compensation offers. Now it has postponed the closure for a month as it still wants to sell the 1,400 cars that are almost finished in the factory.

Our Indian colleagues continue to reject Ford’s offers. Some have contacted us and are very interested in an exchange of ideas with us.

Not only Ford colleagues around the world, but also other workers would welcome the initiative to fight against plant closures since protests and struggles are increasing all over the world, especially because of rapidly rising prices.

In the last few days, we have seen that the willingness of the workforce to fight is great. But the most important step in conducting a principled struggle to defend the factory is to build our rank-and-file action committee.

Send a WhatsApp message to the following number: +491633378340) to give organisational and political expression to the widespread opposition to the works council!

Discuss with us these fighting measures:

- Strike now because we cannot wait until 2025! That would just be death in installments.
- Unite with our brothers and sisters, first in Spain and India, but also in Cologne, Romania, Turkey and the USA.
- Make contact with other workers in Germany, France and around the world who are resisting paying with their livelihoods for the enrichment of shareholders and executives and the cost of war and militarism!



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact