

Prevent the Ford Saarlouis plant closure! Unite all Ford workers! No trust in the IG Metall union, works council and the corporation!

Ford Action Committee
5 October 2022

The following statement was distributed to Ford workers at Saarlouis, Germany, before the mass meeting on Wednesday

At the factory meeting on Wednesday, the works council and IG Metall union, supported by Saarland's Minister President Anke Rehlinger (Social Democrats, SPD), will do everything they can to seal the plant's closure. The date has been specially postponed to give Ford time to come up with some cloudy promises.

While the works council and the union promote the slogan "A Future or Resistance," their submissive attitude toward the corporation cannot even be called a protest on all fours. The IG Metall-led works council under Markus Thal has managed to fit more illusions, cloud cuckoo lands and outright lies into a "Joint Declaration" than sentences.

This starts with the title. The declaration was not discussed, let alone decided, by "IG Metall, the works council and the workforce" as suggested there. It was presented to the IG Metall shop stewards, who dutifully approved it. The workforce will not see it until the works council has handed it over to the management.

Although Ford has unequivocally announced it will close our plant by 2025 at the latest, they would have us believe the company wants to offer us a future: "FORD is and will remain responsible"—for the preservation of "all jobs at the Saarlouis location beyond 2025," the creation of "future-proof replacement jobs," and so on.

This was also the tenor of the "Solidarity Festival" on September 24, which was organized with a lot of publicity and not attended by most of us, because we do

not need a wake, but the defence of our jobs.

At the "Solidarity Festival," just as in the "Joint Declaration," the works council and IG Metall announced they would fight if Ford shirked its alleged responsibility.

We all know for a fact that this will never happen. Markus Thal and his works council will not fight and resist Ford. The only fight they are waging is against us workers. The declared goal of the works council and IG Metall is a "social collective agreement" to force the regulated liquidation of the plant on us.

In the hands of the works council and IG Metall, our jobs—in the plant and in the [neighbouring] industrial park—cannot be defended. They will reject and seek to prevent any serious fight against the closure. The task of these stooges of the corporation, who are exempted from working on the line, is to enforce the closure. That is what they are paid for.

The time is extremely favourable for a fight to defend our jobs. The bidding war between Saarlouis and Almussafes, which the unions and works councils at both sites had eagerly stoked, has produced two losers. Following Ford's announcement that it will not be manufacturing electric vehicles in Almussafes, Spain, in 2025 after all, the plant and at least several thousand jobs there are on the line.

Our Spanish colleagues are therefore our first allies. A joint struggle by us would quickly gain support. And from the workforce in the industrial park, of course, but also from other plants. Stellantis, Mercedes, numerous automotive suppliers like ZF, they are all massively cutting jobs and closing entire plants right now.

We are the ones who produce the record profits of the auto corporations, and we can also shut down production and enforce our demands. To do this, we must also seek worldwide support against the globally active corporations like Ford. All over the world, struggles are currently developing against rising inflation, especially skyrocketing energy and food prices, and against the costs of rearmament and war in Ukraine that the corporations and governments are saddling us workers with.

Britain is currently gripped by a wave of strikes involving railroad workers, dockworkers, teachers, and postal workers, among others. In Spain and Turkey, care workers and industrial workers are on strike. In France, several refineries are at a standstill and spontaneous strikes took place at the Stellantis plant in Hordain, France. Last Thursday, some 250,000 workers demonstrated in France for higher wages.

In all these struggles, workers are confronted with unions that are doing everything they can to isolate and suppress them. More and more workers are therefore joining together in independent rank-and-file action committees to organize their struggles themselves. In the US, hundreds of railroad workers have formed a rank-and-file committee to prepare independent strikes against inhumane working conditions.

Socialist Will Lehman is running in the presidential election of the American Auto Workers Union (UAW) to return power to the workers themselves and abolish the bureaucratic apparatus. He had already attended a meeting of fellow Ford workers from Saarlouis and India in July. His campaign for independent rank-and-file committees is also receiving strong support among Ford workers in Detroit/Dearborn, Chicago and Kentucky.

This growing movement of rank-and-file committees shows that we would have great support for our struggle in Germany and internationally. Ford will not be able to close a single plant if we unite internationally and lead the struggle together.

The calls for “solidarity” on the part of the works council and the union, on the other hand, are completely mendacious and mean the exact opposite. Their “solidarity” in the bidding war was that German Ford workers should accept cuts together—in Cologne, Saarlouis and Aachen. They divided us from our Spanish colleagues in the bidding war and continue to

do so. When the works council and IG Metall call for us not to be divided, they mean that opposition to their policy will not be tolerated. We are supposed to stand by silently while Thal and Co. lead us to the slaughter.

What is needed is real solidarity and a joint labour struggle to defend our jobs, wages and living conditions.

To be able to tackle this, we must organize ourselves independently of the works council and IG Metall in the Ford Action Committee. We urge all colleagues: Do not accept any longer the threats of IG Metall and the works council and their stalling tactics. Become active. Get in touch via WhatsApp: +491633378340!



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