

Vote “No” to Verdi’s fraudulent contract agreement for German postal workers! Build the Postal Action Committee!

Postal Action Committee
13 March 2023

The following is a statement of the Postal Action Committee, which is fighting to mobilize rank-and-file workers against the proposed deal by the Verdi union that would substantially cut real wages for 160,000 workers at Germany’s Deutsche Post.

Dear Colleagues,

We call on you to reject the contract deal agreed to between the Verdi trade union and the executive of German Post. The deal means severe cuts in wages. It is no different from the offer we previously rejected by 86 percent.

The whole strike vote was a set-up to deceive and disarm us. The result was a foregone conclusion. Verdi speaks on behalf of the Post and its shareholders, not for us.

There is only one conclusion to be drawn: We must organise independently of the Verdi bureaucracy to assert our interests and fight back against the blatant wage cuts.

We, from the Post Action Committee, warned before the vote that Verdi does not want to go on strike but is only looking for ways to enforce the dictates of management against us. This was more than confirmed by the behind-the-scenes activity last Friday and Saturday. On Saturday afternoon, less than 48 hours after the announcement of the ballot for an all-out strike, Verdi’s Andrea Kocsis presented the tentative agreement to the media.

Verdi officials must think we cannot read or count. The long-term, tabulated increases in the new offer are almost identical to the initial offer we threw out. In the first offer, there was supposed to be an increase in two installments, first 150 euros per month starting in January 2024 and then another 190 euros starting in

December 2024—making a total increase of 340 euros. Now there is only a one-time 340 euro increase starting on April 2024.

The Post had previously offered us a tax-free inflation compensation payment of 3,000 euros in its first offer, to be evenly distributed over 24 months. Now we are supposed to receive 255 euros per month for the months of January to April this year, then 180 euros each month from May 2023 to March 2024.

The agreement not only cements our already low wages until 2025, it also means a further loss of wages for all workers. This is because the wage increases do not remotely compensate for the horrendous rate of inflation! All claims to the contrary by Verdi are complete nonsense.

In an internal video conference with 2,500 participants on Saturday afternoon, Verdi’s representative on the German Post supervisory board, Stephan Teuscher declared, “We are quite sure we achieved all that was possible.” Gabi Günzau, chair of the works council at Deutsche Post, seconded his remarks, saying, “The employers have made a very convincing case that they are not prepared to give even one cent more.”

In the course of the last 150 years, working conditions, wages, social security and other advances were not won because workers asked companies what they were willing to give. Every one of these gains had to be fought for.

While low wages are forced upon us, shareholders rake in the profits. The agreement as presented will cost the Post, at a generous estimate, 0.8 billion euros, i.e., 400 million euros per year.

For its shareholders, on the other hand, the Post is

again paying five to six times that amount in dividends this year, i.e., well over 2 billion euros. The Post also announced it would buy back its own shares for 2.2 billion euros this year and next year in order to push up the group's share price. These billions of euros are thus flowing into the pockets of shareholders via share price increases.

Billions for the shareholders, who do nothing but count their money, and starvation wages for the workers, who produce those billions with our hard work!

The plan is to ensure that this process of enrichment continues and is not interrupted or even halted by strikes. Big business and the wealthy are celebrating the deal. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* commented that the agreement was good news “for the development of inflation and to answer the question of how many strikes people will have to endure in the near future.”

The rich and their hacks in the editorial offices argue that rising inflation is due to our wages. This is pure propaganda. We have received only minimal wage increases in recent years. Soaring prices are not caused by our wages but the huge sums of money being thrown at the banks, corporations and the superrich.

The European Central Bank has invested over 5 trillion euros in public and private bonds during the past eight years. This barely imaginable sum has financed an orgy of enrichment which, according to Oxfam, has produced one new billionaire every 30 hours during the COVID-19 pandemic alone.

We are now being asked to pay up for all of this, together with the costs of the constantly escalating war in Ukraine and the militarisation of society. The 100 billion euros for arming the Bundeswehr is only the start. Some German politicians are already talking about the need for a “war economy.”

To this end, our wages, which are already far too low, are to be depressed to levels last seen by our great-grandparents. The tax- and levy-free “inflation compensation payment” of a maximum of 3,000 euros, proposed by the Post and Verdi, was first presented last year by the German government in its Concerted Action program. The program, devised together by the trade union and business leaders, has only one purpose: to camouflage wage deals well below the rate of inflation.

Our dispute at the *Deutsche Post* is therefore of great

importance. We face major struggles. Across Europe and internationally, a powerful movement is developing against the consequences of massive levels of inequality, the war in Ukraine and militarisation. Hundreds of thousands and millions are already taking to the streets in France, Greece, Spain and the UK.

Verdi's attempt to prevent our strike and sabotage our action is aimed at preventing this movement from spreading to Germany. A strike by postal workers would have far-reaching effects, especially for those 2.5 million colleagues in the public sector, whose sellout is also being prepared by Verdi. We would encourage them to join us on strike and spark a broad strike movement.

“Tariff issues are always power issues,” Teuscher said on Saturday, justifying Verdi's cancellation of the strike. Allegedly, the Post is more powerful than its workers. In fact, workers have the power to beat back the attacks being made, but their main obstacle is the unions.

Verdi and the other trade unions dread a European-wide movement of workers—but it is precisely such a movement that is necessary to beat back the attacks on wages and working conditions.

We, as members of the Postal Action Committee, call upon you to vote down this pernicious deal and contact us in order to make a stand against Verdi and defend our wages and working conditions.

The action committee can be reached via Whatsapp message on the mobile number +491633378340 or register here via the following form.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact