Pay offer at Deutsche Post: Make a “no” vote the start of a rebellion against the Verdi union leadership!

Postal Action Committee
21 March 2023

Dear colleagues,

Postal workers have begun voting on the latest pay offer from Deutsche Post. The Postal Action Committee calls on all Verdi members to reject the offer and become active in our committee.

Postal workers have already voted by 86 percent in favour of strike action, and this must now be enforced. But for this to happen it is necessary to break the role of the Verdi leadership as strikebreakers. The mendacious propaganda of the Verdi negotiating commission about alleged improvements must be refuted. Convince all your colleagues that a strike for our demand of 15 percent more pay over a 12-month contract can develop enormous strength and power.

Our wages struggle is part of a growing strike movement across Europe and around the world.

In France and Greece, hundreds of thousands are on strike and millions are taking to the streets to protest policies that make workers pay for war and militarism and to enrich the shareholders. In Britain our fellow postal workers have taken 18 days of strikes, but the Communication Workers Union (CWU) has suppressed further action since a renewed mandate of 96 percent last month. A rebellion is emerging, fuelled by the CWU agreeing to hiking up workloads and reducing staffing levels.

The Verdi board, under chairman Frank Werneke and chief negotiator Andrea Kocsis, is afraid that we will come to see ourselves as part of this European movement and join it.

Moreover, by trying to prevent our strike, Verdi also wants to send a signal to 2.5 million workers in the public sector, where Verdi is also conducting negotiations and is trying to push through cuts in real wages.

A joint strike by postal workers and our colleagues working in nurseries, public administration offices and municipal authorities, buses and trains, refuse collection, etc., would encourage many to stand up confidently for their own rights and demands and would spark a broad strike movement.

The Verdi leadership—and the leaders of the other unions—are pulling out all the stops to prevent this. The reason is that they are closely linked together with the federal and state governments and big capital, with whom they are in cahoots. They support the pro-war policies and massive rearmament spending, as well as the record profits of the corporations. But handing over billions for rearmament and the unrestrained enrichment of top managers and shareholders is not compatible with paying workers higher wages.

That is why Verdi is trying to force an offer on us that we had already rejected by a large majority and that would continue the loss in real wages of past years.

The Verdi leadership is trying with all its might to overrule our clear decision taken to strike in the last strike ballot.

We reject this undemocratic approach, which has been set up between Deutsche Post and Verdi. Who decides on a strike here? The approximately 100,000 members or the barely three dozen functionaries and careerists sitting at the negotiating table and on the bargaining commission?

The claim that the new offer includes a 25 percent improvement is a lie. To disguise the fact that the offer the Verdi bargaining commission is now recommending for acceptance is no different from Deutsche Post’s first offer, Verdi has presented several different calculations, tables and overviews. Using all kinds of distortions, misinterpretations and outright lies, the bargaining commission is trying to cause as much confusion as possible.

Therefore, we say the following in brief:

The first and second offers included €3,000 in inflation compensation, divided into different tranches. We maintain that this one-off payment is not a wage increase. However, Verdi always includes it as such, as does Deutsche Post.

The first and second offers include a freeze on basic rates in 2023.

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The first and second offers have a 24-month contract term.

And, most importantly, the first and second offers only propose an increase of €340 in basic rates after 24 months.

The only difference between the two offers is the start of this increase in basic rates. This would give us €1,450 more next year—spread over eight months in gross pay. You can work out for yourselves what would be left over for you after deductions.

No matter how you look at it, Deutsche Post and Verdi are trying to sell us a cut in real wages and cement low wages for the next few years.

The ballot, which runs until March 30, is about who calls the shots when it comes to our interests. Do we, the workers who generate the billions in profits for Deutsche Post, stand in first place? Or is it the Verdi officials who use our union dues to pay themselves six-figure salaries and sit on company supervisory boards where they pocket even more money?

For us, the answer is clear. A small group of bought-and-paid for union apparatchiks must not be allowed to override the decision of the majority and push through the interests of management, shareholders and government.

Verdi's main negotiators Andrea Kocsis and Stephan Teuscher both sit on the Deutsche Post Supervisory Board, together with other members of the negotiating commission. While the Supervisory Board is imposing cuts in real wage on us, it regularly approves payments worth billions to shareholders, with the blessing of the Verdi representatives.

Verdi officials have countless connections with the wealthy, the corporations, federal and state governments through their supervisory board positions, their memberships in government parties, and the lifestyles they share and can afford.

They inhabit a different world and have absolutely nothing in common with the economic hardships that are hitting ordinary workers with rising prices, especially in food and energy. These officials are not on our side, but on the side of Deutsche Post, the shareholders and the federal government, which is the largest single shareholder.

The past weeks of our industrial struggle hold a very important experience: we can only assert our interests and justified demands if we unite in independent rank-and-file action committees. Only if we break through the control of the Verdi apparatus can we unleash our true power and strength.

That is why it is now important to build active action committees in all mail and parcel centres, delivery hubs and all other operating sites. We also need to network online in WhatsApp and Facebook groups to take the preparation of the strike into our own hands.

The next important step is to mobilize for a "no" vote in the strike ballot. Our slogans are "Vote No! Against another cut in real wages! For strike action and a 15 percent raise!" A no vote is also a vote of no confidence in the compliant union negotiators sitting on the bargaining committee. It is the first step in stopping the negotiations, taking them out of the hands of the corrupt Supervisory Board officials and replacing them with an elected strike committee.

The second step is to build close ties and cooperation with our colleagues in the public sector and beyond with strikers in France, Britain, Greece and many other countries. The old slogan of the labour movement, "Together we are strong!" can only be implemented in a struggle against a trade union apparatus that is systematically used to restrict, isolate and turn all warning strikes and protests into fruitless pseudo-actions.

The Postal Action Committee calls on you to send us reports on the "No" Campaign! Report on discussions with your colleagues and on the manoeuvres of Verdi officials. Verdi deliberately wants to keep turnout low to increase the weight of their own bureaucrats and secure a "yes" vote. Do not let this happen. Spread the information about the ballot! Also, make sure the votes are counted correctly in your workplaces and take careful note of the results.

Come to our online meeting on Thursday, March 23, at 7 p.m. to discuss how to proceed together. We will post the link to the meeting shortly. You can participate anonymously. Also, contact the Action Committee directly via WhatsApp message to +491633378340.

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