

Founding resolution of the German Railworkers' Rank-and-File Committee: "Form rank-and-file committees to break the dictatorship of the EVG apparatus"

Railworkers' Rank-and-File Committee
17 August 2023

The following resolution was passed overwhelmingly Tuesday night at a meeting of more than 50 railroad employees, other active and former transit workers and their supporters in Germany. WSWs will publish a detailed report from the meeting tomorrow.

Contact us via Whatsapp at +49-163-337 8340 to join us in building rank-and-file committees in all plants to fight back against the massive attacks on wages and working conditions.

Railworkers' Rank-and-File Committee Resolution, August 15, 2023

- Vote against the arbitration recommendation!
 - Prepare an all-out strike!
 - Build rank-and-file committees to break the dictatorship of the EVG union apparatus!
1. The Railworkers' Rank-and-File Committee is an association of railroad workers with and without union membership who are no longer willing to accept the domination of the EVG rail union apparatus. It is not the EVG officials, many of whom sit on the supervisory board and have long ago been bought off, who decide, but the rank and file. Our goal is to fight off the massive attacks on our wages and working conditions. Our rights to decent wages and tolerable working conditions take precedence over the profit interests of the rail board, investors and speculators.
 2. The conciliation agreement recommended by the

EVG leadership must be rejected. It entails massive real wage cuts, a drastic deterioration in working conditions in many areas and, above all, a further division of employees: between the individual specialist groups, within the specialist groups themselves and between the work forces of individual Deutsche Bahn (DB, German rail) Group companies.

Given the low wages agreed to in 2020 as well as ongoing inflation, the real wage reduction is obvious. Considering that most employees spend the majority of their income on food, energy and rent, they will have lost 20 percent or even a quarter of their real income by 2025 compared to 2020. The inflation compensation is not a wage increase; for many, it is not even enough to pay off the debts they had to take on because of low wages in the past.

3. We vigorously oppose the threat of the EVG Federal Executive Board that we would be left empty-handed if the mediation offer is rejected. We will not be intimidated by this provocative motto of "do or die." The truth is just the other way around: accepting the arbitrator's recommendation would have catastrophic consequences—and not just for us at Deutsche Bahn, but for all workers.

An attempt is being made to make an example of us in order to push through massive wage cuts and social attacks in all other areas. Hundreds of thousands of jobs are on the line in the auto and supplier industry. The auto bosses are using the transition to electric vehicles to triple the profit rate and increase exploitation immensely.

4. Behind the rail management and its arrogant

refusals is the actual owner, the German government. With no hesitation it has allocated 100 billion euros for military rearmament and is in the process of tripling this quantity. Any corporation that claims high energy costs or supply chain bottlenecks and any bank that has gambled away its assets easily gets billions in support.

The EVG leadership supports this policy and declares that it is bound by the agreements with the federal government, which is trying to push the costs of military rearmament onto us workers via low wages and cuts in social spending. We decisively reject this! We combine the struggle against cuts in wages and social spending with the struggle against war and military rearmament.

5. Contrary to what the EVG board claims, a strike by us railroad workers would receive tremendous support—and not only in Germany. Workers everywhere are outraged by the effects of inflation, the austerity programs to finance rearmament and the constant social attacks, and welcome any courageous struggle against this situation. In France, Italy, Turkey, the US and many other countries, workers are fighting for decent pensions, wages and working conditions.

But everywhere they face the same problem: The unions are fighting for the other side and use their whole apparatus to suppress strikes and labor struggles. That's why it's important that we organize independently and take the reins out of the hands of the EVG apparatus. We, the rank and file, must have control over the collective bargaining process and all decisions, not the EVG apparatus.

6. We welcome the establishment of rank-and-file committees in other companies and other countries and ourselves join the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

We advocate two elementary principles:

First, we stand for the principled defense of workers' rights. This means that the rights and needs of workers and their families take precedence over the profit interests of investors, shareholders and speculators.

Second, we strive for international unification and cooperation. We deliberately address our call to permanent and temporary workers, colleagues of all nationalities, regardless of whether they are members of a trade union or not. We will not be divided! For us, international cooperation and the coordination of international struggles are of the highest importance.

7. The first task of railroad workers' rank-and-file committee is to prevent a sellout by the EVG and to fight for an indefinite strike. The inflation and income losses of the past years must be fully compensated.

We propose the following immediate measures:

- No to the arbitration offer! Support an offensive campaign against it! Organize meetings in all EVG locals and company groups to discuss why the arbitration offer must be rejected.

- No faith in the EVG board! The current ballot must take place under the full control of the rank and file. Trustworthy colleagues must monitor the service provider of the online election and especially the calculation and dissemination of results. The results must be transparent and verifiable.

- Prepare strikes! The federal board of the EVG wants to prevent a strike and accordingly has not made any preparations. No weeks of delays between the rejection of the arbitration offer and the strike!

- In order to enforce this, we call on all our colleagues to form rank-and-file committees in their work sites and branches that are committed to the interests of all employees—even beyond the EVG. We are reaching out to colleagues from the GDL (Gewerkschaft deutscher Lokführer, engineers' union), other unions or unorganized workers who are serious about defending our common interests.



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